

**Re-positioning the Subject:
Trainee English Teachers'
Constructions of
Grammar and English**

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**For my brother, Roland Smith,
who was prevented by illness
from completing his own
doctorate**

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Abstract

There is a requirement, within Key Stages 1-4 of the National Curriculum for English, that pupils should be taught various aspects of 'Knowledge About Language' which draw on an explicit understanding of English grammar. Many English teachers find themselves ill-equipped to deal with grammar, not only because they have gaps in their own knowledge, but because they struggle to reconcile the teaching of grammar with the progressive philosophies which have underpinned English teaching in recent decades. A number of studies have explored the philosophies of English teaching. My aim was to examine the perceptions of trainee English teachers on grammar and its place in English teaching within the context of changing definitions of 'English', and specifically the National Curriculum version that they would be teaching to.

A mixture of quantitative and qualitative data from questionnaire surveys and interviews enabled me to make a detailed description of trainees' prior experience of learning grammar and their feelings about teaching it. However, when I came to analyse trainees' understandings of 'grammar' and 'English', I came up against issues of interpretation and epistemology which caused me to re-think my analytical approach and my overall methodology. The problem was that questions on the meanings of grammar and English teaching had generated a complex, wide-ranging and often contradictory set of responses. I felt a conventional method of coding and analysis could not adequately reflect the intricate, shifting nature of trainees' perceptions at this early stage of their apprenticeship. Allied to this were problems of epistemology: the dangers of treating data as 'fact' at a time when respondents' views on teaching and on themselves as teachers were in a state of transition.

My solution was to change my analytical method, to treat the data as discourse, to use discourse analysis to explore the multiple meanings of 'English' and 'grammar' for trainee teachers and to construct a model which could reflect the fluidity, the contradictions and the potentialities of this discourse. In this way I was able to provide evidence of a transformative process whereby trainees' constructions of 'grammar' were broadening and becoming more compatible with their constructions of English and of themselves as English teachers, while at the same time demonstrating the contradictions and conflicts which continue to characterise subject English.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher: "Who can tell me what a complex sentence is?"

Year 7 boy: "A sentence with a main and a suburbanite clause."

Times Educational Supplement, May 25th 2004

i. **Background to the study**

In some form or other, grammar has always been part of English teaching. It has also, historically, been one of the most contentious issues within a contentious subject. What, how and why it should be taught have been subject to public and professional debate in Britain for at least two hundred years, but that debate has never been as virulent as during the last two decades of the twentieth century, when, with the development of a national curriculum, the explicit teaching of grammar became officially part of subject English. By 1998, when my research began, there could be no doubt that intending English teachers, whatever their educational background, would be teachers of grammar. Moreover, if teacher educators had any remaining doubts about their own responsibilities in this regard, a draft national curriculum for initial teacher training was already in PGCE departments and the English section contained a detailed breakdown of the grammatical structures to be taught.

My own background as an English teacher was different from most in that I had taught grammar for ten years as part of 'A' level English language courses in further education, as well as on university degree programmes. My first degree, in the early 1970s, had involved the study of both literature and linguistics. I was also old enough to have been taught 'traditional' grammar at school, including parsing and clause analysis. But in the 70s and early 80s when, like everyone else, I was teaching English through personal growth and literature, sociolinguists were re-inventing grammar. Chomsky's structuralist and mentalist approach had been sidelined, at least in the UK, by Halliday's systemic-functional grammar, a model of language in which context, meaning and use were central. Though teaching materials which drew on Halliday's approach, such as 'Language in Use' [Doughty et al, 1971] and the later LINC project materials, failed, for different reasons, to find a permanent place in secondary English, they played a significant role in the development of 'A' level English language syllabuses in the late 1980s and 1990s. These

syllabuses varied in the extent to which they required explicit knowledge of grammatical structure, but almost all drew on a sociolinguistic model of language which employed descriptive methods to analyse language variation and which repudiated the prescriptive ideology of traditional school grammar. The first 'A' Level English Language syllabus based on modern descriptive linguistics was introduced in 1987 by the London Examinations Board. It gave me the opportunity to teach a kind of English which was different in terms of both content and ideological perspective from established pre- and post-16 syllabuses. While 'O' level [and subsequently GCSE] programmes taught competence in 'standard English', 'A' level literature taught 'the great tradition'. For me, they represented two sides of an elitist coin. The aim of the 'A' Level English Language course was to describe language use in context, using an explicit descriptive framework or metalanguage. All varieties were 'equal': written and spoken, standard and non-standard. This was a liberating pedagogy not only for me, and for those colleagues in the English department who eventually became the 'English Language team', but also, I believe, for scores of students who, because of their social, cultural or language backgrounds, did not feel comfortable with traditional 'Eng. Lit.'.

The Language syllabus was far from an easy option, however, and it was grammar which proved, year after year, to be the least popular aspect of what was an increasingly popular 'A' level course. Those who had studied a modern foreign language coped better than those who hadn't, but it was rare that any sixteen year-old had more than a very basic knowledge. Over a number of years we tried different ways of teaching the grammatical framework which was an essential tool for language description and analysis. One year the teaching was framed around students' intuitive knowledge of language variation; then we taught grammar via the topic of language acquisition; finally we made it a discrete element at the beginning of the course, and followed up the 'short sharp blast' with practical and interactive application. Still we found, in annual course evaluations, that grammar was perceived by students as 'difficult' and the 'least enjoyable part of the course', views echoed by the university students I tutored on English language and linguistics courses.

ii. Focusing the research

This was a particularly important time in the history of English teaching. English, more than any other discipline, had been subject to change from its beginnings, but the last decade of the twentieth century was a time of radical upheaval for secondary English teachers. For the first time a national curriculum dictated what they were to teach. Explicit grammar teaching, abandoned in most state schools in the 1960s, had been imposed on an unwilling and mainly ill-equipped profession. How would new teachers deal with an English which might be very different to what they had experienced in school and at university? How might this different English affect their views on English teaching and the teacher-identities that would begin to emerge during the PGCE course? This would depend partly on their own educational background and the understandings that they brought into the training year, as well as on their experiences during that year. While most of them would begin their PGCE training with an 'English' degree consisting mainly of literary studies [Poulson, 1996:5], the qualification could encompass a wide range of different courses:

With the increasing development of modular courses, the only thing that a group of trainees drawn from different universities and now embarking on a PGCE is likely to have in common is the possession of a degree in English [Tweddle et al, 1997: 59-60]

One aspect of English unlikely to have been included in undergraduate courses was grammar [Poulson: *ibid*]. By the time I embarked on my PhD, explicit grammar teaching had become part of the national curriculum [DfE,1995], and was soon to become a statutory part of the initial teacher training curriculum for both primary and secondary phases [DfEE, 4/98]. Assuming that the majority of graduates on PGCE courses would have taken literature rather than language-based degree courses, I was interested in exploring their views on grammar teaching. At the same time I wanted to investigate the ideological perspectives which underpinned their attitudes and the extent to which they coincided with their broader conceptions of subject English. Although there had been a number of studies of both practising and apprentice English teachers' beliefs about their subject, none had addressed the potential impact on these beliefs of the re-introduction of

grammar teaching. Publishers were churning out grammar textbooks, and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority would soon move beyond trying to justifying the reintroduction of grammar teaching to focus on classroom method [QCA, 1998; 1999a]. But I shared Ronald Carter's approach to debates about English language teaching:

The fascination comes from interrogating and attempting to understand better the ways in which the very terms of the debate are rooted in ideologies, in the relationship between language and power, and in particular in the different understandings of what is the *proper* in 'Proper English' [1993:4]

Central to the debate about grammar teaching is the distinction between prescriptive and descriptive approaches to language, between grammar as a set of rules and grammar for use. Implicit in this distinction are fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of English teaching:

If I teach grammar as a set of rules which must be observed absolutely, I engender, in the young human who accepts this, a particular attitude to authority and a particular notion of who she or he is or can be. The young person who rejects this view is still affected: their view will be that of a rejection of authority. If I teach grammar as a resource, which is constantly newly made by those who use it in the course of their lives and out of *their interests*¹, I engender a potentially quite different notion of that person about himself or herself, and about their place in society. [Kress, 1995: viii]

The 'rules' invoked by prescriptivists generally equate with the grammatical features of 'standard English', the 'Proper English' of Carter's quotation. In the National Curriculum [DfE, 1995; DfEE, 1999] English grammar is emphatically the grammar of standard English, and pupil success in English is measured by their ability to speak and write it. Yet it remains a contested issue in terms of its definition, its history and its ideological associations [Milroy and Milroy, 1991; Perera, 1994; Bex and Watts, 1999].

Underpinning the two quotations above, and my approach to this study, is an argument for critical literacy. Its supporters reject the traditional, functionalist model of literacy as 'reading and writing' or 'proficiency in the use of standard English', in favour of a

pedagogy which sees language as a site of struggle and language education as a means of individual and collective empowerment. Central to this approach is the explicit analysis and discussion of language features, including grammatical forms, to help students identify and resist powerful and manipulative discourses, as part of a broader programme of action for a more just and equitable world. My work as a tutor for Open University courses in English Language and Linguistics had strengthened my own sympathies for the radical/political approach of analysts such as Norman Fairclough [1989; 1992a; 1992b; 1995; 2001]. For Fairclough, the liberal agenda of sociolinguistics was ultimately pointless because it limited itself to describing language varieties, their functions and contexts, and lacked a theoretical framework for social critique. For critical linguists, the point of analysing language features [including grammar] was not merely to describe them, but to show how they encoded power relations and ideologies.

It would be unrealistic to expect literature-trained PGCE entrants to have a detailed knowledge of the theoretical debates around literacy. But I hoped, while investigating their understanding of and attitudes to grammar teaching, to gauge their awareness of issues such as the role of ‘standard English’ in the English classroom, prescriptive and descriptive approaches to grammar, rationales for teaching it, and its relevance to subject English.

iii. **Research Methods**

My initial orientation was reflected in the title of my research proposal: *Teaching English Grammar: Issues of Policy and Pedagogy for Trainee Teachers*. I intended to use questionnaire surveys and face-to-face interviews to investigate trainee English teachers’ views on grammar teaching and to attempt to situate them within a context of changing ideologies underpinning English and grammar teaching. Using a grounded theory approach to the various stages of my research, I would work from my data rather than bringing to it any preconceived analytical framework. This kind of investigation would need to be based on a detailed examination of the historical processes through which these

¹ Author’s italics

ideologies had arisen [Goodson, 1988: 23]. So my preliminary literature search aimed at establishing a broad knowledge base in the histories of both English and grammar teaching with particular attention to the various perspectives underpinning them.

After a pilot survey of 53 PGCE English trainees at Nottingham University, I distributed my first questionnaire survey in October 1998 to PGCE English departments at the universities of Birmingham, Loughborough, Newcastle, Nottingham, and Sheffield. This generated 127 returns. In January 1999 I completed follow-up interviews with a self-selected group of 14 trainees, mainly from Nottingham. A preliminary analysis of findings enabled me to construct a second questionnaire for distribution in May, after trainees had completed their main school practice. In June I recorded a final set of face-to-face meetings with my Nottingham interview group.

I had almost completed my write-up of findings from Questionnaire One when I decided to reconfigure my method, and to use critical discourse techniques to analyse the final set of questions, on the meanings of 'English' and 'grammar'. A detailed explanation of this re-alignment can be found in Chapter 4. Having already completed my data collection, I could not change my research instruments. They had, in any case, generated a good deal of useful quantitative and qualitative material which would help to 'ground' my discourse analysis sections and verify their conclusions.

My final thesis title reflects this re-configuration. Although the aims are essentially unchanged, the methodological switch to discourse analysis did necessitate some re-wording of my original research questions, in order to foreground the notion of 'ideologies' rather than 'views'²:

1. What are the nature and history of the ideological conflicts around the teaching of English grammar?
2. To what extent are these conflicts reflected in apprentice teachers' constructions of English and grammar as they progress through PGCE training?

3. What are the implications for the training of English teachers?

My first chapter addresses the historical construction of grammar teaching within English. Chapter 2 examines the research on contemporary constructions of grammar and English. In Chapter 3 I present the findings from my initial, quantitative analysis of Questionnaire One. Chapter 4 offers a detailed explanation of my methodological re-orientation, followed by discursive analysis of trainees' constructions of 'English' and 'grammar'. Chapter 5 presents the findings from Questionnaire Two and Chapter 6 the discussion of trainees' constructions of English and grammar, with my summary and conclusions in Chapter 7.

² Again, this is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Chapter 1: The Historical Construction of Grammar Teaching in England

I think it was a peece of the Tower of Babylon's curse, that a man should be put to schoole to learn his mother tongue.

[Francis Bacon, quoted in Keith [1990], 'Language study at key stage 3' in Carter [ed] *The LINC Reader*]

1.1 English and grammar: the beginnings

Implicitly or explicitly, grammar has always been part of English teaching, whether we locate the beginnings of subject English at the end of the 18th century [Michael, 1987] or at the beginning of the 20th [Protherough and Atkinson, 1991]. If we accept Protherough's [1987] argument that English appeared as a distinct academic subject taught by people called English teachers at the end of the 19th century at the earliest, then there is no doubt that the teaching of English grammar pre-dated the teaching of 'English'. If English teaching is defined not in terms of a separate disciplinary and professional status, but more broadly in relation to language and literacy teaching, then it becomes possible to say that for several centuries English teaching meant teaching grammar. However, it was only in the 19th century that grammar teaching began to be modelled on English rather than on Latin [Michael, 1987]. Two main strands emerge in the period up to the end of the 18th century: the use of Latin as a model for English grammars and grammar teaching, and the equation of grammar with written language. Lyons [1968: 12] traces this connection back to 'the first comprehensive and systematic grammatical description to be published in the western world', Dionysius Thrax's 'Art of Grammar' in 4th century [BC] Alexandria. Its aims were literary as well as pedagogical: to establish and explain the language of the classical authors and to preserve the purity of the Greek language [Lyons, 9]. Here are to be found the origins of the links between literary studies and what 20th century linguists would designate 'prescriptivism'. Here also began what Lyons terms 'the classical fallacy' in linguistics, which meant that until the 20th century, the study of the written word took precedence over speech.

The Thrax linguistic framework, of eight parts of speech, with subordinate categories [22 for nouns and 28 for adverbs], was adopted more or less unchanged by the Romans.

Subsequently the Latin grammars of Donatus [c. 350 AD] and Priscian [c. 500 AD] came to be used extensively in medieval Europe as part of the monastic tradition of education which dictated that to be literate meant to be able to read and write in Latin. Such was the power of Latin in medieval and Renaissance England, that it was not until 1586 that the first full grammatical description of English, Bulloker's 'Pamphlet for Grammar' appeared [Gilvary, 1996:56]. Gilvary notes the parallels between the central concerns of Thrax's work and those of traditional English grammars:

- word forms rather than sentence structures
- written not spoken language
- literary rather than common forms
- the works of authors long since dead [ibid: 54]

The focus on word forms rather than sentence structure [syntax] was to remain the model for grammar teaching in England until the end of the nineteenth century [Michael, 1987]. The assumption that English grammar was best taught by reference to Latin structures persisted well into the twentieth.

1.2 Prescription and parsing: the founding of a pedagogical tradition

There is no common-sense belief that linguistic scientists so urgently wish to displace as the fetish of prescriptive grammar; and there is no common-sense belief that has been so resistant to their efforts at displacement. [Deborah Cameron, [1995] *Verbal Hygiene*, p. 81.]

The debate about grammar teaching in English schools is still heavily influenced by the prescriptivist pedagogy which took hold in the 18th century. While it is customary to distinguish between the 'descriptive' approach of early grammarians like Thrax, whose principle aim was to codify their language, and later attempts to prescribe and proscribe English usage, it can be argued that any grammar based on a single, standard variety of a language is in effect normative [Cameron, 1995: 234-5] and at least covertly prescriptive [Greenbaum, 1996: 25] Whatever the method employed in writing accounts of language, it appears that any grammar with a pedagogical purpose will have the force of prescription. That prescriptivism became a defining characteristic of 18th century

grammars has, however, more to do with social history than the inclinations of linguistic scholars. Graddol et al [1996] describe how the drive to standardise and codify European languages was part of the process of establishing separate national identities. When, in 1586, Bullocker produced his ‘Pamphlet for Grammar’, the first grammar of English in English, it signified an England that now considered itself fully separate from Rome [ibid:151]. Three centuries and numerous ‘grammars’ later, education was becoming available to increasing numbers of an expanding middle class; society was changing rapidly, and the reaction was a reassertion of order and authority [Baugh and Cable,1978: 253] which was to intensify with the Industrial Revolution and the movement towards mass education in the 19th century. The urge to order has, throughout history, involved a turning back to past ideas and established authorities. So education in the 18th century continued to be based on the classics, and the study of English grammar based on Latin [Michael, 1987: 318]. At the same time, the ‘spirit of the age’ demanded that grammarians give the English language ‘a polished, rational and permanent form’ [Baugh and Cable: 255]. Samuel Johnson obliged by introducing the nine-fold division of the parts of speech: noun, adjective, pronoun, article, verb, adverb, conjunction, preposition and interjection [Michael, 1970: 225]. Although Johnson’s work was quickly established as the authority on English usage, Robert Lowth’s *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* [1762] was more lastingly influential in the classroom. Both Lowth and Joseph Priestley [*The Rudiments of English Grammar*, 1761] wrote for the enlightenment of children and were concerned, like Swift and Johnson, with ‘abuses’ of language. [Christie, 1993: 81]. Lowth’s presentation of verb tables as paradigms, according to the Latin model, has had a lasting influence on ‘traditional’ grammar teaching, while his proscriptions on ‘dangling prepositions, split infinitives, beginning sentences with conjunctions, avoidance of ‘it is me’ and use of multiple negation have proved equally enduring.’ [Aitchison, 1981: 22]. Lowth chose to discuss ‘sentences’ rather than ‘syntax’, classifying them as ‘explicative’, ‘interrogative’ and ‘imperative’ and also discussing compound sentences, linked by relatives and conjunctions. However, the most popular classroom text by the end of the 18th century was Lindlay Murray’s *English Grammar* [1795]. Murray’s 22 rules of syntax were to appear, with minor variations, in textbooks throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th. [Christie, ibid:85-6].

The most common methods used in grammar teaching from the 17th to the mid-19th century were rote-learning, parsing, correction of errors and ellipsis exercises. Drilling, modelled on Latin declension tables, was commonly used in the 19th century to reinforce rote-learning. Until the second half of the 19th century, when grammar teaching became more closely linked with composition, syntax was about word rather than sentence grammar, and based on principles of concord and governance [agreement]. The division of the sentence into subject and predicate, first used in the 17th century was extended to include subordinate clauses in the late 19th century [Michael, 1987: 332]. According to Michael, the popularity of exercises in error correction, ‘immense during the 1790s’, had ‘practically ceased to appear by 1855’ [ibid: 350]. However, Freeborn [1993: 8] reproduces just such an exercise from *A Manual of Our Mother Tongue*, written for ‘pupil teachers’ in the late 19th century by Marmaduke Hewitt and including such ‘incorrect’ sentences as:

He parts his hair in the centre.
He would have spoke [Milton]
How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank! [Shakespeare]

Michael also observes the changing nature of cloze exercises or ellipsis, which required pupils to fill gaps correctly. Up until the mid-19th century, they were aimed at improving written style, and called for ‘the fullest grammatical expression’. But they later became more restricted and word-based, ‘a verbal exercise in the form of a puzzle, meant to develop linguistic control’ [ibid: 353]. Historians of literacy have seen in such methods a purpose which goes beyond linguistic control to the regulation and maintenance of social order.

1.3 Standards and standardisation

The association of ‘standards’ with language can be traced back to the eighteenth century, when it was first used in reference to Greek and Latin. It was Jonathan Swift who applied the term to English in the 18th century, declaring his intention to refine the language ‘to a certain standard’ [Graddol et al, 1996: 157] and establishing the metaphorical connection

which echoes through contemporary educational debate. Standardisation, on the other hand, is generally viewed by linguists as a historical process [Milroy and Milroy, 1991]. For Graddol et al, the development of Standard English is associated with those broader social, intellectual and political transformations in Britain which have come to be known collectively as ‘modernity’ and which include the emergence of rationalism and humanist science, the growth of capitalism and the restructuring of society along the lines of social class. During this period, extending from the 15th to the late 18th century, English was transformed from a vernacular to a standard variety which could be identified with England as a nation state [ibid: 137-8].

Graddol et al subdivide standardisation into four overlapping and often concurrent phases: selection, codification, elaboration and implementation. Caxton’s selection of the East Midlands dialect of English for his printing presses [c. 1476] affirmed the political and economic importance of the ‘triangle of power’ which constituted London, Oxford and Cambridge, while three centuries later, Samuel Johnson’s [1755] dictionary represented a significant contribution both to the process of codification, or ‘fixing’ of the language and to its elaboration. The motivation for the enlargement of the vocabulary and, to a lesser extent, the grammar of English was part stylistic and part practical. For English to achieve its full status as the national language and the repository of culture, it needed to become more ‘eloquent’. One of the ways in which this was achieved was by enlarging its vocabulary, and between 1500 and 1700 over 30,000 words were added to the language, many of them of Greek or Latin origin [ibid: 142]. At the same time, developments in scientific thought necessitated expansion in both the vocabulary and grammar of English. The process of implementation, whereby these changes were disseminated and monitored, continued into the nineteenth century, facilitated by advances in technology and mass literacy.

The voices of ‘authority’ driving the processes of standardisation and prescription did not go unchallenged. For example, there was considerable opposition to the insertion of Latinate or ‘inkhorne’ terms into English. The Puritan John Wallis, in the Preface to his

Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae [1653] criticised the use of Latin categories by grammarians of English:

They all forced English too rigidly into the mould of Latin.. giving many useless rules about the cases, genders and declensions of nouns, the tenses, moods and conjugations of verbs, the government of nouns and verbs and other things of that kind, which have no bearing on our language, and which confuse and obscure matters instead of elucidating them.
[Crystal 1995: 78]

The ‘chief controversy’ in 1760s, according to David Crystal, was whether grammar should ‘reflect’ usage or ‘evaluate’ it. He compares the responses of Bishop Lowth and Joseph Priestley, to a debate which mirrors contemporary distinctions between prescriptive and descriptive approaches to grammar. Lowth, in his *Short Introduction to English Grammar* [1762] asserted that:

The principle design of a Grammar of any language is to teach us to express ourselves with propriety in that Language; and to enable us to judge of every phrase and form of construction, whether it be right or no.

In contrast, Joseph Priestley’s [1761] *Rudiments of English Grammar* [1761] reflected his empirical approach:

Our grammarians appear to me to have acted precipitously ... It must be allowed, that the custom of speaking is the original and only just standard of any language. [Crystal, *ibid*: 79]

The term ‘standard English’ was first used in the nineteenth century and increasingly in relation to spoken as well as written English. This suggests that the processes of standardisation were largely complete by then. In fact sociolinguists view standardisation as a historical process which, given the nature of language, can never be fully realised or fixed in the way that Swift had envisaged. Spoken English is particularly problematic in this regard [Milroy and Milroy: 22; Carter, 1993: 8]. Moreover, because it is ‘language change in process’, any so-called ‘standard language’ will always be subject to contestation. For these reasons, Milroy and Milroy suggest that standardisation is best viewed as an ideology, and ‘a standard language as an idea in the mind rather than a reality

– a set of abstract norms to which actual usage may conform to a greater or lesser extent’ [ibid: 22-23]. This ideology, established in the eighteenth century, is one to which, according to Milroy and Milroy, nearly three decades later, ‘virtually every speaker now subscribes in principle’ [ibid: 36].

In this period of ‘extraordinary technological and social change’ [Graddol et al, ibid: 161], a growing middle class, boosted by economic confidence and access to education, yet still uncertain of the social rules, provided a market for books on linguistic etiquette. At the same time, the steady influx of the rural poor into the cities led to the creation of an urban working class. Although in the second half of the nineteenth century there was considerable support for the preservation of English rural dialects [ibid: 162], there was a much stronger fear in case ‘vulgarisms’ should infect the superior classes. Michael quotes the Honourable Samuel Best who, in the preface to his *Grammar for the Use of Village Schools* [1852] declared:

The classically educated man cannot, if it were desirable, so ignore his education as to address his congregation in the jargon and patois of the village....We may and ought to raise them to our standard; we cannot, without profaneness in sacred things, descend to theirs. [1987: 351]

In any case, interest in non-standard dialects, whether driven by scholarship or romanticism, did not extend to the urban poor, whose language and behaviour alike were considered ‘barbaric’ [Graddol et al: 163]. Neither did it extend to the developing varieties of English in those parts of the world colonized by the British. Twentieth century sociolinguists would catalogue a vast array of Englishes, each with their own grammatical and lexical forms, and all as valid as ‘English English’ [Leith, 1996; Holmes, 2001]. But while their speakers were governed by a bureaucratic elite educated in English public schools, the language of power was ‘standard English’ [Watts, 1999: 63]. A number of critics of English Language Teaching have argued that ‘linguistic imperialism’ persists in the insistence on a single, structuralist model of English in ESOL courses [Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1992].

Bill Green [1993] uses the phrase ‘the insistence of the letter’ to describe the increasing focus through educational history on the written word as a form of individual and social control. In fact, as Pugh [1996] points out, even when elementary education became free in England [1891], large numbers of children failed to attend school, mainly because they were at work. For those who did attend, any potential for social disorder was kept in check by concentration on ‘the basics’, using the method of ‘alphabetism’, which involved the copying of letters and eventually words [ibid: 171]. For pupils from the higher social orders, grammar teaching, whether oriented towards style or structure, could serve a similar purpose.

1.4 The 20th Century: English gets personal and grammar declines

During the last century, English as a school subject has risen in status, widened in interpretation and taken on a powerful sense of moral purpose. From its beginnings as two rudimentary skills [reading and writing].... English has come to be regarded as ‘co-existent with life itself’. It is seen as the school subject which concerns itself with the personal development and social competence of the pupil.
[Margaret Mathieson, 1975, *The Preachers of Culture*, p. 11]

Objections to what has come to be called ‘traditional’ grammar teaching increased during the 19th century [Michael, 1970], but they were to become more concerted as English emerged as a distinct curriculum subject. David Shayer’s [1972] account of English teaching from 1900-1970 is significant not only for its detailed documentary investigation of changing perspectives and pedagogies, but also for what it reveals about the model of English current at the time of writing. His book can be read as a history of the ‘personal growth’ model which, up to and beyond the arrival of the national curriculum, was to become the dominant influence on English teaching. The process of change was a very gradual one, and was bound up with the development of child psychology, liberal theories on education, and changing social structures. It was also, like all ideological shifts, characterised by contradiction, tension, and counter-reaction.

Shayer describes conflicts between theory and practice, between liberals and traditionalists, and within the traditionalists, conflicts between classicists [from the public and grammar school traditions] and utilitarians [from the elementary tradition]. He

describes disagreements between ‘romantics’, for whom individual experience and expression were paramount, and ‘elitists’, who saw subject English as the guardian of a culture threatened by industrialisation, commercialism and the mass media. But throughout this book, the central opposition is between grammar and what would come to be known as ‘personal growth’. It is there in the battle between English as knowledge or facts versus English as experience and imagination; English as teacher-directed versus English as pupil-centred; English as rules versus English as individual creativity. It is there in the persistent complaints from teachers about the examination system, from school certificate through to GCE ; in the debate on the role of oral work, with grammar, as always, associated with writing, despite ever more confident denials of its effects on written performance. And it is there at the end of the book, when Shayer announces with evident relief, as well as his customary guardedness, that although teachers still have different views about the place of grammar, ‘by and large creative English will not include grammar teaching as such’ [165]. Grammar is still there, but as part of the teacher’s knowledge of good [or ‘appropriate’] English; not to be taught explicitly as a separate component of the subject, but to be subsumed within the teaching of individual expression and enjoyment of literature:

The fact is that pupils acquire correct English, not through grammar, but through reading, listening, speaking and absorbing what sounds right through constant usage within a lively and generous environment of good English [ibid: 96].

This is the view which would prevail in most secondary English departments until the final years of the 20th century. But in 1900, not only was grammar a necessary part of English, but, in official thinking at least, it was ‘English’ itself. In the Board of Education’s English Schedules for elementary schools that year, the curriculum consisted of three elements: ‘Reading’, ‘Writing’ and ‘English’. Under the heading ‘English’, the following elements were to be taught³:

³ Cited in Shayer: 4-5

Standard 1 [7years]:	Pointing out nouns.
Standard 2 [8years]:	Pointing out nouns and verbs.
Standard 3 [9 years]:	Pointing out nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, personal pronouns and forming simple sentences containing them.
Standard 4 [10 years]:	Parsing easy sentences, and showing by examples the use of each of the parts of speech.
Standard 5 [11 years]:	Parsing and analysis of simple sentences. The method of forming English nouns, adjectives, and verbs from each other.
Standard 6 [12 years]:	Parsing and analysis of a short complex sentence. The meaning and use of the most common Latin prefixes in the formation of English words.
Standard 7 [13 years]:	Analysis of sentences. The most common prefixes and terminations generally.

Nevertheless, it was the elementary [and subsequently the secondary modern and comprehensive] system which drove the changes in English teaching during the 20th century. Historically there has been little impetus for change from within the grammar and public schools, while they are firmly anchored to higher education and the elite professions and relatively inured from social change [Shayer: 92]. Thus the history of the separation of grammar from ‘English’ in the state system is bound up with the democratization of education in the 20th century, and, for many teachers, as well as writers on English, the triumph of ‘personal growth’ over ‘grammar’ has been a triumph over the forces of conservatism and class.

In the early years of the 20th century, the idea of the child as a developing personality as opposed to merely an incomplete adult was a major factor in the discrediting of ‘learning by imitation’ in written composition, and more and more theorists and official reports encouraged pupil interest and expression over copying and grammatical exercises [ibid: 48]. The influence of the child-centred approach is evident in Newbolt’s promotion of literature as ‘a source of delight, a personal intimacy and the gaining of personal experience...an equipment for the understanding of life’ [Board of Education,1921: 205]. That said, Shayer observes that although Newbolt was clear in its rejection of the utilitarian ‘Revised Code’ [detested by Arnold but still prevalent in schools], its overall approach was only ‘gently progressive’, especially in reference to secondary schools,

where ‘creative composition should be approached ‘very warily indeed’, and where pupils needed constant practice in formal essay writing. [ibid: 68].

Newbolt’s conservatism is more apparent in its treatment of what Shayer calls ‘the knotty problem’ of grammar teaching [ibid: 69]. Such was the divergence in the witnesses’ opinions that it was inevitable that the Report’s final position should be a fudge. Shayer is clearly indignant about the ‘sleights of hand’ by which Newbolt repudiated ‘old-style’, Latin-based grammar teaching and welcomed [Jespersen’s] new ‘pure grammar’ which was based on language functions rather than form, but nevertheless declared that grammar work needed to continue, if only to assist foreign language learning. While endorsing the new grammatical theory, Newbolt gave no indication as to how it could be translated into classroom practice, leaving teachers with no alternative, according to Shayer, but ‘the usual parsing and analysis treadmill’ [ibid: 70].

While theoretical linguistics developed at a distance from educational practice, it is not surprising that, until the arrival of sociolinguistics in the second half of the 20th century, it had little or no impact on school grammar teaching. However, this does not explain why ‘traditional grammar’ persisted for so long, given that philosophically and pedagogically it flew in the face of ‘personal growth’ English. Shayer notes with some irritation that even George Sampson, while declaring [1921, in his own italics] ‘*it is impossible to have too little grammar at the elementary stage of education*’ and that ‘the amount of practical help a boy will get in speech or writing from grammar is infinitesimal’, still did not propose its removal from schools, and included ‘a good basis’ of grammar work in his textbooks [Shayer: 78]. Sampson’s famous assertion⁴ that the purpose of English should be ‘not to prepare children for their occupations, but to prepare children against their occupations’ epitomizes the anti-utilitarian agenda central to personal growth English. But the durability of grammar is only partially explained by its association with the Revised Code mentality. Its historical significance is much older, and, as Cameron [1995] argues, it resides in notions of order and authority. The personal growth model of English permeated very

⁴ *English for the English*, 1921, p. 11.

slowly into English teaching, partly because there is always a time lag between theory and practice, but particularly because it was part of a radical re-conceptualisation of education and society in the 20th century. The impetus to extend educational opportunity appeared to some to be reaching beyond the liberal towards the radical end of social change. Shayer describes the period 1927-1932 as

marked by a seemingly concerted attempt to stave off creative developments and keep to the straight and narrow of traditional English teaching – and that included a demand for the return to the most formal of formal grammar teaching.....*The Times Educational Supplement* printed a string of letters through 1927 and 1928 from correspondents lamenting the decline of ‘real’ grammar teaching.....and the *Supplement* also printed two front-page articles in 1931 [21 February and 9 May] strongly supporting grammar teaching, expressing dismay at its recent decline, and giving further support to the ‘mental training’ and ‘foreign language’ fallacies [ibid: 89].

In fact Shayer demonstrates that, like most ‘moral panics’⁵, this one was not based on reality. Though there was a decline in new grammar books post-1920, he claims ‘it was not uncommon for a grammar to be published before 1910 to be reprinted ten or twenty times in the space of thirty years.’ He concludes:

It would therefore be quite wrong to assume that grammar teaching was literally on the way out by 1928 – in the secondary schools it was probably as strong as ever. [ibid: 90]

Moreover, as Shayer points out, ‘creativity as we know it today’ did not reach even junior school English until the 1950s. But progressive educationalists in the 1920s and 30s were using phrases such as ‘individual development’, ‘expression’, ‘freedom’, ‘the child’s self-creative growth’ [Percy Nunn]; ‘the emotional life’, ‘culture of the feelings’ [Greening Lamborn] and there was clearly a sense that radical changes were underway [Shayer: 93].

The formality of formal grammar teaching can be seen as an attempt to hold in check this re-conceptualization of English as the discourse of its supporters increased in confidence and influence. The educational agenda was shifting from whole class [in its sociological as

⁵ Cameron, *ibid.* pp. 82-85

well as pedagogical meanings] instruction to the education of the individual [Shayer: 82], from the vocational or utilitarian perspective to the liberal ‘whole-personality’ view [ibid: 88]. But in, Foucaultian terms, the ‘disciplinary’ purpose of schooling had to be maintained. This goes some way to explain the contradictory nature of so many official documents on English teaching during the first half of the 20th century. For example, the Second Hadow Report on the Primary School in 1931 takes what Shayer describes as ‘a comparatively enlightened and progressive view of English teaching’, stating that ‘the curriculum is to be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be shared’. However, it takes an ‘almost wholly traditional stance’ on grammar teaching, expressing concern that it has ‘declined somewhat’ in elementary schools, and concluding that ‘the teaching of English has become weakest on its formal side’ [ibid: 103-104]. Shayer’s frustration at the Report’s inconsistency is very apparent:

...we seem to have arrived at the point where advocates of formal grammar are prepared to admit that the subject has no *practical* value whatsoever, but that it must still be learnt in schools because this has been the British tradition in the past [104-5]

This is not tradition for tradition’s sake, but for the sake of the ‘formality’ inherent in a notion of tradition based on nostalgia for a more ordered, secure and compliant society. The ‘formal’ in ‘formal grammar’ here, and sixty years later in the National Curriculum’s invocation of ‘formal standard English’ stand in discursive opposition both to pupil speech and individual expression. Add to this the characteristically British [class-based] association of ‘form’ as acceptable behaviour, and ‘formal English’ becomes socially sanctioned language use which has to be taught and learnt via the ‘rules’ of grammar.

Leavis’s contribution to English was as much about tradition and class as it was about reinvigorating the study of literature. The ‘New Criticism’ pioneered by Leavis and Richards provided a means of absorbing into grammar school and university English the liberal notion of ‘individual expression’ while at the same time disciplining it through an analytical method combining intellectual rigour, carefully tutored personal response and

moral purpose. The ‘great tradition’ carried through Newbolt’s agenda, created a new curriculum of ‘classical’ English texts and ensured that, especially for sixth form and university students, ‘English’ would mean literature for the next half century at least. Moreover, the essentially conservative and transmissive nature of Cambridge English posed no real threat to grammar teaching, except to reduce its significance in the overall understanding of what constituted the subject. Thus it could be marginalised in practice and even excised theoretically, but continue to be practised throughout the secondary school system. Goodson and Marsh [1996] see Cambridge and Leavis as a threat to the ‘classical fallacy’, ‘the first powerful, high status opposition to the grammarian tradition’ [112]. But according to Medway, grammar teaching persisted until the late 1960s [1990: 28], which suggests accommodation rather than opposition.

By the end of the 60s, London’s personal growth-through-language had done what Cambridge could not or would not do: it had more or less ousted grammar teaching in the formal and explicit sense. This did not mean that until the 1960s teachers had enjoyed teaching grammar, or even that they saw the point in it. Back in the 1930s, James Britton recalled the ‘storm of controversy about the teaching of English grammar’⁶ and teacher complaints were to escalate over the next three decades. Many of these were directed at an examination system which appeared to be stuck in a Revised Code time-warp. Shayer’s survey of language and literature papers from 1920 to 1960 revealed ‘an astonishing degree of continuity and sameness’ [112]:

a picture emerges of a stable, almost rigid structure that has dominated secondary English teaching for over fifty years. [ibid:114]

Complaints about grammar testing went beyond the kinds of test questions set, to debate whether it should be taught at all. Nevertheless, such was the power of the School Certificate [and later ‘O’ levels] that even the Board of Education’s assertion that ‘such grammatical work as is introduced should arise naturally from actual speech, writing and reading in the work of the class, rather than consist of formal exercises in abstract

⁶ Quoted in Goodson and Marsh, 112

grammar'⁷, together with increasing denials of the link between grammar teaching and written performance, could not prevent their prolonged and deadening impact on English method until well into the 1960s.

Percy Gurrey's *Teaching English Grammar*, published in 1961, reflects, on one level, the prevailing view among teachers of the sterility and pointlessness of traditional grammar teaching. He is atypical, however, in his knowledge of contemporary linguistic theory, and in his advocacy of a mode of grammar teaching based on meaning and use rather than decontextualized rules:

Instead of tearing language up by the roots to see how it grows, this is to be an investigation of the language to see how the interlocking parts work together to express and carry out a speaker's thoughts and intentions in a total situation. [58].

For Gurrey, grammatical knowledge could be an aid both to written expression and precision of thought, 'but only if application exercises are intelligently and imaginatively devised' [ibid: 57]. The exercise presented in an 'O' level paper in 1961, the same year that Gurrey's book appeared, did not meet these requirements:

Leaving childhood behind, I soon lost this desire to possess a goldfish. It is difficult to persuade oneself that a goldfish is happy and as soon as we have begun to doubt that some poor creature enjoys living with us we can take no pleasure in its company.

Using a new line to each, select one example from the above passage of each of the following:

- [i] an infinitive used as the direct object of a verb
- [ii] an infinitive used in apposition to a pronoun
- [iii] a gerund
- [iv] a present participle
- [v] a past participle
- [vi] an adjective used predicatively [i.e. as a complement]
- [vii] a possessive adjective
- [viii] a demonstrative adjective
- [ix] a reflexive pronoun
- [x] an adverb of time
- [xi] an adverb of degree

⁷ *Suggestions*, 1937, quoted in Shayer: 122]

- [xii] a preposition
- [xiii] a subordinating conjunction

The extract is quoted by Carter [1990a: 104-5] who observes that these types of questions test the pupil's ability to label and to memorize facts. For advocates of the 'new grammar' that Carter was proposing in the 1990s, English was no more about 'facts' than it had been for progressive English teachers in the 60s, 70s and 80s. However, the appearance and aims of the English curriculum at the end of the 20th century would have shifted so far as to be barely recognizable to those of David Shayer's generation who could proclaim that 'English has no content', or, as Peel and Hargreaves [1995] put it:

English does not essentially comprise a body of facts to be communicated: those specifiable items which *are* taught – spellings for instance, or grammatical structures – do not constitute the substance of what English is seen by its practitioners to be about. [48]

'English' has proved notoriously difficult to define, for theorists and practitioners alike [Protherough and Atkinson, 1994; Medway, 1990]. But what is very clear is that once the 'personal growth' model came into its own, around the end of the 1960s, whether teachers continued to teach it or not, grammar ceased to feature in that definition.

1.5 Personal Growth English [c. 1960 -]

In attempting to define 'personal growth' English, Mary Bousted cites Cox's [1989] description:

A 'personal growth' view focuses on the child; it emphasizes the relationship between language and learning in the individual child, and the role of literature in developing children's imaginative and aesthetic lives. [DES, 1989]

but finds it an inadequate reflection of its 'rich and complex' history [2002:186]. Nevertheless, it does highlight a key issue in the personal growth philosophy: the individual, or 'the self'. The aim of personal growth pedagogy is the nurture and expression of individual feelings, what Medway [1990: 28] has called 'identity work' rather than the intellectual endeavour of Leavis's cultural heritage model. Thus in *Growth*

Through English, based on the 1966 Dartmouth Conference, and what has been taken as the definitive statement of the philosophy and pedagogy of personal growth English⁸, John Dixon describes the contemporary English classroom and an English which is different both from cultural heritage English and from other school subjects:

Here we see not only the intellectual organising of experience that goes on in many other subjects, but also a parallel ordering of the feelings and attitudes with which pupils encounter life around them. [1975: 7]

Language is central to this process, but it is not something to be studied in its own right; it is tied in to the exploration and expression of ‘self’, or what cultural theorists were later to call ‘subjectivity’. Dixon’s answer to the question ‘What is English?’⁹ makes this point emphatically, at the same time demonstrating the huge [even grandiose] nature of the project:

It proves impossible to mark out an area less than the sum total of the planned and unplanned experiences through language by means of which a child takes control of himself and of his relations with the surrounding world. [ibid: xviii]

Such a panoramic agenda is incompatible with the notion of a set syllabus or curriculum. Dixon contrasts English with mathematics, declaring them ‘worlds apart’:

The world shaped through natural language is much less simple and homogeneous than that expressed through the mathematical....English is the meeting point of experience, language and society... [It] is ‘intimately bound up with the individual’s whole intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual growth’ [Whitehead]..... Thus it seems an elementary mistake to demand a list of skills, proficiencies and knowledge as the basis for an English curriculum. [ibid: 85]

Dixon acknowledges the public or social nature of language, but what is important ultimately is its impact on the individual:

There is, then, a central paradox about language. It belongs to the public world, and an English classroom is a place where pupils meet to share experience of some importance, to talk about people and situations in the world as they know

⁸ Burgess notes that Dixon’s book was ‘never intended as the naming of a movement’ [2000: 12].

⁹ From the Preface to the 1975 edition of *Growth Through English*.

it, gathering experience into new wholes and enjoying the satisfaction and power that this gives. But in so doing, each individual takes what he can from the shared store of experience and builds it into a world of his own [ibid: 6-7].

The emphasis on language owed much more to work on children's language development by Vygotsky [1978; 1987] and the London School educationalists and writers who took his theory into the modern classroom, than it owed to 'mainstream' linguistics. Speech, both in terms of children's own language and classroom interaction was both a medium of expression and the means by which the process of 'self-actualization' [Dixon: 28] took place. Literature, broadened to include pupils' own writing as well as popular media and writing from other cultures, was still all-important, but its primary function was to assist in this process through the exploration of personal relationships and social issues. Classroom drama became another vehicle for experiencing-through-talk. The moral function of literature gave way to a psychological purpose and to a sociological perspective, a pluralistic outlook which celebrated diversity and difference [Ball et al, 1990; 58]. The instrumental function, [what Cox called 'adult needs'] had become as marginal as Sampson, some 50 years earlier, could have wished. According to Medway pupils could now enjoy a 'role moratorium'. They wrote in order to organize their experience, to enhance their social understanding, and to express their feelings, but 'never for the mere attainment of competence' [1990: 17].

Dixon contrasts the transmissive method of the 'skills' and 'cultural heritage' versions of English teaching with the interactive approach of personal growth:

Both the skills and the heritage approach emphasize the teacher as authority, the class as recipients of instruction. Working on a *developmental*¹⁰ approach with activities such as we propose, a teacher has a complex relationship with pupils. Pupils learn to take on their own tasks within a framework of choice that the teacher introduces and helps them develop. Sometimes groups form themselves, sometimes a pupil works alone. Teachers spend more time planning initial experiences that suggest a branching programme of group or individual work. The class are called together at times when this seems appropriate – because they all need to share something... Simple marking or grading becomes irrelevant... What counts is recognition of one's part in a

¹⁰ Author's italics.

group achievement, or one's individual contribution to a class presentation... taken together these contributions amount to a collaborative learning of language and of what it makes of experience. [ibid: 96-7]

In this version, as Mathieson observes, the teacher's personality has become a crucial factor, 'the missionary, ambassador and warrior have been replaced by the artist, psychoanalyst and charismatic figures who exercise control without external authority' [1975: 169]. Of course, Dixon was describing an ideal teacher and an ideal English classroom. He recognised the difficulty of operating personal growth pedagogy in real schools in terms of 'the dilemmas of coercive authority and inescapable subordination' and 'how prone the teacher is to use his language to dominate and constrict' [ibid:111]. This [arguably inevitable] gap between theory and practice was still in evidence 25 years later, when Mary Bousted's survey revealed that English teachers adhered to personal growth theory as a 'fundamental rationale for their practice', while actually operating in the classroom 'in a highly controlled way' [2002; 14]. Nevertheless, as both ideology and teaching method, it remains hugely influential today, testimony both to its continuing appeal within the profession and to its adaptability. Such was the durability of personal growth English that it was to become a powerful platform for opposition to 'education reform' when questions about teacher authority, group work and methods of assessment would accompany a campaign for the reintroduction of grammar teaching.

1.6 Personal Growth and Grammar Teaching

The Dixonian ideology of personal growth English was incompatible with traditional grammar teaching. This is not to say that, even during the years of its ascendancy, English teachers who agreed totally with its credo, taught no grammar at all. Contrary to the opinions expressed by 'moral panickers' in the 1980s, few English teachers had ever refused to teach written skills, including standard English grammar. Dixon observes that 'the traditional methods' were still being used at the end of the 1960s:

in the secondary school we still invite defeat by putting the old 'drills' alongside imaginative approaches to literature. [1975: 2]

But in *Growth Through English* the position is clear: pupils should be helped individually when they needed help, and when the teacher judges ‘the right moment to call his [sic] attention to the problem’. Not only were explicit and whole-class teaching of grammar to be discouraged, but the teacher needed to avoid negative comments, and ‘to remind pupils ‘incidentally’ of the standard forms’ [ibid: 28].

Any criticism of language must be introduced very delicately. The tacit presentation of alternatives is preferable. [ibid: 55]

Thus any knowledge about language was not to be transmitted, but offered as and when required, and apparently absorbed by a kind of osmosis, so as to cause least damage. The idea of knowledge as facts or information to be taught and learnt, was incompatible with the philosophy and practice of this new English. It is worth noting that Dixon dealt with the topic of grammar in a chapter called ‘A Question of Knowledge’, where he dismisses traditional grammar teaching because it was about product rather than process, and was unrelated to experience or use:

When we taught traditional grammar we could not, as research showed, claim to affect language in operation. In fact, grammar teachers, both past and present, have been among those most guilty of imposing a body of knowledge which never became a guide to action or a point of reference [ibid: 81].

In English knowledge had been redefined as individual experience:

When we talk of a body of knowledge or a set of ideas, we imply that some parts of our own past experience have been organised cognitively [ibid: 73].

The teacher’s role was to act as helpmeet, sharing in the process of discovery. Theoretically at least, the teacher-pupil distinction becomes blurred. So, for Dixon, the teacher ‘spends his [sic] time in his better hours discovering *through* his pupils’.¹¹ If direction were needed ‘he’ would ‘nudge pupils in a particular direction’ [ibid: 48], facilitating rather than instructing. At the time of writing it was still customary to use the masculine pronoun as a generic [Spender, 1980: 147] but at this point it begins to feel

particularly inappropriate. Whenever Dixon writes of the teacher-pupil relationship, his discourse is characterised by verbs of nurturing such as ‘fostering’, ‘helping’, ‘sharing’, ‘encouraging’, ‘drawing out’, ‘building together’. In a culture where such behaviours are expected of women rather than men, it could be said to reflect a feminisation in the discourse of English teaching, in contrast with the cerebral-analytical approach of Leavis and Richards. It also contrasts markedly with the transmissive pedagogy of traditional grammar teaching, where knowledge about language is to be overtly and explicitly taught. In rejecting the pedagogy of knowledge-transmission, and advocating collaborative learning, the theory of personal growth also represented a direct challenge to the formal written examinations which had driven classroom English for nearly a century.

The incompatibility between personal growth English and explicit grammar teaching is thus inseparable from questions of knowledge, pedagogy and assessment. But the most significant area of ideological incompatibility lies in the preoccupation of personal growth English with the individual ‘self’. If, in the ‘new English’, knowledge was redefined as experience, then it might be said that the self became the subject-matter in the English classroom [Medway, 1990: 19]. The teaching of grammatical form and function refers the learner to collective, publicly approved norms or ‘the standard’. This is one reason why Ball et al are able to connect grammar teaching with Leavis’s cultural heritage model:

This, then, is the literacy of morality: English teaches the inevitability of the state, the virtues and duties of citizenship, the demarcation of power. It is here that we place grammar teaching with its concern for a fixed, standard English [1990: 78]

In traditional, prescriptive grammar teaching, a writer may be expressing her unique experience in a unique way, but [as long as it is grammatically correct] that is irrelevant because the ‘rules’ are what counts. It is also irrelevant, in a different way, to modern descriptive grammar, where the focus is on the language rather than the writer. In both

¹¹ Author’s italics.

cases it could be argued that the rationality of linguistics contrasts with the romanticism of personal growth¹².

1.7 The rejection of formal grammar teaching

There is clearly no single reason for the disappearance of formal grammar teaching during the 1960s. Teachers had been unhappy with it for decades, but had not managed to remove it. There had been a number of research studies which refuted the link between grammar teaching and pupils' written performance¹³. These were later to be called into question by those supporting the re-insertion of grammar into the national curriculum [QCA: 1998] but in any case it is by no means certain that teachers in the 1960s were aware of these studies. Marland [1977: 61] agrees that the deficiencies of traditional grammar teaching were a factor, but notes also its incompatibility with current theories on language learning. Cameron, from a later [1995] perspective suggests that the main reason for the demise of grammar teaching was a practical one: teachers simply found for themselves that it did not work. However, in the light of Cameron's own account of the metaphorical connections of grammar with 'order, tradition, authority, hierarchy and rules' [ibid: 95], a major factor in its disappearance must be its ideological incompatibility with personal growth English. This might explain why, after nearly two decades of arguments in favour of a new approach to grammar in the 1970s and 80s, it had eventually to be reintroduced into the English classroom by force at the end of the 1980s.

1.8 Personal Growth and the New Grammar

The second [1975] edition of *Growth Through English* is significant in that it contains Dixon's observations on his earlier work. Not only do they demonstrate that personal growth, like any cultural practice or ideology, must change over time [and this one would prove remarkably adaptable] but that some of these changes have been connected to current work in linguistics. Dixon acknowledges that in stressing the importance of what he called 'the spectator role', the individual response to experience through language, he had

¹² Brooks, in Hargreaves, 1983

¹³ Wyse [2001] reviews these studies

omitted in the earlier edition, the role of ‘participant’: the need for individuals to use language in various public contexts.

What was left unexplained was...the role of *participant*¹⁴...a generic term for the roles we take on when we use language to confirm, advise, persuade, report, invite, request, instruct....writing for an audience [ibid: 123-4]

Dixon realises the challenge that this new perspective presents to personal growth theory:

Language in the spectator role ‘focuses our attention on how we represent the world to ourselves, and ourselves to the world’ [Britton]. Our interest is in the imaginative processes involved and in the adequacy of language to represent experience[s]. When we shift focus to include language in participant roles, the central process becomes the act of *communicating*.¹⁵ This is much more open to scrutiny and to public discussion, I would think, from its very nature [ibid: 128].

Dixon stresses the importance of real audiences and readers rather than textbook exercises. This, along with his brief but positive mention of ‘Use of English’ materials produced since Dartmouth [Doughty et al, 1971], suggests that it might be possible to accommodate this kind of work into English. Dixon thus shows his awareness of current work in linguistics, and agrees that ‘teachers need to be familiar enough with modern linguistics to be able to draw from the subject a framework in which to understand the problems of language in class’ but still sees it as ‘folly’ for bring grammar as a body of knowledge into the classroom [ibid: 81].

The opposition to explicit classroom grammar was shared by the authors of *Language in Use* [Doughty et al 1971], product of a Schools Council Programme in Linguistics and English Teaching [1967-71] led by Michael Halliday. This textbook employed a broadly sociolinguistic approach, demonstrating how everyday uses of language could be investigated, but it stopped short of advocating the use of linguistic terminology to describe linguistic features. This reflected current thinking both about educational practice

¹⁴ Author’s italics.

¹⁵ Author’s italics.

and about what came to be called ‘language awareness’. [Riddle: 1982]. It was also in line with the Bullock Report [DES,1975], which has been seen as an official sanctioning of current theory and practice in the face of accelerating criticism from the Right in the form of the Black Papers [Brumfit, 1995; Saunders and Hall, 1995; Burgess, 1996].

The English of Bullock, however, was already a different English from the one described by Dixon in 1968. For Ball et al [1990] the emphasis given to skills in the Report signified ‘a significant shift in the discourse of English teaching’, prefiguring the displacement of ‘social realism and political criticism’ with vocationally-oriented literacy [69]. Indeed, while it gave clear endorsement to personal growth theorists, and little comfort to the Right in failing to find evidence of declining standards, it also criticized ‘the notion of English in the secondary school as almost exclusively a source of material for personal response to social issues’. Teachers needed to intervene to ensure children’s language development. [DES, 1975: 7]. However, this would not involve grammatical terminology, specifically on the grounds that it would not improve written skills:

There is no satisfactory evidence to show how far an explicit knowledge of the rules governing language can reinforce an implicit knowledge or substitute for it [ibid,1975: 162].

Already, though, the issue of grammar was associated with the ‘skills’ model of English, an assumption which would be reiterated in subsequent government documents, but as an argument for rather than against explicit grammar teaching. In the meantime, through the first half of the 1980s the consensus was against.

1.9 Grammar returns – officially and explicitly

To investigate the reasons for the re-insertion of explicit grammar into school English towards the end of the 1980s is to reveal a complex ideological struggle in which teachers, politicians, academics, employers, parents and the press tied their disparate convictions, fears and hopes to variously designed grammatical banners and joined battle.

i. Criticisms of personal growth English

An important factor in the changes soon to transform the English curriculum was a growing unease about what was happening in English classrooms, or what was believed to be happening. Criticisms of personal growth English in the years preceding the introduction of the national curriculum came not only from politicians and the press, but from academics in education, linguistics and English studies.

The Bullock Report had been broadly supportive of the status quo, despite its concerns about the neglect of skills, and was well received by teachers. The media response, however, had focused on the minority report of Stuart Froome, a *Black Papers* contributor:

My own observation in a number of schools leads me to the belief that in the zeal for ‘creativity’ by teachers today, there is not the rigorous critical marking of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors which there used to be, while the traditional systematic ‘doing of corrections’ is fast disappearing... And I believe the Committee is in error in putting undue emphasis upon talking as a means of learning language. It has its place, but in my view, one of the causes of the decline in English standards today is the recent drift in schools away from the written to the spoken word.” [Bullock, p. 526.]

In effect, it was a rare English teacher who did not teach skills as well as creativity, though the balancing act was not always easy when departmental policy prioritised personal expression. Margaret Mathieson saw it as a potentially damaging conflict: ‘In practice many conscientious English teachers lead double lives’. As a teacher educator she also envisaged problems for beginning teachers in classrooms where lessons lacked structure and clarity and where exam preparation could be inadequate [1975: 215].

Other writers commented bluntly on the pretentiousness of personal growth English:

English teaching is not the study of the human condition... English *is* very complex, but not as complex as life itself.’ [Stubbs in Carter, 1982:138]

Stubbs was arguing the relevance of linguistics to school English. Other academic linguists located the problem in the narrow range of texts that pupils read and produced in the personal growth classroom. As far back as 1968, Peter Doughty,

one of the authors of *Language in Use*, had criticised the emphasis on personal response:

The only kind of written work acceptable to many teachers at present is written work that is recognizable as one variety of the language of literature, that is, intensely autobiographic, densely metaphorical, syntactically highly informal, and devoted to the accurate reporting of personal response to experience....From the point of view of the pupils' needs as a whole...the limitations of this assumption are immediately apparent.... It ignores the nature and function of technical varieties of English, that is, the workaday language of a complex industrial society. [Cited in Mathieson, 1975: 201]

Two decades later, according to Christie, a 'notable feature of the personal growth model' was still 'a disinclination to address seriously questions of what to do in the name of teaching about English language' [1993: 96]. For Christie, a critical linguist, being explicit about language was a issue of politics and class. For her, personal growth English worked against rather than for the democratic ideals shared by many of its proponents:

Research has shown that what children do in their linguistic choices in writing is overwhelmingly a condition of what they have been enabled to learn to do. Where life opportunity exposes children to the patterns of language actually rewarded in education, they come to school very much advantaged over those not so exposed. For so long as we continue to leave the linguistic choices necessary for school success a matter of the 'invisible' agenda of schooling, so too we perpetuate disadvantage. [ibid: 90]

This perspective has been supported by ethnographic studies of community literacy practices by ethnographers such as Brice Heath [1983], as well as by genre theorists, who agree that children need an explicit grammar to help them construct a range of texts for particular purposes [Brindley, 1996: 223-4]. Integral to these approaches is a belief that pupils' experience of texts has been restricted by personal growth pedagogy to creative writing and fiction reading, and that such restrictions can further disadvantage children whose community literacy practices are different from 'school English'. Gilbert [1994] uses Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital' to argue against the 'mystique of authorship' in

personal growth English. For her, ‘creative writing’ and ‘personal response’ to literature ‘may operate to disenfranchise many children from any real understanding of the social, learned nature of writing and reading, and to deny them access to the obvious power of cultural literacy.’[260]

For Gilbert, like Christie, explicit language study is a tool for critical literacy:

Rather than authorizing disadvantage by focusing on the mystique of authorship, could we not instead promote critical social literacy by focusing on the cultural construction of reading and writing practices? The way forward lies in shedding much of the unnecessary personal and romantic 1960s discourse while holding firm to its important emphases on children’s needs and rights [ibid: 275-6].

But critical literacy certainly had no place in politicians’ arguments for the re-introduction of grammar teaching in the 1980s.

ii. The politics of grammar teaching in the 1980s

The shift to the Right heralded by Callaghan’s Ruskin speech in 1976 and pursued through various Conservative and New Labour administrations has been well documented [Ball et al, 1990; Carr and Hartnett, 1996; Whitty, 1996; Smyth and Shacklock, 1998; Furlong et al, 2000; McKenzie, 2001]. Driven by economic recession in the first instance, this withdrawal from the political and cultural ethos of the 1960s involved a set of ideological shifts which were to impact massively on education and on English teaching in particular. The ‘moral panic’ about English teaching was one ramification of a massive anxiety attack among the richest nations, and one which impelled some of them to run for the ideologically safe haven of the Victorian age: utilitarianism and social control. Arguments for the reintroduction of grammar teaching set a ‘back to basics’ skills agenda against what was presented as laissez-faire creativity of the 1960s, while at the same time reinstating the ‘classics’ of English literature to counteract both the influence of critical theory and the broadening of school English to include working class, Black and women’s writing. That grammar and literature were to become the central issues in a lengthy conflict over the English national curriculum was established early on when John Marenbon declared, on

behalf of the Right-wing Centre for Policy Studies, and just before the publication of the [1988] Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Teaching of English [The Kingman Report]:

When children leave English schools today, few are able to speak and write English correctly; even fewer have a familiarity with the literary heritage of the language. It is not hard to see why. Among those who theorise about English teaching there has developed a new orthodoxy, which regards it as a conceptual error to speak of 'correct' English and which rejects the idea of a literary heritage. [1987, 5]

It is unclear which particular 'theorists' Marenbon was denouncing here: educationalists, sociolinguists or literary theorists. In effect a general antipathy to 'theorising' had characterised government policy on education, particularly teacher education, since the end of the 1970s. [Whitty, 1995; Wilkin, 1996; Calderhead and Shorrocks, 1997]. The increased time given to school experience on PGCE courses, the introduction of competencies and standards for assessment of courses and students, along with a national curriculum for ITT¹⁶, the promise of skills tests for PGCE entrants¹⁷, and not least discursive shifts such as those from 'teacher education' to 'teacher training', and 'student teacher' to 'trainee' led Furlong et al to conclude that 'by the middle and late 1990s, initial teacher training had become an overwhelmingly practical affair' [2000: 139].¹⁸

iii New perspectives from linguistics

But one group of theorists, in the field of linguistics, was actually beginning to support the re-introduction of explicit grammar teaching. Halliday, the pre-eminent voice in linguistics and education since the 1970s, signals the change. In the early 1980s, although advocating

linguistics study in teacher education [1982: 2], he opposed explicit classroom grammar. By 1990 he had changed his mind [Burgess, 1998: 111]. The long stand-off between linguistics and school English was coming to an end, as teachers discovered common

¹⁶ 1998; 2003.

¹⁷ Introduced in February 2001.

¹⁸ Again, these changes were not confined to Britain. Furlong et al refer to a 1996 OECD paper which showed that 'many countries in the developed world are now engaged in the process of 'systematic reform'

ideological ground in the sociolinguistic credo of equality among language varieties. Language Awareness courses in teacher education since the 1970s, as well as the Language in Use programme, gave added impetus to the redefinition of 'literature' and the broadening of textual study:

Linguistics made it possible to see English teachers' near exclusive concentration on literary language as unreasonable, and to maintain the belief that no variety of English was inherently superior to any other. Of immediate practical importance was the assertion that 'correctness' was a matter of no more than arbitrary social convention. [Medway, 1990: 20]

But the sociolinguists' version of grammar teaching was quite different from the politicians', reflecting its origins in descriptive functional linguistics rather than the prescriptive tradition:

Grammar is a fundamental human meaning-making activity which can be investigated as a fascinating phenomenon from the powerful basis of considerable resources of existing knowledge possessed by the very youngest of children..... Knowing more about grammar, as part of KAL, is to be empowered to respond to and to use grammar as central to the creation of textual meanings. [Carter, 1990b: 120]

This version of grammar teaching involved using linguistic terminology, not in order to do sentence parsing exercises, but, as a 'metalanguage', to lend precision to the discussion and analysis of language varieties. Though LINC recommended caution and attention to context in teaching terminology, it highlighted its importance in encouraging a critical approach to reading:

Being more explicitly informed about the sources of attitudes to language, about its uses and misuses, about how language is used to manipulate and incapacitate, can empower pupils to see through language to the ways in which messages are mediated and ideologies coded [ibid: 4].

These fundamental oppositions between 'traditional grammar' and 'new grammar', in terms of their purposes, methods and ideological meanings, would resurface persistently during the writing and re-writing of the national curriculum in the 1990s.

of their education service....including teacher education'. [2001, p. 163]

1.10 The inscription of grammar into the national curriculum and the re-definition of ‘English’

i. Old and new grammarians

The official re-inscription of explicit grammar teaching into English took a little over a decade. The process itself, from the 1984 HM1 consultative document *English from 5-16*, which urged the reinstatement of grammar teaching, through to the arrival of the National Curriculum in 1995 has been thoroughly documented [Brumfit, 1995; Cameron, 1995; Cox 1995; Davies, 1996]. Both the Kingman Report [DES:1988] and the Cox Report [DES:1989] were received favourably by sociolinguists and with relief by teachers, since neither recommended a return to traditional, prescriptive methods [Hardman and Williamson, 1993: 7; Davies, 1996: 37]. Neither pleased the politicians. The remit of the Kingman Committee had been to ‘recommend a model of the English language as a basis for teacher training and professional discussion, and to consider how far and in what ways that model should be made explicit to pupils’ [1988: 1]. It did relate explicit grammatical knowledge to written performance; it also proposed that Standard English should be an attainment target for all 16 year-olds [though without reference to social class, regional or ethnic variation] [Ball et al, 1990: 73]. But Education Secretary Kenneth Baker wanted a return to traditional grammar. If he expected the Cox Committee to provide it in what was to be the framework for the first version of the National Curriculum for English [1990], he was to be disappointed. The publication of the Report left no doubt that its version of grammar was essentially a sociolinguistic one.

Instead of factual information to be learned by rote and with a focus on linguistic form in isolation from context or from broader social functions, the Cox Report underlines a KAL which is attentive to the ways language is used across varieties of spoken and written modes, in literary and non-literary contexts and as an expression of social attitudes especially in relation to central ideological functions such as Standard English [Carter, 1990a: 108].

But the conservatives did not want any ideological examination of Standard English and they set about re-writing the Cox curriculum almost immediately. The National

Curriculum Council made it clear that the principal purpose for teaching grammar was to ensure correct ‘standard English¹⁹’, not to promote understanding of dialect variation:

The one explicit reference to standard English in the statements of attainment [in the Cox curriculum] focuses on the need to develop ‘an awareness of grammatical differences between spoken standard English and a non-standard variety [level 6]. This is not the same as being able to use standard English in conversation and will not necessarily encourage pupils to speak clearly, accurately and confidently... These requirements need to be based on a clear definition of standard English [NCC, 1992, in Davies, *ibid*: 44]

If there was any doubt about the prescriptivist nature of the NCC’s definition of ‘standard English’, Chairman David Pascall dispelled it shortly afterwards in a press interview:

It’s grammatically correct English....so that you can be understood clearly, so that you don’t speak sloppily, you use tenses and prepositions properly, you don’t say “He done it” and you don’t split infinitives.... “He done it” is speaking English incorrectly. That’s bad grammar. We think it important that our children speak properly.²⁰

Another casualty of the government’s rejection of the Cox Report was the Language in the National Curriculum project [LINC], directed by Ronald Carter and aimed at helping teachers to devise programmes of study for the KAL components of the National Curriculum. In its final year it had organised nearly 400 training courses involving 10,000 teachers across the country. Davies [1996] assesses its impact:

Of particular importance...was the way English teachers began to take on the teaching of knowledge about language. Students started to learn about things like the history of the language, and about the differences between dialect and standard English, and about how those things related to notions such as accent and Received Pronunciation. The ultimate idea – and the thing that justifies the original inclusion of this approach in the 1984 HMI document - was that students would be taught how to articulate and explore their own understandings about language, and skills at using it. [42]

The LINC materials contained ‘a more detailed description of the grammar of English than in any mother-tongue English curriculum materials anywhere in the world’ [Cox, 1995:

¹⁹ The significance of the small case ‘s’ is discussed below, p. 65.

²⁰ Quoted in *The Independent on Sunday*, 13 September, 1992, and cited in Cameron, 1995: 102.

17]. Like Cox, they were based firmly on sociolinguistic principles and they met a similar fate when in 1991 the Government refused publication. Brian Cox reacted bitterly in a Channel 4 lecture in 1993:

The extraordinary situation today is that this small group of sentimental dogmatists is in a position to impose its will on all teachers of English in state education – and is doing so... The rightwingers are attacking the present curriculum because they want to restore a unity and stability based on the hegemony imposed by the upper and middle classes in the 1930s and before. The texts they prescribe often seem more suited to the days of British imperialism.²¹

ii. New grammar in the classroom

Despite their objections to some aspects of personal growth English, advocates of the ‘new grammar’ were keen to demonstrate its compatibility with current classroom pedagogy. Teachers had been fearful of a return to the kind of grammar teaching exemplified in Sheila Lawlor’s pamphlet on English assessment in 1988:

14 year-olds should be able to ‘identify nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs in most contexts, and pronouns, conjunctions and prepositions in most simple contexts; and analyse a simple sentence in terms of subject, object and predicate. [quoted in Saunders and Hall, 1995]

But the contributors to *The LINC Reader* insisted that this need not happen. George Keith described the new grammar teaching in language borrowed from personal growth discourse:

a style of teaching that includes a willingness and a capacity to learn alongside pupils...sharing knowledge and experience of real everyday language, rather than the transmission by teachers of a set of labels and closed methods of analysis [1990: 86].

Ronald Carter’s observations on method put teacher-pupil interaction to the fore. Grammatical knowledge was to be invoked as and when appropriate and relevant. It was to be

²¹ Quoted by Hardman, 2001: 18.

a matter of teacher judgement and sensitive intervention... The intention should be that such knowledge forms an incremental part of writing development and be mainly discussed with pupils in the context of their use of language [ibid: 111].

Competence should come before reflection, which should then precede explicit analysis. Carter recognised it as a challenge for teachers and pupils 'to present grammar in classrooms in ways which avoid the worst excesses of formalism without losing sight of the fact that grammar is systematically organised' [ibid: 117].

But personal growth English has never been about knowledge. Teaching any element of the 'system' of grammar means imparting knowledge, and it is difficult to do that from within a pedagogy which abjures transmission. Thus it would seem implausible that personal growth pedagogy could be unaffected by the re-introduction of grammar. Geoff Barton's description of his approach to grammar teaching reveals a fundamental change in pedagogy: He rejects the 'child-centred' approach to grammar as 'dangerously haphazard', believing not only that pupils need explicit teaching about sentence grammar, but also traditional forms of reinforcement such as drills and exercises [1998:113]. His is a pragmatic, test-driven version of English teaching:

It's all very well to amuse them and entertain them. But they're going to be assessed chiefly in all subjects through their writing. And I believe that the main criterion for assessment in English is grammatical control. [ibid: 113]

In fact, according to Carter, 'new grammar' could be taught within any of Cox's 'five views' of English. In addition to 'growth', 'skills' and the 'cultural analysis' of media and other texts, it could be also be employed in the analysis of literature within the 'cultural heritage' model and in the study of different genres in 'cross-curricular' English [1990b: 109-116]. While claims for the versatility of 'new grammar' might help to convert doubting Thomases in staffrooms and even in government quangos, this argument could only succeed by ignoring the ideological framing of the 'models', in other words, by seeing them, like Cox, as alternative preferences rather than ideologies. As an ideological construct, for example, personal growth English, at least at the time of the Cox Report was

incompatible with grammar teaching. And the ideology which informed the cultural heritage model required traditional, prescriptive grammar teaching [Ball et al, 1990; Marshall, 2000a].

There is also a case for questioning the association of the Cox grammar with ‘cultural analysis’, especially if we assume that the aims underpinning it are those of critical linguistics and critical literacy. Fairclough [1992a] queries Cox’s representation of Standard English as an ‘entitlement’, without which access to opportunity would be denied [DES 1995, paras 4.3; 4.5]. For Fairclough, the suggestion that Standard English can simply be added to a pupil’s repertoire is problematic, because Standard English is not simply another dialect:

How is it possible to teach pupils a variety of English so much more prestigious and powerful than their own dialects and languages without detriment to the latter? [ibid: 35-36].

Fairclough also takes issue with the notion of ‘appropriateness’ [Cox, para 4.41] which implies a universally agreed system linking context with language. He argues that ‘appropriateness’ is both normative and prescriptive, giving the message to pupils that ‘their varieties *may*²² be appropriate, but are pretty marginal and irrelevant’ [ibid: 36]. Other writers have focused on the potentially detrimental effects on pupils’ sense of identity if they perceive that their home or community language has less social value than Standard English [Keen, 1994; Saunders and Hall, 1995]. Brindley again makes the link with social control²³:

English teaching can be seen as providing access to powerful language practices: to Standard English, for instance, or to certain formal written genres. But what are the implications for children’s sense of themselves and their personal identities? Does teaching such forms and practices actually empower children, or serve to keep them more firmly in their place? [1996:228]

Brindley describes how teachers have tried to address such dilemmas by exploring the features of different varieties of English and how they are evaluated

²² Fairclough’s italics

²³ See above, Section 1.3 on theories of social control through language education.

by others [ibid: 212-3]. However, this kind of application of explicit grammar teaching did not feature either overtly or implicitly in the official motivation for its reintroduction.

iii. Grammar in the National Curriculum

Despite the acrimony surrounding the abandonment of Cox and LINC, the boycott of Key Stage 3 tests in 1992 and widespread discontent with the way that the revision of the English Orders had been managed, teachers were reasonably pleased with the 1995 National Curriculum [Davies, 1996; 48]. Even its insistence on ‘standard English’ could be seen merely as an explicit [or over-explicit] statement of what English teachers had always taught. In broader terms, though, this *was* a different ‘English’: one based firmly on language, and paving the way for a subsequent re-definition in terms of literacy skills [Peel et al, 2000: 30]. The amount of space taken up by grammar lends credence to Peim’s [2000a] characterisation of the English Orders as ‘Literature plus grammar’. However, the 1995 curriculum did represent something of a compromise between the traditional and the progressive: between traditional, prescribed content and progressive pedagogy, or at least the discourse of progressive pedagogy. If ‘Bullock had been ‘skills plus old humanism’ [Ball et al: 70], the 1995 curriculum might be described as skills plus cultural humanism with a sprinkling of sociolinguistics courtesy of Cox. In the ‘General Requirements’ ‘standard English’ is framed in the egalitarian discourse fundamental to both personal growth English and sociolinguistics:

In order to *participate confidently* in public, cultural and working life, pupils need to be able to speak, write and read standard English fluently and accurately. All pupils are therefore *entitled* to the full range of *opportunities* necessary to enable them to develop competence in standard English. Where *appropriate*, pupils should be encouraged to make use of their understanding and skills in other languages when learning English.²⁴ [DfE: 2]

On the other hand, the ‘Standard English and Language Study’ under ‘Speaking and Listening’ is presented as factual knowledge to be ‘taught’:

²⁴ My italics

Pupils should be taught:

- about the main characteristics of literary language
- to consider features of the vocabulary and grammar of standard English that are found in different text
- to analyse and evaluate the use of language in a variety of media, making comparisons where appropriate
- about different genres and their characteristics, including language structure and organisational features
- to analyse techniques.

[ibid: 22]:

Interestingly, in the section covering the use of grammatical knowledge for writing, the verb ‘taught’ is used only once, softening the authoritarian ‘should’ in terms drawn from personal growth:

a. Pupils *should be encouraged to be confident* in the use of formal and informal written standard English, using the grammatical, lexical and orthographical features of standard English, except where non-standard forms are required for effect or technical reasons. They *should be taught* about variation in the written forms and how these differ from spoken forms and dialects. Pupils *should be given a range of opportunities* to use the syntax and vocabulary characteristic of standard English in formal, and to distinguish varying degrees of formality, selecting *appropriately* for a task. They *should be encouraged* to relate their study of language to their reading and their previous linguistic experience, written and oral.

b. Pupils *should be encouraged to broaden their understanding* of the principles of sentence grammar and be taught to organise whole texts effectively. Pupils *should be given opportunities* to analyse their own writing, reflecting on the meaning and clarity of individual sentences, using appropriate terminology, and so *be given opportunities to learn about*:

- discourse structure
- phrase, clause and sentence structure
- words
- punctuation. [ibid: 24].

Despite the liberal packaging, and the plethora of ‘opportunities’ on offer, there could be no doubt about the prescriptive intent of ‘should’ for teachers and teacher educators. It was ‘accurate’ and ‘effective’ standard English rather than ‘correct’, ‘good’ or ‘proper’ English. But embedded in this politically correct phraseology was a declaration of

supremacy for ‘standard English’ and ‘standard’ grammar. What was, of course, missing, was any guidance on how to teach it. This would be largely left to staff development sessions and PGCE courses, whose remit was to focus on ‘method’, not theory. Given that most teachers and intending teachers had little experience of modern linguistics, there was a danger that they would fall back on a prescriptivist model of grammar teaching [Peim: 2000a:21-22]. Guidance would also come in the form of QCA publications such as ‘The Grammar Papers’ [1998] and ‘Not Whether but How’ [1999], whose title reveals an attempt to pull away from the ideological disputes of the 1990s and particularly the arguments over the rationales for explicit grammar teaching.

The principle rationale for re-introducing explicit grammar teaching was a utilitarian one: to improve pupils’ writing skills. This is made clear in ‘The Grammar Papers’, in which a substantial section is devoted to the repudiation of studies denying the relationship between grammar teaching and written performance [ibid: 21]. Arguments have continued, with later studies again refuting the connection [Wyse, 2001; EPPI English Review Group, 2004]. What is significant is that the debate has revolved around the issue of written performance, and that it has been conducted within a discourse which assumes skills teaching to be the main purpose of grammar teaching, if not English teaching itself. For sociolinguists the main purpose of acquiring a ‘metalanguage’ was ‘not seen as a means of improving performance, but as a kind of shorthand for discussing meanings in different structures’ [Riddle, 1982]. The analysis of varieties of [mainly standard] English had a role in the 1995 Curriculum, but it was a minor one. This reflects a major difference in the rationales for grammar teaching: for sociolinguists the main purpose of grammar teaching is investigating language; in the National Curriculum it is about producing it. Nevertheless, the construction of grammar in the National Curriculum is not a single, unitary one. It employs a discursive mix of personal growth, sociolinguistics, ‘skills’ and prescriptivism. These are all, to varying degrees, implicit in the rationales for grammar teaching which underpin the National Curriculum. They are made explicit in *The Grammar Papers*:

It is clear that.... explicit grammatical knowledge:

- is important in understanding how meanings are made and how

particular effects are achieved. Pupils who are able to articulate how language use and choice contribute to meaning and effect are more likely to be more responsive and critical as listeners and readers;

- is relevant to all written and spoken texts. Pupils' progress as language users depends on their increasing familiarity with and competence in, a wide range of forms and styles. Explicit grammatical knowledge enables them to recognise and understand the particular linguistic demands of different kinds of texts and contexts;
- is relevant to other subjects in the way that knowledge is constructed. Although each subject has its own vocabulary and technical concepts, explicit grammatical knowledge can help students use the language of the subject area appropriately, for example when describing events, reporting a process, or explaining what they have learned;
- provides a basis for the investigation and study of spoken language and how it relates to personal and social identity;
- provides an additional, more analytic dimension to the English curriculum which may appeal to those pupils, particularly boys, who are less interested in responses grounded in personal reaction;
- provides a basis for developing pupils' understanding of the differences between spoken and written English;
- is helpful in developing pupils' awareness of the grammatical features of their own writing. This is important when pupils are correcting and improving drafts [1998: 21].

This represents an even more complex mixture of discourses, apparently justifying Carter's [1990a] assertion that grammar teaching is applicable across all of Cox's 'five views' of English [above, p. 41]. It borrows from sociolinguistics a concern for spoken language and identity, as well as contextual relevance; from critical theory it draws on the idea of knowledge as 'constructed', while advocating a role for grammar in cross-curricular teaching. It even connects with the contemporary debate about boys' achievement in suggesting that they might prefer the more objective/rationalist approach offered by grammar. Here grammar is presented an antidote to the creative/reader-response approach of personal growth English, lending weight to the notion that subject English may be undergoing a process of masculinization [Green, 1993: 217].

1.11 English and grammar: continuing change, continuing tensions

Peim [2000a] has argued that the discursive confusion in official documents could work positively in that it could open up spaces for alternative approaches [22]. However, the Head of English who wrote a letter to the TES in 1999 found national curriculum English limiting rather than liberating:

Am I losing the plot? I went into a respected high-street bookseller recently to browse through the education books. I could find a maths section, a science section and sections for history, geography and modern languages; but the shelves where the English section used to be were populated by series after series of books on grammar teaching and how to teach for national tests. I looked in vain for a book that would help me to do what I love doing best: teaching English. Furthermore, is it just that I have become something of a dinosaur or was the recent English section in the 'Friday' magazine dominated by articles and reviews of books to do with grammar and knowledge about language? Where has my subject gone? Can anybody out there help me to find it please?²⁵

This Gradgrindian apparition of late 20th century English has to be read alongside other, more optimistic voices. Shortly before David Edwards' letter appeared, Anne Shreeve presented a discussion to NATE Conference proposing 'a new model' for English. Her summary of the aims of English reflects NATE's abiding loyalty to personal growth:

- valuing the unique identity of the individual
- respecting, celebrating and promoting understanding of a range of cultures
- valuing the importance of community
- understanding the nature of democracy
- recognizing the spiritual dimension

But this is a different model from Dixon's. English is now 'primarily about communication', which she glosses as 'creating and interpreting texts... spoken, printed,

²⁵ Letter to the Times Educational Supplement, 5th February 1999, from David Edwards, Head of English, Bishop's Stortford College, Herts.

media and electronic'. What seems to be emerging here is a move towards reconciling English-as-text with English-as-growth:

I want students to value what makes them unique and what they have in common with others; to understand themselves and be aware of the effect of this perception on how they view the world, so they will be aware of what they or other originators of texts are bringing to their creations. I want them to understand that creating a text is a powerful thing to do and to understand how they are influenced by the texts they read. [ibid:2]

Four years later Burgess, calling for just such a reconciliation, would characterise it as a 'synthesis' of linguistic and psychological perspectives [2002: 33]. Shreeve does not underestimate the difficulties. One of the questions she asks is: 'How do you present a model like this when people think of English as a mixture of, or only one of the following: literacy, literature, linguistics?' The debate continues, as versions of English teaching shift and change. My next section reviews existing studies on the constructions of English and grammar that trainees might bring to PGCE and begins to consider the implications for English teacher education.

Chapter 2: Contemporary Constructions of English and Grammar: Previous Research

An examination of previous studies of trainee teachers' perceptions of English and grammar gives an indication not only of the knowledge and attitudes that trainees might bring to grammar teaching, but also some insights into how their tutors might view the new curriculum prescriptions.

2.1 Trainee teachers' knowledge of grammar

Circular 4/98 [DfEE] specified the contents of initial teacher training courses to take effect from September 1999. To be eligible for Qualified Teacher Status, secondary trainees would need to be able 'as a minimum' to teach 'all the English specified in the pupils, National Curriculum for English at Key Stage 3' and, for 11-16 and 11-18 courses, 'all the English specified...at Key stages 3 and 4'. Those intending to teach post-16 would need to be assessed at the end of the course on their subject knowledge in relation to 'A' level English Language, Literature and 'related vocational courses pre- and post-16' [Annex F, pages 87-88]. From February 2001 entrants to PGCE courses were to be tested on their numeracy and literacy skills, including grammar.

In the section 'Trainees' knowledge and understanding of English' were listed the 'principles of spoken and written language as a system' that trainees would be required to 'know and understand'. These were 'lexis²⁶; grammatical; punctuation and textual':

- word classes and their functions in sentences;
- word order and cohesion within sentences
- construction of complex sentences to include a variety of clauses and phrases
- co-ordination and subordination in sentences.

[para. 28, p. 100]

²⁶ There appears some problem with the grammatical cohesion here. Arguably 'lexical' would be the more appropriate form, i.e. 'lexical principles'.

This was a traditional and somewhat limited definition of ‘grammar’. I intended to explore the meanings of grammar that graduates themselves brought to the PGCE course. In the meantime, there was plenty of evidence that they would be unfamiliar with even the basic grammatical concepts.

The first studies of trainee teachers’ knowledge of grammar were undertaken by researchers in primary education. David Wray’s [1993] analysis of a series of written assignments revealed that his primary trainees performed best when identifying basic word classes, particularly nouns and verbs, but struggled to use a metalanguage to describe changes in language function or to explain grammatical variation in standard and non-standard varieties. [61-2]

Two years later, Williamson and Hardman were more positive. Despite what they called ‘significant gaps’, they reported ‘a rather higher level of grammatical knowledge than some critics might have supposed’ [1995:117]. Of 99 primary trainees, most were able to pick out nouns, verbs and adjectives, half spotted pronouns and adverbs, though less than half could identify prepositions and conjunctions. They performed less well with clauses and phrases: ‘well over half’ could not identify the clause, and only a small minority the phrase. Only 22 could write a sentence including a subordinate clause and underline it. Only 14 students attempted a definition of ‘sentence’. On correlating scores with prior learning, the researchers found ‘some slight advantage’ for students who had had a linguistics component in their degree, but ‘very low scores’ for those who had not studied a foreign language at GCSE or above.

Williamson and Hardman’s view of their findings looks positively sanguine in comparison to Robertson et al [1998], who were dismayed when only 4% of their 110 primary trainees successfully completed a test on ‘parts of speech’:

We have become increasingly aware of how disadvantaged the students are who are unable to make explicit reference to particular language features. We have noticed that many students do not possess the metalanguage to be able to discuss language use and choices effectively [6].

The use of the traditional term ‘parts of speech’, as opposed to ‘word classes’, suggests that, unlike Hardman and Williamson, the authors did not have a background in modern linguistics. This is more apparent in a later study by Robert Jeffcoate [2000] who tested secondary English and Drama trainees in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the grammar course that he taught annually. He defended his use of traditional, transmissive teaching methods, on the grounds that ‘linguistics is a science and grammatical analysis a kind of mathematical operation’ [82]. Only half the group submitted evaluations, and of these, sixteen ‘passed’ and nine ‘failed’. Jeffcoate attributed the failures primarily to a mixed ability intake. Unlike Williamson and Hardman, he found that degree level linguistics made little difference to test performance:

For a disturbing number of PGCE students in the seven cohorts that I have taught, grammar constituted a major lacuna in their knowledge, as well as a source of considerable embarrassment to them. Only those who had taken GCE A level in a foreign language claimed to have done anything at secondary school beyond parts of speech, and even those who had studied topics like sociolinguistics and discourse analysis in their degrees sometimes could not tell a noun from a verb or a subject from an object. [75]

It appeared that teacher educators themselves did not necessarily agree either about what constituted ‘grammar’ or how to teach it. At the same time that Jeffcoate was instructing and testing his English and Drama trainees in Liverpool, Tony Burgess and his colleagues at the Institute of Education were using questionnaires to research trainees’ understanding of and feelings about grammar as part of the department’s own development of method training in this area [2000]. Surveying rather than testing revealed ‘a great range’ of subject knowledge among the 120 entrants to their PGCE, and even some of the language features that caused ‘concern’ [for example nominalisation, subordination, parenthetical commas] suggest an impressive breadth of language awareness. In fact, although the majority were literature graduates, two-thirds had done some prior language learning as part of their degree courses. Nevertheless only a third declared themselves ‘reasonably confident’ about teaching grammar and, importantly, for many this confidence did not extend beyond an implicit knowledge.

Trainees and their tutors were not alone in their uncertainties about teaching the grammatical elements of the national curriculum. The views of 137 teachers were surveyed between 1995 and 1997 as part of the research for The Grammar Papers [QCA 1998]. Among the issues that teachers were ‘uncertain’ about were the meaning of grammar, the relationship between implicit and explicit knowledge of grammar and grammatical terminology. They were most confident about teaching discourse structure²⁷ and, like the London Institute trainees [Burgess et al, *ibid*: 11] least confident about sentence-structure [QCA, *ibid*: 7].

The two papers [Burgess et al, 2000 and Turvey, 2000] from the Institute of Education are important not only for their researching of trainees’ prior knowledge of and feelings about grammar, but also for the authors’ reflections on the problems for trainees and tutors. For Anne Turvey, in the second of the papers, Circular 4/98, the draft Initial Teacher Training Curriculum from the Teacher Training Agency, had put ‘a chill in this provider’s heart’ by demanding that:

Where gaps in trainees’ knowledge are identified, providers of ITT must make arrangements to ensure that trainees gain that knowledge during the course and that *by the end of the course*²⁸ they are competent in using their knowledge of English during their teaching. [*ibid*: 145]

It is very likely that the difficulties experienced by trainees in handling this ‘knowledge’ were shared by their tutors, and that Burgess’s comment applied to many of those faced with teaching it:

Our students are confident users of language. They are skilled in reading and interpreting texts and in writing. Just for this reason it can be difficult to turn aside in order to engage the formal aspects of language and daunting to attempt to achieve a knowledge of language structure that is commensurate with their abilities in use [8]

²⁷ Here the meaning of ‘discourse structure’ is that of the [1995] English Orders: ‘the structure of whole texts, paragraph structure, how different types of paragraphs are formed, openings and closings in different kinds of writing’ [*The Grammar Papers*, QCA, 1998: 24], a definition more compatible with the teaching of literature and writing than ‘discourse analysis’, a branch of critical linguistics.

²⁸ Emphasis in original, DfEE Circular 4/98.

Time was also an issue for these PGCE tutors, especially in departments where discussion and reflection were considered essential to the training experience:

It sometimes seems as if we gather large numbers of intelligent people to initial training courses and, as the year advances, progressively deny them time to talk to each other. [ibid:16-17]

This was a gentle protest at the changing context of initial teacher training. Elsewhere there has been anger at the loss of autonomy in education departments in over recent years: the increase in time allocated to school experience and corresponding reduction in university learning; the emphasis on ‘skills’ and ‘knowledge’ over ‘theory’²⁹; the use of competency based assessments, and the prescribing of a curriculum for ITT to be followed in all education departments [Whitty, 1996; Wilkin, 1996; Calderhead and Shorrocks, 1997; Hartley, 1998; Furlong et al, 2000]. Seen from within this context, there is a sense that Burgess’s team are struggling against the odds to maintain a supportive learning environment, to encourage trainees both to acquire the knowledge they need and to reflect on the issues which accompany it.

For those teacher educators adopting a more pragmatic response to government policy on grammar teaching, the central issues were knowledge and teaching methods: the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ rather than the ‘why’. Myhill [2000] used a grounded theory approach to investigate the ‘misconceptions and difficulties’ encountered by secondary [year 8] and PGCE students in learning grammar. Unlike Hardman and Williamson, she found that for the two PGCE cohorts studying a second language was not always helpful, since it led to inaccurate assumptions about English [for example the number of tenses] and inappropriate use of terminology [‘pluperfect’, ‘conditional’] [155]. Both the school and PGCE groups had misconceptions about grammar ‘rules’. The most common examples were ‘every sentence must have a verb’ and ‘sentences should not begin with “and”’. Myhill was particularly concerned about her PGCE respondents’ insistence on the sentence-verb ‘rule’:

²⁹ This has been referred to elsewhere as ‘the de-intellectualization of teacher education’. [Wilson, J. [1989] *Oxford Review of Education*, 55, pp.111-120.]

worryingly... they adhered to the view from a standpoint of correctness, even though the group had explicitly studied the writing of a pupil who made effective use of a verbless sentence in a previous [non-grammar] session [155].

It seemed that teaching terminology and structure might prove easier than eradicating traditional attitudes.

2.2 Attitudes to grammar teaching

The mention of ‘grammar’ rarely provokes warm feelings among people educated in Britain, including most English teachers. David Crystal describes this antipathy as ‘a pervasive and deep-rooted mythology’ which sees grammar as too complicated for anyone outside academia:

In the popular mind, grammar has become difficult and distant, removed from real life, and practised chiefly by a race of shadowy people, [‘grammarians’] whose technical apparatus and terminology require a lengthy novitiate before it can be mastered. [1995: 190]

The authors of ‘Describing Language’, a book often used on introductory linguistics courses, concede that their subject has not been the most accessible to non-linguists, thanks partly to the appearance of ‘a whole range of theories and terminologies in recent years’ [Graddol et al, 1994]. But as far as grammar is concerned, the ‘mythology’ has its roots in collective memories of schooling:

The way grammar has traditionally been taught in schools in many parts of the world – almost as a matter of punishment than for any enjoyment of discovery and learning – has probably alienated generations of students. [ibid: 65]

It is impossible to determine whether the perception of grammar as ‘difficult’ in many of the studies cited above is real or ‘mythological’, though of course the perception of any subject as ‘difficult’ will undoubtedly pose problems for learners. Hudson, in his [1992] guide to grammar teaching, denied that school grammar was hard, citing the example of Germany, where ‘sophisticated grammatical concepts’ were taught to children across the ability range [4].

Although two of the studies I have described [Robertson and Burgess, above] differed markedly in their approach to the question of trainee teachers and grammar, they both reported negative feelings on the part of their respondents. Many of their trainees, like Jeffcoate's [ibid: 80] found grammar 'difficult' or 'confusing'. Trainees in both studies expressed concern about their lack of grammatical knowledge, but there was also evidence of indifference and even hostility to the idea of teaching it. Turvey remembered 'a heated outburst' during a seminar discussion at the London Institute about grammatical features, when a trainee demanded, 'Can you teach them? Would you want to?' [145]

The findings of Burgess and his colleagues reinforced their belief that the issues around grammar teaching went beyond acquiring knowledge, challenging though that might be. They understood that ideas about grammar are bound up with bigger questions about what constitutes 'English' as subject and pedagogy:

There is still uncertainty about the aims; and attempts to represent grammatical subject knowledge so often end up specifying features through technical terms as if a glossary were really the end product of grammatical knowledge. Neither a glossary view of grammar nor reduction of it to a set of teaching items, nor identification of grammar with teaching basic skills can be appropriate. The aims must start with children's learning at the centre, and balance this with an equivalent concern for theoretical knowledge amongst teachers... not an impossible goal for specialist English teachers in a graduate profession. [2000: 17]

But government policy on teacher education in recent years had engineered a shift away from theory [above, p.53], and in the national curriculum grammar was presented unequivocally in terms of pupil knowledge and skills. It might be possible for PGCE trainees to acquire a theoretical background, despite evidence of their decided preference for practice over theory [Wilkin, 1996; Furlong et al, 2000; Leach, 2000] and despite the current time restrictions for university-based sessions. But underlying Burgess's conclusion are other, more fundamental, issues: conflicting ideas of what constitutes 'English' as subject and pedagogy; and, driven by the requirements of the ITT curriculum, the task of transforming PGCE trainees into very different kinds of English teachers from those they might have expected to become. To clarify any potential conflicts, I needed to

identify the model or models of English most likely to influence graduates' decision to join the profession.

2.3 'Models' of English, language and grammar teaching

i. The importance of models

That subject beliefs, philosophies or ideologies are considered important is evidenced by the numerous studies of subject philosophies and cultures, from Lacey's still influential 1977 study, *The Socialization of Teachers*, to more recent work such as Hargreaves [1994], Goodson and Marsh [1996] and McCormick and Paechter [2001]. These studies are premised on two fundamental assumptions: that what constitutes subject knowledge is a political and cultural construct, and that therefore any investigation of subject disciplines must be contextualized historically. Bernstein's declaration that:

how a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control [1971: 47]

gave voice to a 'new wave' of critical educational theory in the 1970s. Since then, although the operations of power have become increasingly overt, particularly since the introduction of the national curriculum, theorists have striven to be less deterministic, showing how ideological conflict is never one-way, and always brings with it the potential for resistance [Foucault, 1978; Giroux, 1985; Apple, 2000]. Apple stresses the importance of classroom practice in mediating teaching materials. His comments are also relevant to teachers' management of the national curriculum 'orders':

teachers have a long history of mediating and transforming text materials when they employ it in classrooms. Students bring their own classed, raced, religious and gendered biographies with them as well. They, too, accept, reinterpret, and reject what counts as legitimate knowledge selectively. As critical ethnographies have shown, students [and teachers] are not empty vessel into which knowledge is poured. Rather than what Freire has called 'banking' education going on, students are active constructors of the meanings of the education they encounter.[2000: 58]

Apple's observations refer to teaching in general, but 'teaching the text' has special resonance for English teachers, and particularly for today's apprentice teachers, who would be expected to have had at least some experience of literary theory. Add to this, a sense that English has always resisted precise definition [Protherough and Atkinson, 1994] and it is unsurprising that it has generated more research in the area of subject philosophies than any other discipline. A number of reasons have been suggested for the popularity of such studies since the end of the 1980s. For Ball et al the influence of different models of English extends beyond the classroom into the construction of society itself:

Each version of English contains and informs a particular political epistemology, the learner is placed differently in relation to subject knowledge, their teachers and the state. Each produces different kinds of student [and citizens] with different kinds of abilities and relationships with peers. [1990: 80]

But changes in the conceptualization of English teaching were, consciously or unconsciously, part of a much broader and more profound intellectual revolution. Burgess [1993] explains how changes in the theorizing of English teaching in the second half of the 20th century had served to shift academic focus from the individual to the social, at the same time reinserting a sense of history into educational writing and research. His short paper necessarily conflates a number of important shifts in thinking from Marxism through various permutations of structuralism, reproduction and critical discourse theory, where critical theory intersects with poststructuralism, but his main concern is the effect of this 'critical shift' on conceptualizations of literacy and English. 'Literacy' is no longer a single, functional process of learning to read and write. This perception, what Street [1984;1994] has called 'autonomous literacy', has given way to an awareness of plurality and difference, of 'literacies' which are conditioned socially, historically and politically. Ethnographic studies of literacy practices in the 1980s [for example,; Scollon and Scollon,1981; Scribner and Cole, 1981; Brice Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983] have provided the empirical basis for debates on 'dominant literacy', 'school literacy', 'home' and 'community' literacies, and have contributed to the establishment of a 'politics of literacy' [Lankshear, 1997].

In the English classroom in the 1990s it was possible to identify many different kinds of literacy practices, but it appeared that most teachers' definitions of literacy did not extend beyond the traditional meaning of reading and writing skills, and, according to Lankshear, their practice remained untouched by theoretical advances:

...much remains the same. So much, in fact, one may wonder whether the most effective changes in literacy remain at the level of sociocultural literacy theory, unrealized to any significant and abiding sense in formal educational practices. [1997:4]

The arrival of the National Literacy Strategy in primary schools in September 1998 confirmed the pre-eminence of the literacy-as-skills model. When, two years later, the government announced plans to introduce a Key Stage 3 version, there was considerable opposition from teachers who saw the Literacy Strategy as a threat to the established pedagogy of personal growth through literature. Karen Gold voiced her disapproval in a letter to the Times Educational Supplement:

If this ghastly, functionalist model of literacy teaching is really going to do the trick in primary schools, we can live with it. But only because we promise ourselves, and our children, that on the secondary school horizon are English lessons dedicated to real poems and stories that you read, not just to read and write better, but because they send shivers down your spine. Threaten us with the literacy hour in secondary schools, however, and you may lose us altogether. [T.E.S 14.1.2000]

It appears that government intervention may well have served to clarify and strengthen teachers' beliefs about their subject. According to Marshall [2000a:4], it also stimulated the numerous studies of models of English which appeared in the last two decades of the century.

ii Trainee teachers' models of English

Since the 1980s there have been several studies of English teachers' conceptualizations of their subject and a smaller number relating to trainee teachers. That approaches to English teaching are variously presented as 'views', 'perceptions', 'beliefs', 'philosophies'

‘models’ or ‘ideologies’ is itself an indication of the range of ideological positions which can underpin contemporary English teaching. Nevertheless, most of the teacher surveys agree on two points: the multi-faceted nature of English teaching and the enduring popularity of the ‘personal growth’ model. Most also refer at some point, to the ‘five views’ on English teaching presented in the Cox Report [DES,1989], which formed the basis of the first National Curriculum for English [DES, 1990]: personal growth; cross-curricular; adult needs; cultural heritage and cultural analysis.

The Cox working group saw their ‘views’ as co-existing rather than conflicting, a liberal position disputed by later writers and researchers [Snow, 1991; Jones,1992; Davies, 1993; Poulson, 1996]. Davies, for example, posits a central divide between ‘cultural analysis’ and the ‘liberal/mainstream’ position of the other four ‘views’. Those studies that have attempted to quantify the relative significance of the Cox models for English teachers agree on the continued supremacy of the ‘personal growth’ model. This is the case whatever the research methods employed. Both Davies [1993] and Goodwyn [1992] used Likert scales to survey the relative degree of importance accorded to the models by teachers. Goodwyn found strong support for the liberal, personal growth position among his 46 respondents but, as Protherough and Atkinson had also found, ‘English’ was changing. In 1991 they examined the language and ‘underlying images’ in interviews with 110 teachers. Many teachers offered views of the subject corresponding with Cox’s models, but there was also an awareness of change and of ‘sharp divisions within departments’ and ‘clearly no consensus about what is to count as English’ [19].

Goodwyn’s conclusion was that English was shifting towards ‘a composite of personal growth and cultural analysis’ [8]. In his study cultural analysis had been second in order of popularity, but did not appear to be influential on practice [6]. He notes the continued dominance of literature in teachers’ responses, while ‘adult needs’ was least popular of the models, suggesting that the anti-utilitarian agenda which dates back to the Newbolt Report [1921] was still very much alive. Subsequently Goodwyn and Findlay found the cultural analysis model increasing in influence, though ‘personal growth’ and ‘response to literature’ were still pre-eminent [1999:7].

Of Cox's models, personal growth has proved the most difficult to define, partly because of the breadth [and often vagueness] of its agendas [Medway, 1990], partly because it has changed and shifted over three decades and partly because it overlaps with other models. Marshall's [2000] study was an attempt to more accurately describe the complexity in teachers', and later trainees', constructions of English. She used an innovative method of data collection: presenting respondents' with five descriptions of English teachers and asking them to select the one which most closely reflected their views. They were also invited to annotate their chosen text, showing where they agreed and disagreed. In explaining the five descriptions which comprise her 'Rough Guide', Marshall uses Davies's liberal humanist /cultural theorists distinction, but subdivides the first group into 'Old Grammarians', 'Liberals' and 'Technicians', and the second into 'Critical Dissenters' and 'Pragmatists'. In Marshall's typography, 'personal growth' overlaps not only with Arnoldian 'Grammarians' model and the personal/creative [her 'Liberals'] but also, at least potentially, with Critical Literacy [her 'Critical Dissenters']. She sees textual study as a vehicle both for personal transformation and social critique. That said, the distinction between Liberal Humanists and Cultural Theorists remains, since, 'those who see themselves as fostering personal growth in their pupils may be conservative or liberal but not radical if they avoid considering literature at any level beyond the impact it makes on the individual' [ibid:54]. However, her Critical Dissenter description contains no direct reference to the social transformation agenda that typifies most contemporary work on critical literacy [Giroux, 1985; Fairclough, 2001; Gee, 1996; Morgan, 1997].

Marshall's findings identify a broadly equal split between liberal humanists and cultural theorists [ibid: 72] which would seem to endorse previous findings [Goodwyn; Goodwyn and Findlay above] about the increasing influence of the critical model. However, along with the skill-oriented 'Technicians', they emerge as the largest of Marshall's five groupings [ibid:111], suggesting a stronger 'critical' element than in other studies. In her 'Rough Guide' portrait, Marshall acknowledges 'a hint of a movement away from the pre-eminence of literature within the English curriculum, and towards reconsidering language as an area of study', but there is a strong suggestion that this is marginal to the real business of English teaching [ibid: 110]. As I have observed above [p 34], some advocates

of critical literacy would see an incompatibility between a literature-focused curriculum and a critical literacy philosophy.

Despite this evidence of increasing radicalism among practising teachers, it appears that the ideas about English teaching that graduates bring to their PGCE are more likely to be conservative than critical. In Daly's [1997] study, 'enthusing others into sharing a love of literature' was repeatedly offered as primary motivation for wanting to become an English teacher.

A follow-up to Marshall's 'Rough Guide' survey attempted to track changes in trainee teachers' perceptions of English through PGCE courses in three institutions from the start of their course through to their first year of teaching. Each institution handled the research differently, and Marshall et al's write-up uses a mixture of 'Rough Guide' responses and case study interviews, rendering any overall conclusion difficult. However, in one cohort who completed the 'Rough Guide', there was clear evidence of change. Those most likely to alter their perceptions were the group initially classified as 'Liberals', which constituted 50% of the group at the beginning of the course, 20% at the end, and only three in number at the end of their first year of teaching [Marshall et al, 2001:192]. On the other hand, those identifying with the 'Critical Dissenter' position were least likely to change, a contrast that the researchers tentatively attribute to the vagueness of the 'Liberal' description and the comparatively stronger definition of the 'Critical Dissenter', as well as the influence of both placement schools and first teaching posts [ibid:193].

One change that Marshall et al do not comment on, is the increase in the number of 'Technicians' after the first year of teaching. No numbers are given, but of the cohort cited above, none had identified with this description in the initial survey. However, by the end of the first teaching year numbers had increased to the point where this category was, alongside 'Pragmatist', second in popularity only to that of 'Critical Dissenter' [ibid:192]. The 'Technician' perspective equates most closely to Cox's 'adult needs', the least popular formulation for Goodwyn's teachers in 1992, but one which constituted, along with 'Critical Dissenters', the most popular group in Marshall's [2000a] teacher survey.

Given that Marshall et al's trainees were in schools at least five years after the introduction of the 1995 National Curriculum, it would be surprising if some at least had not been influenced by the emphasis put on skills in the English Orders, as well as the more generally practical orientation they would have experienced in school. A more skills oriented approach might also facilitate the inclusion of grammar in trainees' developing construction of subject English.

There are many potential influences on PGCE English trainees' beliefs about their subjects, including their first degree [Lacey, 1977; Davies, 1992; Peel and Hargreaves, 1995], their PGCE environment [Davies, 1993; Marshall et al, 2001] and the schools in which they practise as trainees and qualified teachers [Bramald, Hardman and Leat, 1995; Marshall, 2000a; Peim, 2000a] as well as, of course, the moment in history when the research was undertaken and the different methods employed. Hardman and Williamson [1993] used Goodwyn's [1992] teacher questionnaire to investigate the views of 23 PGCE trainees. Their results replicated Goodwyn's to the extent that while the personal growth model was still predominant, a 'composite' of personal growth and cultural analysis seemed to be developing under the influence of media studies. This shift towards the cultural analysis model had already been predicted in a [1989] paper by six trainees from one of the Oxford PGCE groups involved in Davies's [1993] study [Daly et al, 1989]. They agreed about the potentiality for conflict in the Cox models, and believed that the most influential were English as literature/personal growth, adult needs and cultural studies. Though their views were not representative of the three cohorts in Davies's study, he did report [Davies 1992] 'a far higher proportion of respondents with preferences for the more progressive paradigm' than was apparent in the teacher responses. Daly et al's support for the critical model was emphatic:

As educators we have a duty to enable our students to understand the relations between language and society, culture and economics, language and power. In other words, we must develop goals, classroom approaches and materials which will transform English into the study of how and why our entire culture is produced, sustained, challenged and re-made [ibid:16]

In terms of the influence of cultural analysis on classroom practice, Hardman and Williamson's trainees differed from Goodwyn's teachers in that the trainees considered it 'very influential' in the classroom, alongside 'adult needs', which the teachers had judged least important of the Cox models. Hardman and Williamson observe:

Clearly the adult needs model has much more importance in the students' thinking, and is not seen in opposition to the personal growth model [1993:283].

This combination of pragmatism and romanticism reappears in a later study of the views of five trainees. Leach's [2000] analysis of pre-interview lesson plans, self audits produced two weeks into the PGCE course and a questionnaire completed during final teaching practice revealed strong support for a personal growth through literature model, but also a recognition of English as a service subject and one which 'equips pupils for life and success' [153]. Like Hardman and Williamson's trainees, they did not perceive any underlying conflict:

the implicit tensions between these three dominant views of English, as a service subject, a preparation for a successful life in material terms, and as giving access to experience through literature, are not usually recognised by students. [ibid: 153]

Leach also observed that, even though she would expect literature graduates to have had 'some acquaintance with literary theory'.... in the [pre-PGCE] lesson plan exercise it was clear that it 'played no part at all' in students' thinking about English teaching.' [ibid: 156]. This argues against any straightforward connection between the undergraduate experience of English and intending teachers' understandings of what constitutes English teaching in schools and supports Lacey's idea that university subject experiences constitute

a latent culture...from which skills and shared meanings are selected and put to work in new situations. These new situations transmute the old latent culture strategies and a new perspective emerges... a 'subject teacher perspective' [1977: 75].

Subject teacher perspectives for beginning teachers at the turn of the century were likely to undergo more profound shifts than perhaps at any other point in the history of English teaching. And one of the most problematic of these shifts would be to do with the re-inscription of grammar into English. The way that intending teachers adapted to this particular change would at least partly depend on their conceptualizations of language and language teaching.

iii. Models of language and language teaching

Approaches to grammar teaching can be understood in terms of three broad ideological positions: the traditional-prescriptive, the progressive-descriptive and the radical-critical. Crystal defines prescriptivism from the perspective of modern linguistics:

A term used by linguists to characterise any approach which attempts to lay down rules of correctness as to how language should be used... Linguistics has been generally critical of the 'prescriptivist' approach, emphasizing instead the importance of descriptively accurate studies of usage, and of the need to take into account sociolinguistic variation in explaining attitudes to language. [1995: 243]

Given the continuing and widespread influence of prescriptivism in the press, in schools and in popular thinking about language [Crystal, 1987: 2; Milroy and Milroy, 1991: 36], it would be surprising if it did not play a part in PGCE trainees' views on grammar. Prescriptivism is a set of beliefs rather than an approach to language study [Milroy and Milroy, *ibid*:1]. However, it is important not only because of its continuing ideological and pedagogical influence in schools, but because it illustrates the fact that the study of language, or any of its elements, can never simply be about gaining information or skills; that underlying any model of 'language' is an ideological representation of the world: how it is and how it should be.

Carter [1993] explains the implications of two different 'models' of language teaching: the traditional or prescriptivist and the descriptive model which forms the basis of sociolinguistics:

Debates about the state and the status of the English language are only rarely debates about language alone. English is synonymous with Englishness, that is, with an understanding of who the proper English are. A view of one standard English with a single set of rules accords with a monolingual, monocultural version of society intent on preserving an existing order in which everyone can be drilled into knowing their place. A view which recognises Englishes as well as English and which stresses variable rules accords with a multilingual, culturally diverse view of society. [ibid: 6]

Here prescriptivism is inseparable from Standard English, generally agreed to be the dominant variety of English, but still a focus of debate in linguistics and education³⁰. Ideological disagreements are reflected in the orthographical variations used by different interest groups: In capitalizing ‘Standard English’, sociolinguists are able to present it as a subvariety or social dialect of English [Bex and Watts, 1999: 9]. Reduce the ‘s’ and ‘standard English’ can signify not only a specific variety, but also the [one] standard, a measure of quality for language use and language users. Hence its central role in the construction of content, pedagogy and assessment in the National Curriculum [Goodson and Medway, 1990: xiii].

Graddol [1994a] uses a more detailed theoretical framework to show how the ‘models of language’ employed by linguists have embodied different notions of communication and therefore different approaches to teaching language and literacy. Graddol equates a structuralist conception of language with a transmissive pedagogy, where knowledge, often in the form of prescribed ‘rules’, is passed from the teacher’s head into the pupil’s head. A sociolinguistic approach insists that all language varieties are equal, and gives validity to non-standard Englishes and community dialects as well as to Standard English. Teachers operating within this model will focus on variation according to context and use, and their method will be descriptive rather than prescriptive. In Graddol’s third, postmodern, model, meanings are not fixed, but fluent and shifting. They are created not by individuals but through discourses, which position and continually re-define ‘the self’. For advocates of critical literacy [Freire, 1972; Kress, 1995; Gee, 1994; Lankshear, 1997; Morgan, 1997] teaching and learning should be aimed at uncovering and resisting the negative impacts of ideologically-driven language practices as part of an agenda for social

change. Postmodernism has to date had minimal influence on English teaching in schools [1999a], although critical discourse analysis appears in topics about ‘language and power’ in A’ level English language programmes and in simplified form [usually in relation to gender and language] in English language textbooks for younger pupils.³¹

	Models of English	Models of Language and Literacy	Grammar and Pedagogy
L I B E R A L H U M A N I S T	Utilitarian/skills 1. ‘Adult Needs’	Structuralist/Functional Language as unitary: homogeneous rather than pluralist	Prescriptive; transmissive Standard English as ‘correct’ or ‘good’ English Writing rather than speech Possibly explicit
	2. Cross-curricular	Structuralist/Functional Genre-based: language in context	Transmissive Explicit Registers of written Standard English
	Cultural Heritage [1930s onwards]Cambridge influenced	Structuralist Language as unitary	‘Traditional grammar’: prescriptive/transmissive Explicit whole-class grammar lessons Focus on written Standard English
	Personal Growth [1960s onwards] London influenced	Sociolinguistic orientation: Language as plural, diverse; variation according to context, identity	Non-explicit pedagogy: individually focused rather than whole-class Valuing diversity; focus on pupils’ own [spoken and written] language, but importance of standard English as route to individual empowerment Interactive pedagogy Appropriateness and context in language use
P O S T M O D E R N	Critical/Cultural Analysis [1980s onwards] 1. Descriptive- critical 2. Liberationist	Poststructuralist: ‘Literacies’; meaning as multiple, negotiated, provisional; complexity; contradiction	Explicit teaching of grammatical features Metalanguage for analysis of text/discourse Often focused on manipulative features of institutional discourses, eg media Critique of Standard English as dominant variety Tendency to transmissive methods

Figure 1: Models of English, Language and Grammar Teaching

³⁰ See above, p. 42

³¹ Examples include Brownjohn and Gwyn-Jones, 1996; Mayne and Shuttleworth, 1996; Barton, 1999.

Figure 1 is an attempt to cross-reference models of subject English, language and grammar teaching in order to clarify some of the potential conflicts. The most obvious point of conflict is the interface between grammar and personal growth English, whose proponents have generally been antagonistic to explicit grammar teaching. While English from the 1960s onwards has emphasized diversity, equality and the importance of spoken language, all entirely compatible with sociolinguistic principles, explicit instruction in grammar remains philosophically at odds with an emphasis on individual expression in the classroom.

The potential for conflict is apparent in the discourse of a PGCE trainee cited in Davies's [1996] book *What is English?* Kathy's construction of English teaching is located clearly within personal growth pedagogy: the generation of enthusiasm; the importance of the teacher-pupil relationship; inspiration and openness rather than transmission of knowledge; the centrality of talk and reading for pleasure; process rather than programming; the nurturing of independent, critical thinkers:

The first requirement of the English teacher has to be to ensure that students can read and write, to make them literate. Beyond that point, I believe that *students should be actively encouraged to read for pleasure*, and should be provided with an adequate timetable for personal reading.... *English boundaries cannot be easily defined, and there appears to be no agreed body of knowledge*, so the English teacher can only make choices from what the outside world says and from their own inside beliefs which have been – inevitably – shaped by their own experience as students in English classrooms [134-5]..... I do know that English teachers need to be *flexible and responsive to change*, rather than relying on tried and trusted safe lessons – because *teaching, like learning, like literacy is a fluid process*.... Without it you are powerless, unable to get work, respect and to meet the demands of the world you are in. Well-educated students can see themselves progressing down the stream of knowledge leaving behind those who simply watch it all pass by them... *The English lesson is a language for life-raft that will begin by keeping students afloat*. Gradually ease that support away and students can move downstream as *autonomous free thinkers* [138]³².

Kathy's description of language and grammar teaching is quite different: a duty and a legislative requirement. 'Language skills' are only the 'basic rules', but they need to be

³² My italics.

taught carefully to avoid pupil alienation. ‘Grammar’ is perceived negatively, in terms of language errors:

My professional duty as an English teacher is to provide students with knowledge about language. The underlying assumption of the new National Curriculum Orders [1995] seems to be that without a fairly comprehensive grounding in vocabulary, grammar and sentence construction, no child will be able to communicate lucidly. My personal response is that whilst recognizing the importance of equipping students with *a set of basic language rules* I believe it is more appropriate to place grammar in the context of a general lesson rather than in isolation – an approach which often *confuses and alienates the students*. I have witnessed this grammar-softly approach being employed at Key Stage 3 and 4 levels and in both cases teachers use *a common mistake* found in students; writing such as paragraphing or misuse of commas, as a focus for a section of the lesson to good effect. [136]

There are elements here which stand in opposition not only to the ‘English Orders’, but also to the ‘new grammar’. I hoped to find out how other trainees viewed the changes taking place in their subject, and whether the historical and ideological tensions I have described would be reflected in their constructions of English and grammar teaching.

Chapter 3: Findings: Questionnaire 1

3.1 The survey

i. Management of the survey

A questionnaire survey was completed by 48 PGCE English students at Nottingham university in October 1998. A further four universities in the Midlands and North of England agreed to participate in the survey, giving a final total sample of 127.

The survey caused some anxious moments, and at, one point, a fear that there would be insufficient questionnaire returns from the crucial Nottingham group. However, thanks to the co-operation and persistence of the staff, most were completed and returned. Returns from the other universities varied in response time, largely because of differing programme schedules, but the final set of questionnaires was returned at the beginning of February 1999.

Questionnaire surveys generally, and especially postal surveys, will often encounter problems in terms of practical management and unpredictable return-rates, but some of the problems with this survey were context-specific. Pressure of time was undoubtedly a factor, both for PGCE staff and their students, with PGCE programmes tightly packaged in the space between blocks of school practice. Completing questionnaires is rarely a priority activity in any case, and a questionnaire on English grammar may not be the most exciting prospect for student-teachers. The difficulties I encountered may well be a result of errors in research methods or management: the questionnaire was neither quick nor easy, and its administration might have been more tightly controlled. However, the difficulties in data gathering might, even at this early stage, be indicative of student teachers' feelings about grammar and grammar teaching.

ii. The interview group

Of the Nottingham group, 13 respondents volunteered to participate further in the research, and they were invited to hour-long semi-structured interviews in December 1998 and

January 1999 to clarify and develop questionnaire responses and to discuss relevant issues arising from school experience during the first term.

A total of 127 questionnaires were returned, the main group of 48 from Nottingham, and the others divided as follows:

Birmingham:	21
Loughborough:	10
Newcastle	22
Sheffield	26

Tables 1 and 2 give the age and gender profiles of the whole sample of 127 secondary PGCE English students, the Nottingham sub-sample and the interview group. The interview group was self-selected, and therefore could not be expected to be representative of either the Nottingham group or the total sample. However, although no generalisations can be made in respect of this interview group, a comparison of the three profiles may indicate issues of validity.

iii. Comparison of group profiles

a. Age

In the total survey sample, 61% of the students were in the youngest age category, 20-24, though a significant proportion [25%] were aged 25-29. Numbers in this category were higher both for the Nottingham group as a whole and for the interview sample. In all cases there were fewest numbers in the 35-45 category with only one student in the Nottingham group and 9 [7%] in the total sample.

	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-45
Total sample	61	25	7	7
Nottingham sample	52	33.5	12	2 [1]
Interview sample	46	38	8	8

Table 1: Age profile of respondents: as percentages of each survey sample

b. Gender

Gender ratios in the two largest groups were almost identical, with twice as many female as male students. There were proportionately fewer male students in the interview group.

	female	Male
Whole sample	69	31
Nottingham sample	67	33
Interview sample	77	23

Table 2: Gender profile of respondents: as percentages of each sample group

c. Ethnic origin

Respondents were asked to self-designate for ethnic origin. While this can present problems in categorisation, it is more straightforward in terms of the questionnaire design, and it forestalls some of the anxieties that many people experience in providing such information. However, it does result in a somewhat idiosyncratic set of categories which need further interpretation. A first calculation showed that 60% of respondents were White. However, if the categories ‘White’, ‘White Irish’, ‘European’, ‘English’ and ‘English/Italian’ were aggregated, the proportion became 73%. The category ‘British’ is more problematic, since people of both of Black and Asian origins often self-designate as British. However, if people in this group were white, the total percentage of white respondents would increase to 88%. While this aggregation of categories is a matter of induction and commonsense rather than statistical accuracy, there are two points to be made. Firstly, these figures do seem to reflect a pattern in recruitment to PGCE English courses across the country. This is an important issue in any study of English teaching, and especially in the area of English language teaching, not only because there are many pupils whose first language is not the language of the school, but also because many of those pupils will have bilingual skills which can be used positively and productively in the English classroom. Of course, there is no reason why a predominantly white teacher education course should not address these issues, but it might be less likely to be seen as a priority.

My second point concerns the diverse and often apparently defensive response from trainee teachers to a question on ethnic origin. In addition to the selection of ‘British’ and ‘English’ as descriptors of ethnic origin, more idiosyncratic designations included ‘Caucasian’, ‘White Anglo-Saxon Protestant’, ‘East Anglian’ and ‘Geordie’. Such designations at the very least suggest a lack of awareness of the importance of ethnic monitoring in education and could be construed as conscious avoidance of race issues.

3.2 Trainees’ prior learning of grammar at school

The overwhelming majority of students in the study were educated in the state system, with only 7 educated in independent primary schools and 16 in independent, grant-maintained or voluntary aided secondary schools. One received his secondary education in Germany, in a state gymnasium³³. Of those educated in state schools, the majority attended co-educational comprehensives. Fifteen [14%] attended state grammar schools, of which 11 were single-sex. Four of the five grant-maintained or voluntary-aided schools were coeducational.

Given that grammar teaching has been associated with an older, more formal tradition of English teaching [Michael, 1987; Cameron, 1995], it might be assumed that children attending independent, and possibly single-sex schools might be more likely not only to have been taught English grammar, but to have been taught more formally and explicitly. Students were asked a number of questions about their learning of grammar at school:

- whether they had studied grammar at school;
- at what stages [primary, secondary and ‘A’ level];
- what they were taught;
- what teaching methods were used at secondary [11-16] stage;
- how they felt about grammar at school.

³³ Nick, part of the interview group

Some found it difficult to remember, especially at the primary stage, and this is understandable, particularly when nearly 40% were aged 25 or over. It could be particularly difficult to remember if grammar was not taught explicitly, and it is also possible that respondents with negative memories of grammar would be more likely to recall their feelings. That said, a significant proportion of students reported that they had been taught some grammar at school. Seventy-four [58%] of the respondents recalled doing some English grammar at primary school. Of these, 65 [88%] were at state primary schools, four at independent or prep schools and two at voluntary aided primaries.

Grammar at primary school

Table 3 shows that the most commonly taught elements at primary school were word classes, and particularly nouns, verbs and adjectives. The pattern appears to hold for those attending independent primary schools, with only one of the four reporting additional categories [agreement and types of sentence], though the number of independent primaries represented here precludes any generalisations. Some ex-state primary school pupils, however, did report quite substantial amounts of grammar in addition to word classes. Ten recalled learning differences between speech and writing, eight word formation, six attitudes to language, and one even modal verbs. The most substantial ‘package’ recalled was from a student who attended a voluntary aided primary school, and who reported being taught 17 out of the 23 categories.

elements taught in primary school	numbers reporting	% of those taught primary grammar
nouns	71	97
verbs	71	97
adjectives	67	92
adverbs	40	62
pronouns	32	44
conjunctions	20	27
prepositions	17	23
tenses	16	22
sentence structure	19	26

Table 3: Grammatical elements most commonly taught at primary school

What is not clear at the primary stage is the extent to which the teaching of grammar was explicit. Question 4 would attempt to explore this issue in relation to secondary schooling.

Grammar at secondary school

Table 4 shows that 74 [58%] of the PGCE students recalled being taught some grammar at secondary school: 52 [58%] of those who went to state comprehensives and 5 out of the 11 who went to independent schools [45%]. Those attending state grammar schools appeared most likely to have been taught grammar [80%] and this is slightly more likely [82%] for single sex grammar schools. Overall, however, single-sex schools were not statistically more likely to teach grammar, with 59% of those attending co-educational schools and 55% attending single-sex schools having been taught grammar.

type of school where grammar taught	co-ed		single sex		totals	
	no.	%	no	%	no	%
state comprehensive	50	61	2	25	52	58
state grammar	3	75	9	82	12	80
grant maint./vol aided	2	50	1	100	3	60
independent	1	50	4	44	5	45
convent			1	100	1	
German gymnasium	1				1	
totals	57	59	17	55	74	58

Table 4: Learning of grammar at secondary level according to type of school attended

Again, the elements of grammar most frequently recalled are the word classes [nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns and conjunctions] by 50% or more of those who remembered being taught grammar at secondary school [Table 5 overleaf]. But the range of categories recalled is noticeably broader than for primary schooling. Next in frequency to the basic word classes comes sentence structure. The elements least likely to be taught were modal verbs, attitudes to language, word formation and passive verbs. The list of grammatical categories was compiled from the National Curriculum for English [DfE,1995] and the Grammar Papers [QCA, 1998], and are the elements of grammar that English teachers are now expected to teach at key stages 3 and 4.

category	%	category	%	category	%
nouns	65	modal verbs	12	attitudes to language	20
verbs	65	passives	22	texts/analysis	24
adjectives	67	sentence structure	51	diffs between speech & writing	42
adverbs	59	types of sentence	30	change in language	30
pronouns	54	phrases	32	formal and informal usage	30
conjunctions	50	clauses	27		
prepositions	43	standard and non-standard Eng	23		
tenses	47	dialects	27		
agreement	30	word formation	22		

Table 5: Grammatical categories taught at secondary school. [as percentages of those taught grammar at 11-16]

It appeared that attendance at grammar or independent school did not necessarily mean more grammar teaching. Of the 29 students who recalled being taught ten or more elements, 20 [69%] went to state comprehensives, five [17%] went to state grammar schools and four [14%] to independent schools. Comparison with the attendance profiles in Table 4 gives a different picture, showing that these figures represent 38% of those taught grammar in state comprehensives, 42% in state grammar schools and 80% in independent schools. However the numbers for independent schools in particular are too small to be conclusive. Moreover, the four students who recalled the highest number of categories all attended state comprehensive schools.

Grammar at ‘A’ level

Table 6 shows the English-related ‘A’ levels studied by the PGCE students, and the number recording some learning of grammar as part of their course.

Overall, 37 [29%] of the respondents recorded having learnt some grammar as part of their ‘A’ level programmes. These figures include some anomalies which may have arisen from a lack of distinction between explicit and implicit grammar teaching at this stage in the questionnaire. They may also reflect respondents’ impatience with the amount of detail requested. One respondent reported that he had studied all aspects as part of his Literature

‘A’ level, but the fact that he completed very little of the questionnaire suggests that he was a reluctant participant whose answers should be treated with caution.³⁴

A levels	total nos	nos involving grammar learning	% involving grammar learning
1.English Literature	87	16	18
2.Combined Literature/Language	21	13	62
3.English Language only	5	3	60
4.Eng. Language + Communication Studies	1	-	ag. % = 61%
5.English Literature + Communication Studies	5	3	
6.Language and Literature [2 courses]	3	2	
7.‘English’	2	-	
8. no A level English	3		
Total	127	37	29

Table 6: Grammar learning in A level English courses

Although 16 of the ‘Literature’ group reported having studied grammar at ‘A’ level, six ticked less than five boxes and only three ticked more than ten, including the one already mentioned. Of the combined Language/Literature group four ticked less than five boxes and none more than ten.

It is surprising that four of the nine students who had studied English Language at ‘A’ level appeared not to have done any English grammar. All the major English Language syllabuses have, since their introduction, included the systematic study of grammar. However, three of the five people who studied English Language as their only English ‘A’ level [and who attested to having studied grammar] recorded the highest number of categories learnt, an average of 21. It is less surprising to find that taking a combined Language/Literature ‘A’ level did not necessarily involve grammar study. This was not required for AEB 063, one of the most popular of the combined English syllabuses at the time.

³⁴ This respondent also indicated that he had studied every aspect of language study in question C4.

Although responses varied widely across all the ‘A’ level groups, presumably reflecting the range of English courses available at this level, those whose ‘A’ level had included English Language study were, as expected, more likely to have studied grammar. A comparison of the Literature group with the aggregated Language and Language/Literature groups shows that while 18% of the Literature-only group had studied grammar, the proportion for those who had studied English Language was 61%.

Aspects of grammar learnt at ‘A’ level

While those who remembered learning grammar at primary and secondary stages were more likely to have mentioned word classes, at ‘A’ level a significantly higher proportion ticked the boxes which specified aspects of English language which might feature in text analysis or discussion of language issues [Table 7]

category	%	category	%	category	%
nouns	15	modal verbs	18	dialects	51
verbs	15	passives	18	word formation	42
adjectives	18	sentence structure	36	attitudes to language	60
adverbs	18	types of sentence	30	text/discourse anal.	57
pronouns	21	phrases	30	diffs between speech & writing	66
conjunctions	18	clauses	27	change in language	70
prepositions	18	St. and non-St English	42	formal & informal usage	73
tenses	21				
agreement	21				

Table 7: Grammar-related elements taught at ‘A’ level [percentages of those who were taught grammar at ‘A’ level]

The final seven categories in column 3 represent those aspects of English language which might be drawn on in discussion, or for textual analysis. It is not clear whether these activities would involve the explicit use of grammatical categories, and the relatively small numbers ticking basic word classes might suggest that grammatical terminology was not generally used, at least in Literature.

It is clear that, contrary to popular belief, a good deal of grammar teaching had been taking

place in secondary schools in the last two decades. However, since the expectation was now that grammar should be taught explicitly, using precise terminology, it was important to examine not only what intending teachers themselves were taught, but how they were taught and how they felt about learning grammar.

The teaching of grammar at secondary school

Question 4 asked: *How was grammar taught at secondary level?*

Eighty-three student teachers answered this question. For most grammar was either integrated within the teaching of English [40%] or partly integrated and partly taught in separate lessons [41%]. Only one student, from a co-educational comprehensive, reported being taught only in separate lessons. Eighty-one percent said they were taught ‘as and when the teacher thought it necessary’, though for most this would be in ‘whole class’ lessons, only two remembering grammar being taught only to individuals.

A majority of those answering this question recalled the use of grammatical terms, in other words the explicit teaching of grammar [60%]. This appears directly at variance with the belief that grammar had not been taught explicitly in schools in recent years [Wray, 1993]. It is here also that a difference emerged in relation to types of school. Fifty-two percent of those learning grammar in comprehensive schools were taught using grammatical terms, as opposed to 83% and 80% of those in grammar and independent schools respectively. Similarly for the use of grammatical exercises, with 65% of the comprehensive group, 83% in grammar schools and 80% in independents. The latter were also statistically more likely to use drills [80% as opposed to 15% [9] in comprehensives and 17% in grammar schools. On the other hand only 8% of those attending grammar schools remembered games being used to teach grammar, while 27% of the comprehensive school group recalled this method. Rote learning was recalled by a small percentage of students [9], and, again, this was statistically more likely to be used at independent schools and grammar schools [29%, or 5 out of 17]. Parsing was recalled by only four students, two of whom attended comprehensive schools. This analysis of methods might indicate a more formal approach to grammar teaching in grammar schools particularly. However, the numbers of students who

were taught grammar in independent or grammar schools were very small [12 for grammar schools and five for independents], so, it would be unsound to generalise.

There was general agreement in a further three areas: 90% of those answering this question recalled grammar being used for the correction of errors in writing, and for 37 [44%] it was used in correcting both writing and speech; for 57% grammar meant standard English only, with a significantly smaller proportion recalling its application to other dialects and varieties. Few respondents recalled additional methods of grammar teaching, though an ex-grammar school pupil did remember copying out grammatical rules and non-standard variations into an exercise book. The memory was not apparently a positive one.

Feelings about grammar at secondary school.

Of the 81 responses to this question, 13 [16%] were positive, 12 [15%] felt ‘okay’ or indifferent, 6 couldn’t remember, but 50 [62%] had negative memories. The negative responses fell into two main categories: those who saw grammar as ‘difficult’ and those who were bored.

Negative feelings

50% of the negative responses used the words ‘boring’, ‘tedious’, ‘dull’ or ‘irrelevant’. Typical examples included:

Exercises used were archaic, and seemed to make no sense.

Boring. English lessons improved when we stopped doing it.

Very, very dry when not integrated into the study of literature.

Not enough fun.

Twenty-four [48%] remembered grammar as ‘difficult’, felt ‘confused’ about technical terminology or felt that they ‘didn’t know enough’. While one described himself as ‘mystified’, others expressed strong personal feelings:

I was capable of using correct grammar but found it difficult to label or explain... I always felt unsure.

Unconfident and pretty ignorant. My lack of grammatical knowledge became increasingly painful as time went on. My ignorance felt like a bad secret. Eventually I taught myself grammar and now feel confident³⁵.

A few responded very emotively, describing themselves as ‘scared’, ‘terrified’ ‘hated it’. However, not all students wanted to dispense with grammar: three would have liked more grammar lessons:

Worried - unhappy in case I made mistakes. I would have liked more structured grammar lessons.

I never felt very confident with the ‘technical terms’, because we didn’t cover them in much detail.

If somebody asked me to parse a sentence today I would be terrified!

Three respondents thought grammar had been ‘badly taught’, while one recalled the ambivalent attitude of teachers:

Confused as to why we were being taught it at all. As if teachers were teaching it under protest.

Positive feelings

The 13 students who felt positive about school grammar came from a cross-section of schools with some variation in teaching methods, though only three did not use grammatical terms. In only two of these cases would students have liked more explicit teaching. One from an independent school said:

I loved grammar, but there was no provision in school, so I did English Language and Linguistics at university to become an English teacher and fill the gap in English teaching.

Another ex-independent school pupil remembered learning grammar only in modern

³⁵ Jon, interviewed later [Chapter 6]

language lessons:

I transferred skills from Latin and French. I wished that English grammar had been taught similarly.

Specific reasons for feeling positive about grammar fell into three categories: those who found it ‘interesting’ [2], those who found it ‘easy’ [5] and those who enjoyed it. Three had found it easy because they were confident in being able to write ‘correctly’. For two students only, grammar at school was an enjoyable intellectual exercise. An ex-grammar school pupil [aged 38] remembered being taught very formally in the first year of school and:

actually quite liked knowing the names for things and understanding how they fit together.

One final very positive response, which will be discussed in more detail in the analysis of interview data³⁶, was from Nick, who had received the most formal of grammar tuition in a state gymnasium in Germany. For him, grammar was ‘an intellectual sport’:

I loved grammar since I viewed it as an intellectual sport. I got the kind of enjoyment out of it that other people get from playing chess.

Is there a gender issue in grammar learning?

The ‘Grammar Papers’ in listing the reasons for teaching grammar explicitly, suggest that it might appeal to boys because of its more ‘analytical’ approach’ [QCA, 1998:21]. There was no real evidence in this study to suggest that this was the case. Though 20% of those feeling positive about school grammar were male, as opposed to 14% of the women, there were only 13 definitely positive responses in all. There were considerably more negative responses, but no evidence of gender difference, with 59% of the women students and 64% of the men responding negatively. Those who felt ‘ok’ or ‘indifferent’ were equally divided [11% women; 12% men].

³⁶ Chapter 6.

How did respondents feel about English generally?

This question revealed definite differences in students' feelings about school grammar and their response to English as a whole. It is unsurprising, of course, that the overwhelming majority of trainee English teachers enjoyed English at school, but it is also clear that many excluded the study of grammar from this general approval. Of the 50 negative responses to school grammar, 42 [84%] felt positive about English as a subject. For eight [19%] of these, 'English' was 'loved', in one case 'with passion', while 50% [21] expressed their feelings more moderately in terms of 'pleasure' and 'enjoyment'. Just one added that it was also 'useful'.

It appeared that for a significant number of these trainee English teachers memories of school grammar contrasted sharply with feelings about English as a school subject, that they embodied very different meanings. This may have implications for PGCE trainers. Even though respondents were recalling experiences from two, sometimes three decades ago, these memories were often forcefully expressed and could be expected to have at least some impact on beginning teachers' approach to grammar teaching.

3.3 Trainees' prior learning: first degree and TESOL

The 127 respondents had come to their PGCE courses with a variety of first degrees. The largest group [47, or 37%] had graduated in English Literature, but almost a quarter [29, or 23%] had taken English Language and Literature. A similar number [26 or 20%] had taken a combined course with English, seven specified 'other English' degrees³⁷, while 15 had taken a subject other than English. Only three had taken a degree in English Language. Eleven had completed a Masters and two a doctorate.

Fifty-six student teachers in the survey [44%] reported having studied grammar prior to starting their P.G.C.E. course. Chart 1 shows the types of first degree gained by the group as a whole and the percentage of students within those categories who had done some

³⁷ One respondent who ticked the 'Other English' box had taken an 'English Studies' degree with a significant language component, and was therefore included in the 'Language and Literature' category.

grammar study. It includes the group of 11 students who had gained a qualification in teaching English as a second language. Because it was not always clear whether these students had studied grammar as part of their degree course or as part of TESOL or both, the chart may suggest slightly more grammar learning overall than was actually the case.³⁸

As expected, a high proportion of those taking English language-based programmes had studied grammar: all three English Language graduates and those with TESOL training, together with 83% of those who took a degree in English Language and Literature. Twelve of the 47 English Literature graduates [25%] had studied some grammar, as had six of the eight students specifying ‘other English’. The relative depth and breadth of their study were revealed in Question C4, where respondents were asked to list those areas of study in which grammar was a component.

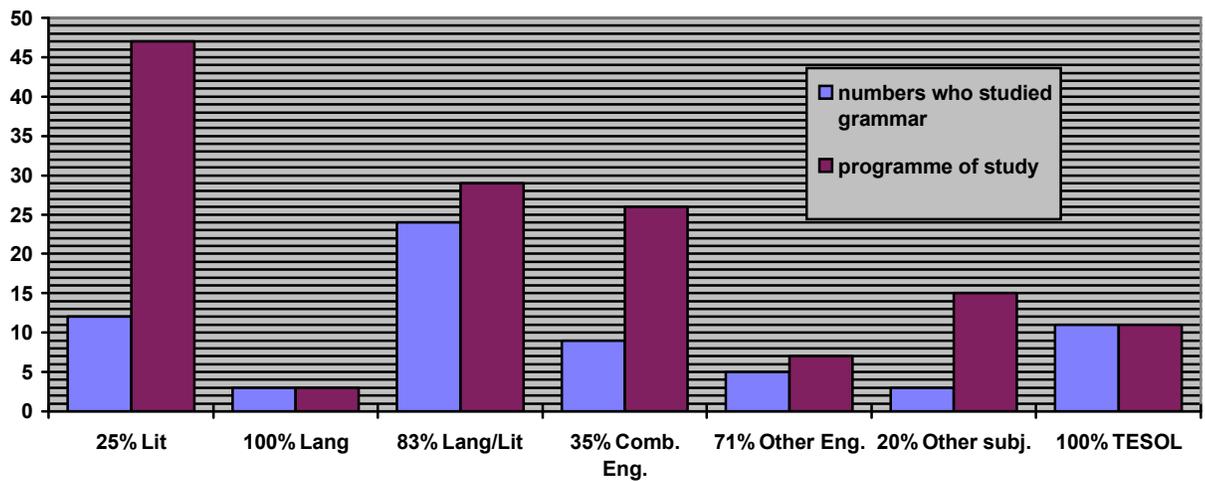


Chart 1: Respondents who studied grammar within degree programme and/or TESOL

³⁸ Though a focus on grammar would be expected in most TESOL courses. Because those student teachers with a TESOL qualification were distributed across a range of English degree courses, the results in any single set are not significantly skewed.

The study of grammar in trainees' degree courses

Table 8 shows the grammar-related aspects in respondents' degree courses. This question was important for two reasons: firstly it indicated the amount of grammar studied at this higher level, and therefore the potential extent of trainees' knowledge; secondly, some of the categories reflected different perceptions of language study which could correlate with student teachers' attitudes to teaching grammar.

categories	%	categories	%
modern English grammar	71	media texts	43
sociolinguistics	53	linguistic theory	77
Critical Language Analysis	39	systemic-functional grammar	27
word classes	52	transformational grammar	25
morphology	52	dialect study	55
phrase structure	59	children's language acquisition	50
clause & sentence structure	66	history of English	52
discourse analysis	68	pragmatics	27
stylistics	53	speech & writing	52

Table 8: Aspects of grammar as part of 1st degree or TESOL courses [percentages of the 56 who did some grammar study at this level]

The categories were selected according to three criteria:

1. requirements of the National Curriculum and I.T.T. Curriculum relating to knowledge about language: *modern English grammar, word classes, morphology, phrase structure, clause and sentence structure, discourse analysis, media texts, dialect study, history of English, speech and writing, stylistics*³⁹;
2. those areas of English language study which represent different strands in modern linguistics and which also encode different ideological perspectives on English language teaching: *sociolinguistics, dialect study, pragmatics, critical language analysis, discourse analysis, media texts*;

³⁹ Stylistics is not explicitly mentioned in either of the English Orders [1995; 1999]. However, the skills required for the analysis of literary texts suggest an approach very similar to that of stylistics. [DfEE 1995, p. 22]

3. additional topics in linguistics which were likely to involve grammar study and which are included in *The Grammar Papers* [QCA 1998]: *linguistic theory; systemic-functional grammar, transformational grammar, children's language acquisition, pragmatics.*

There is inevitably some overlapping here, and while it is important to remember that no approach to teaching is ideologically neutral, only tentative assumptions can be made about the ideological orientation of language courses. The category 'modern English grammar' would be a useful indicator of respondents' knowledge about the grammatical structures of English, but while most courses on 'modern grammar' may be expected to adopt a descriptive rather than a prescriptive approach, this could not be assumed, especially if it was a TESOL course. Categories 2 and 3 in table 8 are more directly indicative of particular approaches to language teaching, and can be correlated with sets of beliefs about English teaching⁴⁰: *sociolinguistics*, along with *dialect study* and *pragmatics* can be related to the descriptive tradition in linguistics which emphasizes variation and diversity in language use. This approach would be compatible with the 'empowerment' rationale which predominates in English teaching today. *Critical Language Analysis, discourse analysis and media texts* are intended to denote a more radical or political approach to language teaching, corresponding to Cox's 'cultural analysis' and connecting to the tradition of critical linguistics.

Answers to this question do need to be treated with a degree of caution, because interpretations may vary, and any assumptions about beliefs and attitudes based on this data will be problematic unless carefully correlated with additional information from the respondents. The potential for misinterpretation is most evident in the categories 'Critical Language Analysis' and 'Discourse Analysis'. Respondents might associate these terms with either linguistic or literary studies, where they are likely to reflect both different methods and different ideological perspectives. For Carter [1995], both⁴¹ refer to relatively new fields of language study in which linguistic analysis is used to examine the

⁴⁰ See above, p. 66.

⁴¹ He uses the term 'critical linguistics' for 'Critical Language Analysis', the term preferred by Fairclough [1989, 1992]

ideological meanings of spoken and written language, with particular emphasis on public and media texts. My use of capital letters for ‘Critical Language Analysis’ was intended to foreground this meaning, but some respondents may have read it as ‘literary criticism’ or ‘critical appreciation.’ The term ‘discourse’ may also be problematic, since, as Carter notes [ibid:39], it is used in a variety of ways and often as a substitute for the generic ‘written or spoken text’. If respondents assumed this ‘neutral’ definition, again, any assumption about their ideological perspectives would be untenable unless clarified in subsequent answers.

Variation in amount and types of grammar studied across degree courses and TESOL

In each category of degree programme there was wide variation in the number of grammar-related topics studied. Both Literature graduates and those with TESOL specified an average of eight topics, while the combined average for English Language and Language and Literature [combined] graduates was only slightly higher at 11. The numbers in each group were small and the responses so diverse across the 18 ‘topics’ that these mean scores have little significance. Nevertheless it is interesting to note the diversity of language topics available as components of an English degree. Many respondents confined their response to question C3 [*What were the courses or modules which included grammar?*] to ‘Linguistics’, but the answers do give an indication of the breadth of study now available within ‘English’. Seven of the 12 Literature graduates reported studying eight or more language topics. Although two of these had studied grammar as part of their RSA TEFLA course, one student reported having studied 17 of the 18 topics as part of his degree in English literature. Language courses for the Literature group ranged from literature-based courses like ‘Shakespeare and the English Language’ [2] or ‘Linguistics, Style and Language, through single modules in linguistics, to one very detailed programme including 17 of the topics in a study of ‘Language and Text, Linguistics, Oral communication, Education, Language and Learning.’ Other frequently cited modules were ‘Modern English Language’, ‘Sociolinguistics’, ‘History of English’, ‘Stylistics’ and ‘Semantics’, while individual students had taken modules in ‘Lexicography’, ‘Structuralist Theories’, ‘Halliday’s Functional Grammar’, ‘Language and Gender’ and ‘Language and Ideology’.

The category, ‘modern English grammar’ was fairly unambiguous, and a high proportion [71%] of the group studying grammar at this level ticked this box⁴². A slightly higher proportion, 77% [43] had studied linguistic theory, 53% [30] sociolinguistics and 55% [36] dialect study. Sixty-eight percent of the group of 56 [38] said that they had studied discourse analysis, but only 39% [22] said they had done Critical Language Analysis. The areas least likely to have been studied were systemic-functional grammar, transformational grammar and pragmatics.

Charts 2a to 2h show the number of students who studied specific grammar -related topics as part of English Literature, English Language/Language and Literature⁴³, combined English and TESOL courses⁴⁴.

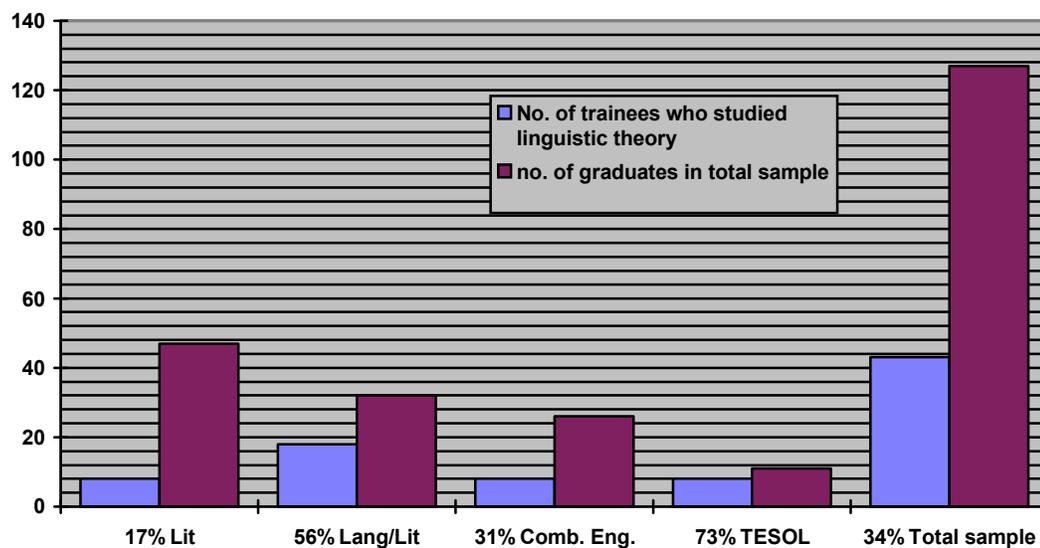


Chart 2a: Proportions of trainees who studied linguistic theory as part of their 1st degree or TESOL course

⁴² Table 8, above.

⁴³ Since there were only 3 English Language graduates, these are aggregated with the Language and Literature group.

⁴⁴ The categories ‘Other English’ and ‘Other subject’ were too small and too diverse to warrant inclusion in this analysis.

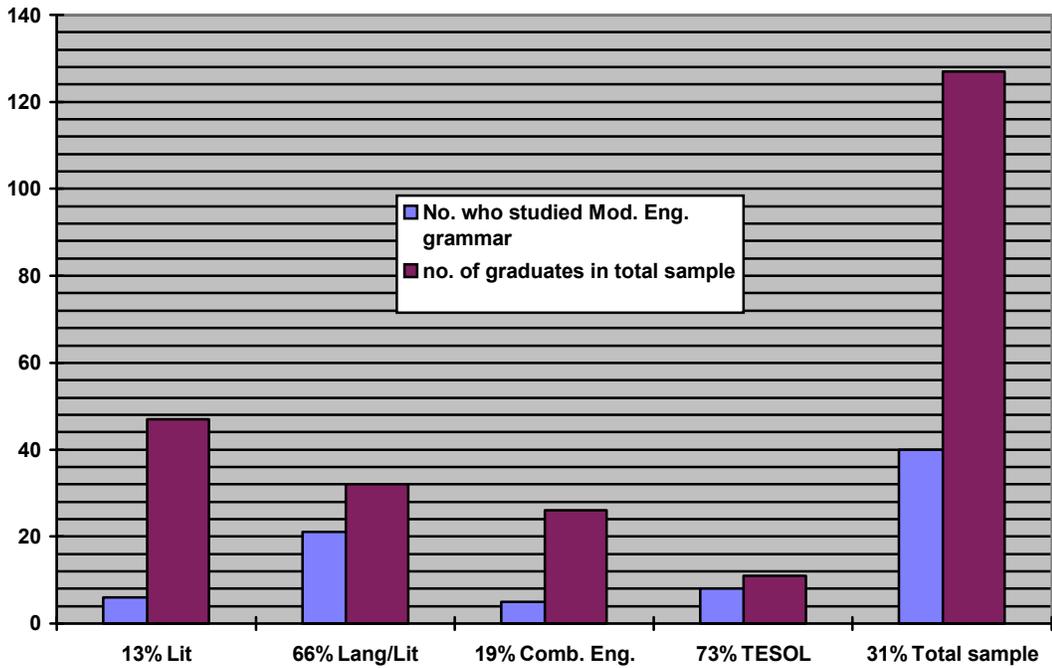


Chart 2b: Proportions of trainees who studied modern English grammar as part of their 1st degree or TESOL course

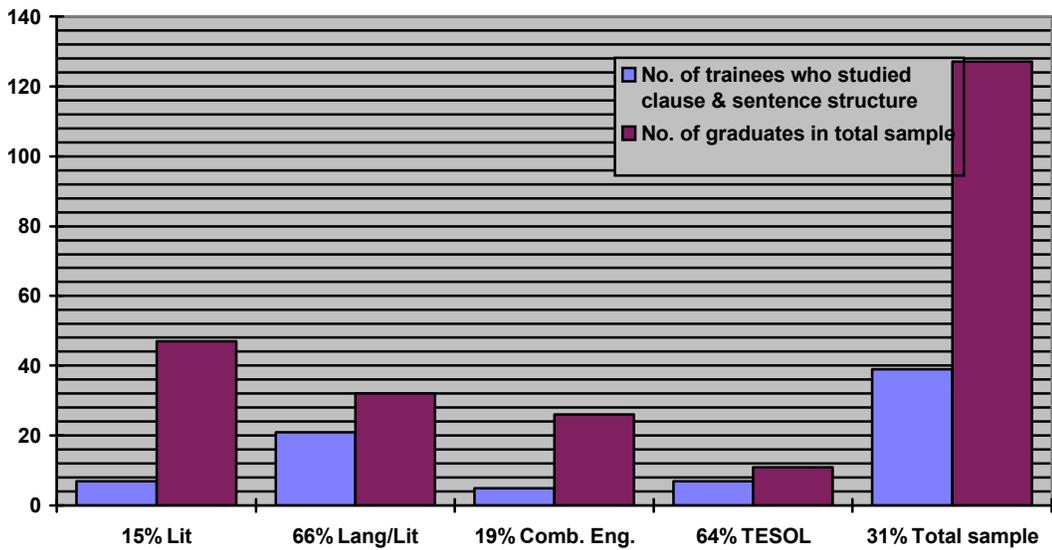


Chart 2c: Proportions of trainees who studied clause & sentence structure as part of their 1st degree or TESOL course

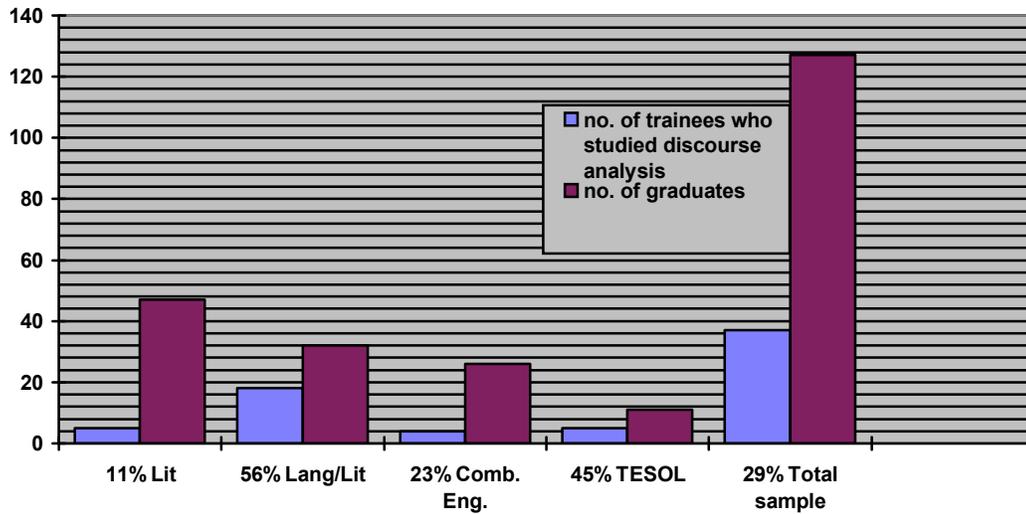


Chart 2d: Proportions of trainees who studied discourse analysis as part of their 1st degree or TESOL course

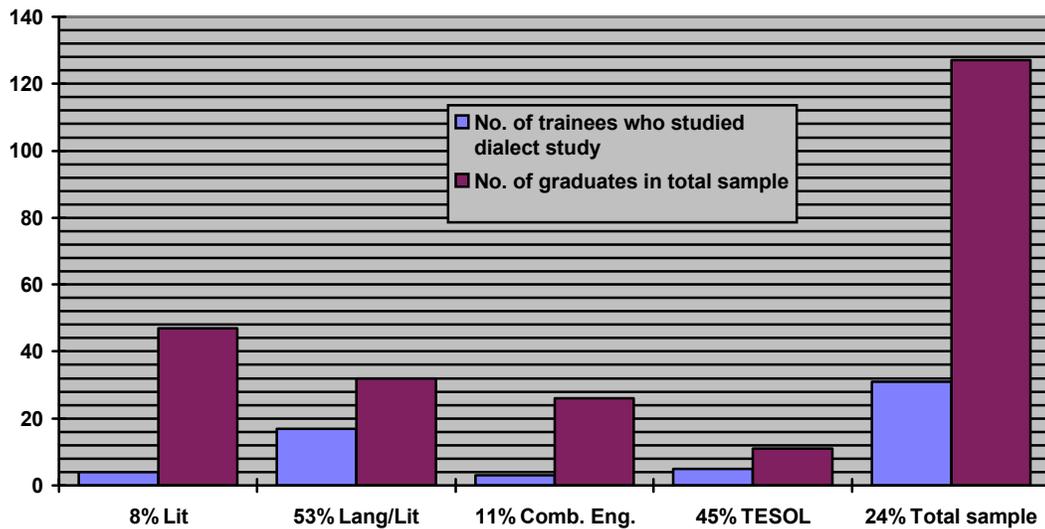


Chart 2e: Proportions of trainees who studied dialect as part of their 1st degree or TESOL course

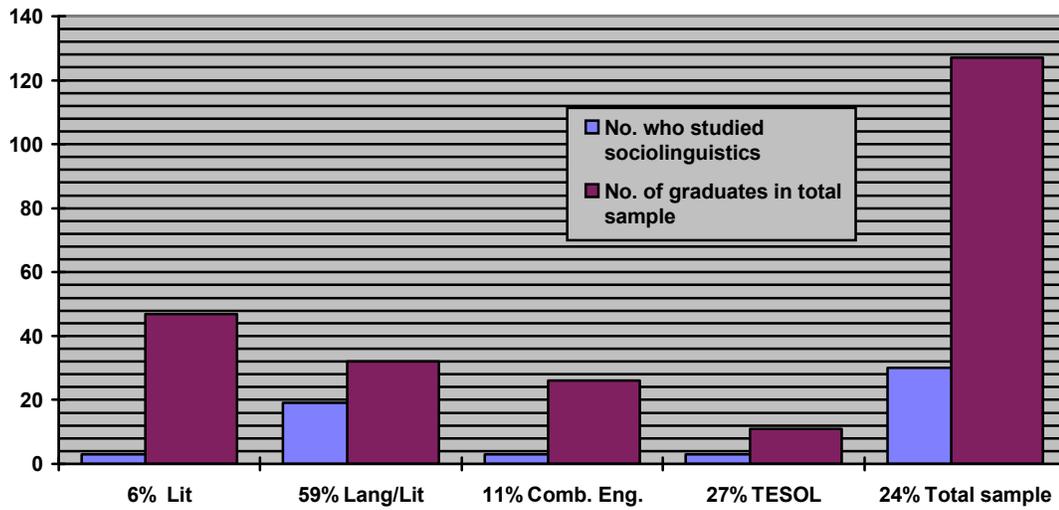


Chart 2f: Proportions of trainees who studied sociolinguistics as part of their degree or TESOLcourse

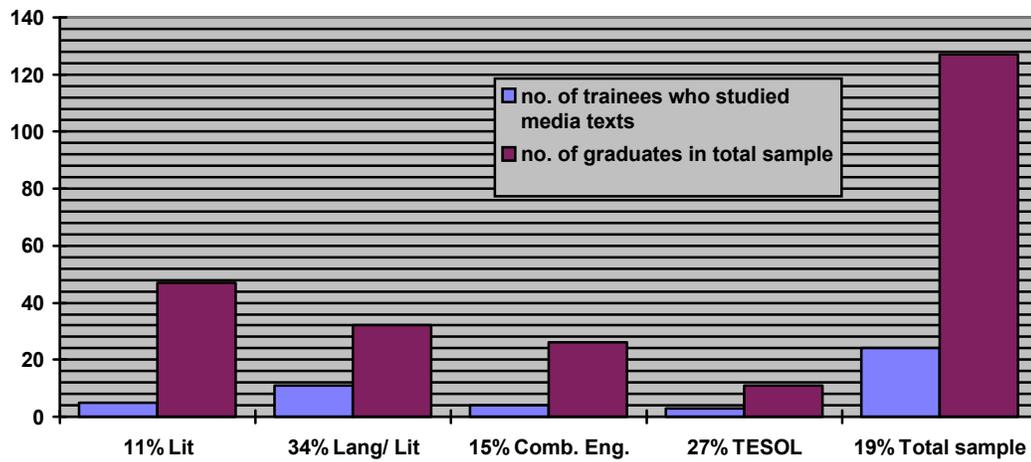


Chart 2g: Proportions of trainees who studied media texts as part of their 1st degree or TESOL course

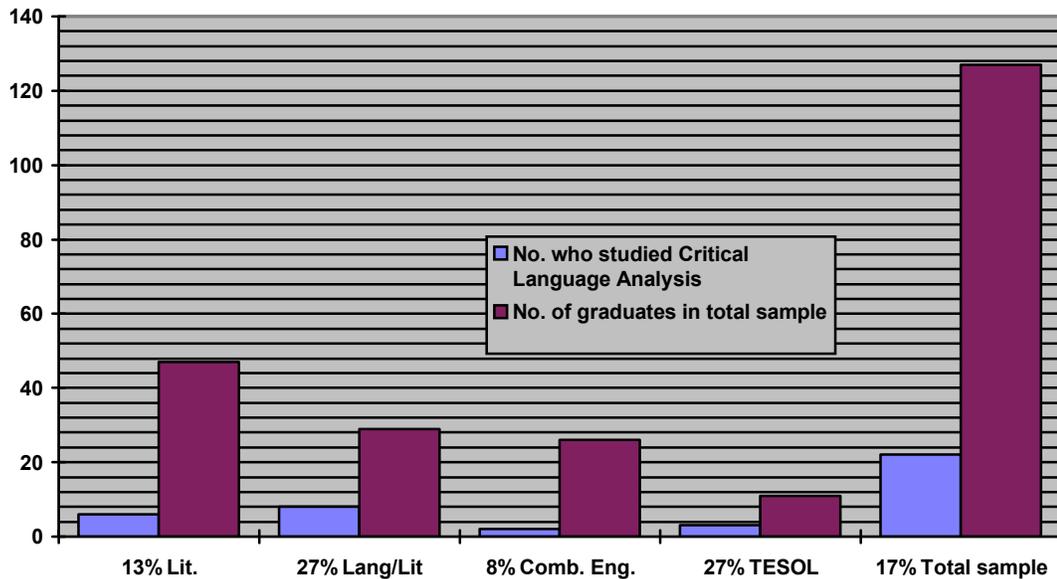


Chart 2h: Proportions of trainees who studied critical language analysis as part of their degree course or TESOL

The categories shown in charts 2a to 2h include the five most commonly cited by the 56 trainees who had studied grammar at H.E. level: *linguistic theory, modern English grammar, clause and sentence structure, discourse analysis*. But an equally important focus of interest was the kinds of approaches to language study that respondents were exposed to and the additional categories *dialect study, sociolinguistics, media texts and critical language analysis* were selected in order to give a picture not only of the extent of trainees' prior learning of grammar, but also the ideological perspectives they might have encountered. Again, interpretation can only be tentative in this area, but the analysis could give an initial indication of trainees' beliefs about language and grammar.

Theory

The area of study most frequently cited was 'linguistic theory'. Although this is a broad category, and, again, one open to interpretation, it is interesting to note that a third of all the PGCE students in this study have some background in 'linguistic theory'. As expected, literature graduates were the least likely to have studied in this area, though answers

suggest it was not compulsory in the combined Language and Literature degrees taken by some respondents.

Structural grammar

Charts 2b and 2c show that Modern English grammar and clause and sentence structure were, again, studied by one third of the total sample and, again, as expected, the literature group were least represented here. Unsurprisingly, the TESOL group were most likely to have studied Modern English grammar. A closer look at the Language and Literature graduates revealed some anomalies, four of them apparently having done little or no language study in their degrees. More puzzling was the graduate in English Language who had done only morphology and pragmatics.

In general, however, charts 2b and 2c do suggest that P.G.C.E. entrants have more knowledge of grammar than might be expected, though Literature graduates, the dominant group in PGCE courses, are least likely to have had access to this knowledge at H.E. level. Each of the 12 literature graduates in this group had studied some aspect of structural grammar, and they may therefore have been taught a descriptive approach to language study. However, they were less likely to have studied sociolinguistics.

Sociolinguistics

Charts 2e and 2f show the numbers of trainees who had studied dialect and sociolinguistics respectively. These graduates might be expected to have been introduced to a descriptive model of language study, one which emphasizes change, variation and diversity [Chapter 2]. This being the case, they will have encountered, at least implicitly, a belief-system which validates all varieties, using context rather than value-judgements to characterise different linguistic forms, and seeing Standard English as only one dialect among many [Graddol, 1994, 16].

Overall, fewer of the trainees had studied sociolinguistics [24%] than structural grammar and, as might be expected, most of this group had also studied dialects. It appears that the TESOL group were more likely to have studied dialects than the broader field of

sociolinguistics. It is tempting to suggest that this reflects the more structural, less ‘ideological’ approach of TESOL training, but numbers are too small to make a judgement. Those who took combined Language and Literature or ‘straight’ English Language degrees were, unsurprisingly, most likely to have studied these topics. Responses to section D questions might reveal whether exposure to this model of language study has translated into ‘progressive’ attitudes to the teaching of grammar.

Critical linguistics

Charts 2g and 2f show the proportions of trainees within each group who had studied media texts and Critical Language Analysis. As explained above, these results, along with those presented in Chart 2d, must be treated with caution. The categories were chosen to represent a radical-critical approach to language⁴⁵, in which linguistic features, including grammatical forms, are investigated not simply as characteristic of particular varieties, but as elements which combine to construct a particular set of meanings and to position the reader/listener in ways which serve the purposes of the institution or the system. Here the principal aim of language awareness teaching is not to pass on knowledge about the structures of language, nor to promulgate ideas of diversity and pluralism, but to equip pupils with the analytical tools to identify and, where necessary, to resist the exercise of power through language and other semiotic systems.

Answers to this question suggest that the numbers of trainees who were likely to have encountered this kind of language work is small. Charts 2d, 2g and 2f show that 29% [37 of 127] had studied discourse analysis, 19% [24] media texts and 17% [22] critical language analysis. Again, the Literature graduates were least likely to have studied in these areas, though proportions are higher than for sociolinguistics. Language/Literature graduates were more likely to have studied discourse analysis than either media texts or critical language analysis, as were TESOL trainees. This may mean that few trainees are likely to see grammar as a tool of critical literacy, but given the issues of interpretation

⁴⁵ Above, pages 65-66.

discussed above, these results needed to be correlated with additional data before even tentative conclusions could be drawn.

Feelings about the study of grammar in 1st degree and TESOL courses

Responses to grammar at this level were varied. Chart 3a [overleaf] shows that of the 56 trainees who had done some grammar at this level, 35% [20] felt positive, 27% [15] negative, 20% [11] gave mixed responses [including two who felt 'ok'] and 18% [10] did not answer. There could be an issue of interpretation in this question, in that respondents might have been registering their general feelings about the linguistics modules they took rather than specifically about grammar, even though question C4 had asked specifically about course elements which included grammar study. That said, when the 'mixed' and 'ok' responses are added to the negatives, the general response is less than enthusiastic. It is interesting to note that proportionately more Literature graduates felt positive about their language study [Chart 3b], whereas feelings were fairly equally divided between positive and negative for Language/Literature graduates [Chart 3c]. Numbers are small, though, in the Literature group. What is more noteworthy is that when the 'mixed' responses were totalled with the negative responses, nearly half [46%] of the Language/Literature graduates had less than positive feelings. Of the three English Language graduates, none reported positively, although one who didn't answer the question made it clear subsequently that for her grammar was 'fundamental'.

Of the 20 trainees who responded positively, nine said they 'enjoyed' those modules with a grammar component, six found them 'interesting' and five 'useful'. There were few expressions of outright enthusiasm, however. A single Literature graduate enthused about sociolinguistics and pragmatics and described discourse analysis as 'a fascinating area to study'. But most responses were more qualified, partly, perhaps, because of the range of language elements taken by some students, even those doing Literature degrees. A Literature graduate who ticked 17 of the 18 boxes in question C4, was happy with language study, except for linguistic theory:

I am naturally curious about language and I enjoy playing with words. Therefore I enjoyed most of my modules at degree level. However, some of the more 'pretentious' linguistic theory caused me to switch off.

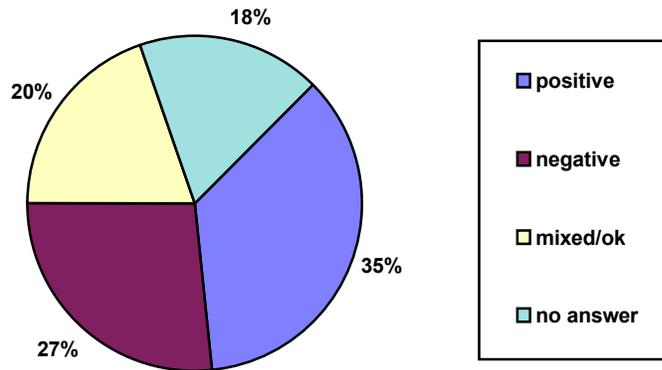


Chart 3a: Respondents' feelings about grammar in degree and TESOL programmes

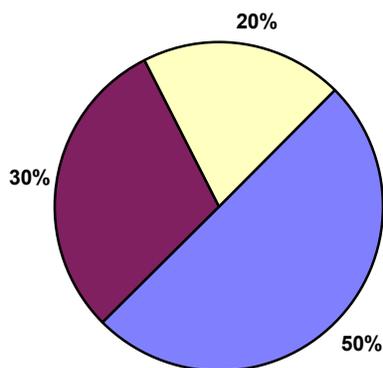


Chart 3b: Literature graduates' feelings about grammar in degree or TESOL programmes

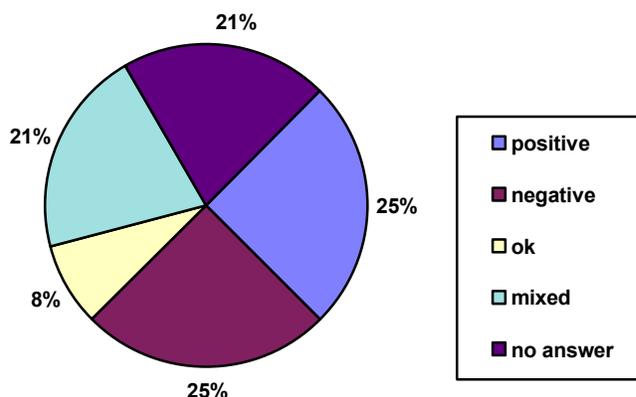


Chart 3c: Language/Literature graduates' feelings about grammar in degree or TESOL programmes

Those who took degrees in English Language or Language and Literature, together with those who gained a TESOL qualification, were, of course, much more likely to have taken modules in which grammar was a component. However, only six Language/Literature graduates responded entirely positively and none of the three Language specialists⁴⁶. Of the TESOL qualifiers who had not done any language study as part of their degree only one gave a positive answer, having found it 'interesting'. More enthusiastic was the response from a graduate in Cultural Studies, who described his linguistic modules as 'extremely useful - providing a sound knowledge base'. The six positive responses from the Language/Literature graduates included three whose interest had developed over their courses:

[I] found it a little dull as a first year undergraduate, but by the second and third years I had gained enough knowledge and was interested enough to write a language dissertation [on stylistics]

Very scared at first, because of having no formal teaching previously. [It] ended up being my favourite part of the course [Humanities graduate]

⁴⁶ However, as has already been noted, one Language specialist who did not answer this question, later referred to grammar as 'fundamental' [p. 94]

I found it [Linguistics] quite demanding, probably the hardest course in the first year, but I eased into it. ['Other English', unspecified]

A further two Language/Literature students appreciated the different approach in their language modules. One of these had studied grammar as part of his 'A' level English Language course. He found his degree modules 'a good change to the vagaries of studying English Literature'. The other noted that her feelings were not shared by fellow-students:

A lot of people resented the language element, but I quite enjoyed the change from literature and didn't find the grammar too difficult.

It is also significant that here, as in many responses to question B5 [feelings about school grammar], there is an association of grammar with 'difficulty', the most common reason cited by those giving negative responses, whatever the degree course. A Literature graduate who chose to do a dissertation on 'Language in People with Alzheimer's Disease' had found the grammar very demanding:

The 'formal' lessons on grammar lost me completely - it was too complicated and assumed a higher knowledge of the subject than many of us had.

A Language and Literature graduate consciously avoided language modules because of the grammar⁴⁷, while a further six respondents linked their difficulties with grammar to their lack of basic knowledge. Of the five students whose studied grammar only as part of their TESOL courses, three felt unprepared. Catherine's response was typical⁴⁸:

Thrown in at the deep end. I've never been formally taught tenses, etc. in English. It was very difficult for everyone to even identify the present simple in the first lesson.

Nine respondents had mixed feelings. One referred to the relevance of grammatical study, a point this student later related to the teaching of grammar in schools:

⁴⁷ Rebecca, interviewed later, Chapter 6.

⁴⁸ A literature graduate, interviewed later, Chapter 6.

I enjoyed language acquisition and sociolinguistics because they seemed to have a wider context. Studying grammar out of context is very dull.
[Language/Literature]

Another Language/Literature graduate who responded less than positively at the time, expressed her regret as a student teacher:

The course was generally unpopular, as it was compulsory. But in retrospect, I wish I'd paid more attention. It would have been invaluable for teaching!

Feelings about the grammar encountered in degree programmes were more positive than those remembered from school, with 35% responding positively at H.E. level, as opposed to 16% of those who did grammar at school. There are a number of possible explanations for this disparity. One factor could be the greater element of choice at H.E. level: the response quoted above indicates that where grammar-related courses were compulsory at degree level, students tended to react negatively. Another issue which must be taken into account is the wording of questions B5 and C5. B5 asked directly and unequivocally how respondents felt about grammar at school. C5 was less direct, asking how they felt about 'these elements of your courses'. As I have said, this may have been interpreted as a more general question about response to the language topics listed in question C4, rather than specifically to 'grammar'. However, although this could have skewed the results, it does point to an important difference in the construction of 'grammar' at undergraduate level. At school, the meaning is apparently unproblematic. Here, at least in respondents' memories, an autonomous or single model of 'grammar' seemed to predominate, within a shared understanding of the subject 'English'. At university level, however, the experience of grammar learning will be contextualized within different modules or course elements [a factor recognised in the structure of question C4]. A majority of the respondents who answered section B [on school grammar] associated grammar with 'correct writing' and 'standard English'; in higher education meanings are more diversely constructed within various models of language. This contextualization of 'grammar' at university may be a factor in the more positive response to question C5, but it also means gives an additional complexity to the answers. The meanings that teachers ascribe to their subjects can be

expected to impact on both what they teach and how they teach it. Questions D 2 and D5 would explore the ways in which these trainee teachers defined ‘grammar’. But another important issue for trainee teachers is confidence. It would be reasonable to expect a greater degree of confidence about grammar from those who had studied grammar as part of their degree or TESOL course. However, this would be too simplistic an assumption, given the variability of language courses represented here, and also the disparate and often complex responses to them. Question D4 examined trainee teachers’ confidence about grammar teaching in three areas: their own knowledge of grammar, teaching methods and reasons for teaching grammar.

3.4 Trainee teachers’ confidence about grammar teaching

Charts 4a to 4c give a breakdown of the answers to question D4: *How confident do you feel about grammar?*⁴⁹.

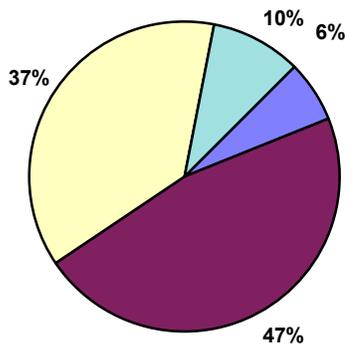


Chart 4a: Trainees' confidence in their own knowledge of grammar

⁴⁹ Key over page.

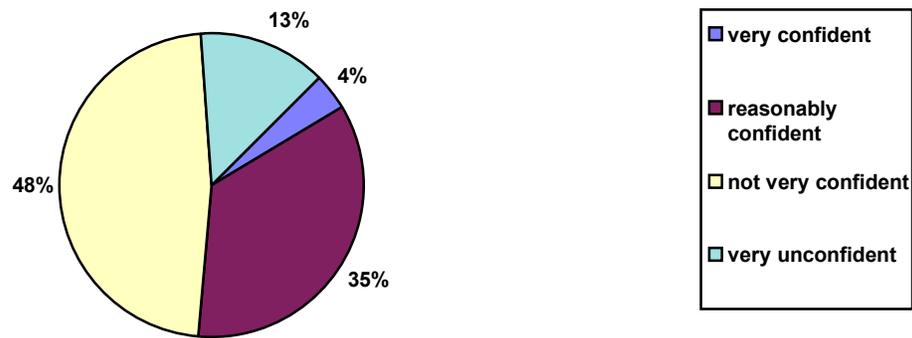


Chart 4b: Trainees' confidence in relation to teaching methods

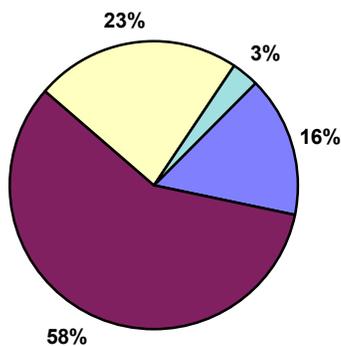


Chart 4c: Trainees' confidence about reasons for teaching grammar

Of the 126 respondents who answered this question, 53% felt either confident or reasonably confident about their own knowledge of grammar; 39% felt confident or reasonably confident about teaching methods and 74% felt confident or reasonably confident about the reasons for teaching grammar.

Again, the issue of definition is important, and would need to be explored, but overall, trainees appeared more confident about grammar than might have been predicted from

their answers to sections B and C. It is not surprising that trainee teachers felt least confident about teaching methods, having only just begun their PGCE courses, though on this account 39% might be considered a high percentage. The other sets of responses are more interesting, given that only 44% had undertaken any grammar learning as undergraduates [or graduates for TESOL training]. Of those who had studied grammar previously either at school or at university, significant numbers had reacted negatively to it [above, pp.79;94]. There is clearly no necessary connection between liking a subject and feeling confident about it, but as one of the most common explanations for negative feelings about grammar, whether at school or at university was its perceived ‘difficulty’, the fact that 53% felt confident about their own knowledge and 74% felt confident about the reasons for teaching grammar warranted further analysis. In the meantime, whatever their reactions to a subject, it is reasonable to expect that prior learning will have an impact on current confidence. Table 9 examines trainee confidence alongside their prior experience in school, first degree and TESOL courses. Percentages refer to the proportions of respondents in the groups who expressed themselves as ‘very confident’ or ‘reasonably confident’ in the three areas.

Prior learning of grammar	knowledge	teaching methods	reasons for teaching
1.no school or H.E. learning [20]	47%	39%	72%
2.school learning; no H.E [50] ⁵⁰	54%	36%	75%
3.H.E. learning, no school [21]	55%	35%	70%
4.H.E. plus school learning [36]	57%	46%	83%
5.TESOL [11]	64%	64%	100%
All with H.E. learning [inc. TESOL] [57]	56%	44%	76%
All with no H.E. learning [70]	53%	38%	74%

Table 9: Correlations between trainee confidence and prior learning of grammar

⁵⁰ Most of this group recalled being taught grammar at both primary and secondary stages. Only 6 had been taught only at primary school; 10 had had secondary, but no primary grammar teaching; 12 reported some ‘A’ level learning.

Knowledge

TESOL-trained respondents were most confident about their knowledge of grammar, but confidence scores generally were not particularly high, whatever the learning background.

Teaching methods

Trainees were generally least confident about teaching methods, apart from the TESOL group, who had had recent teaching experience and could therefore be expected to be more confident in this area. Again, apart from TESOL, prior learning appears to have little significance.

Reasons for teaching grammar in schools

This was the most problematic of the three areas in question D4, because there were at least two ways in which it could be interpreted. The intention had been to gauge trainees' confidence about articulating the reasons for teaching grammar. But in hindsight it could have been read as *'How confident do I feel that grammar should be taught?'* The question would be clarified in the second questionnaire survey, but possible differences in interpretation need to be borne in mind at this stage. That said, all respondents reported the highest degree of confidence in relation to reasons for teaching grammar. The TESOL group were unanimously confident, along with 83% of those who had experienced both school and H.E. learning. Again, however, H.E. learning of itself is not a significant factor in trainee confidence.

Two main issues emerged from this analysis: firstly that trainees' relative lack of knowledge [or their perceived lack of knowledge] did not significantly affect their confidence about the reasons for teaching it; secondly that learning grammar at undergraduate level did not of itself appear to increase PGCE trainees' confidence in their own knowledge, teaching methods or reasons for teaching grammar. It would be premature at this stage to suggest that PGCE trainees perceived that the kind of grammar study experienced at degree level was irrelevant to secondary English teaching, not least because of the diversity of courses studied, but certainly for a number of trainees the connections were not apparent. The model of 'grammar' presented in the national curriculum is, of

course, different from most of the models employed in undergraduate English language modules. At this stage, PGCE students might already be re-aligning themselves towards a more narrowly defined 'school' grammar. However, the general lack of confidence about teaching grammar suggests that trainee teachers might not want to teach grammar in the same way as they were taught at school. This might also explain an apparent contradiction: a significant proportion [62%] of those who were taught grammar at secondary school expressed negative feelings about it, yet were confident about the reasons for teaching it today. While one would hope that the 'cough medicine' theory - it tastes foul but it will do you good in the end - was not in operation here, the propensity of adults to perpetuate practices which they found oppressive as children might not be so easily discarded. However, there was a more charitable possibility in that a number of trainees had intimated in answer to question B5 that their grammar learning had been inadequate at school, either because of poor teaching methods or because they were not taught enough. It is feasible, then, that some of those with negative memories of being taught grammar, might believe that better and/or more grammar teaching is the answer. What is clear from answers to question D1, is that, whether their own experiences were positive or negative, a substantial majority of trainees believed that grammar should be taught explicitly as part of the national curriculum.

3.5 Should grammar be taught explicitly?

Of the 124 trainee teachers who answered this question, 82% [102] agreed that grammar should be taught explicitly as part of the national curriculum. Again, experience of grammar learning in higher education was not a significant factor: 84% of those who had studied grammar at H.E level [including TESOL] agreed, along with 82% of those who had not. Even those who had reacted negatively to grammar learning at undergraduate level agreed [81% of 26] as did those who retained negative memories of school grammar [87% of 54]. The TESOL group were unanimous in supporting grammar teaching, though only four of the 11 [36%] had reacted positively to it as learners.

Of the 12 respondents who felt negative about their grammar learning both at school and at university, only two disagreed with explicit grammar teaching in school today. Thus for the majority of trainee teachers, there appeared no direct correlation between personal experience of grammar learning, either at school or at university, and their attitude towards its mandatory inclusion in the curriculum that they were being trained to teach. Their own negative memories did not prevent them from supporting grammar teaching in schools.

Some of the reasons for this apparent contradiction have been broached above, but question D2 explored respondents' own reasons for supporting or objecting to explicit grammar teaching in schools. I hoped that in answering this question respondents might clarify not only the contradictions outlined above, but also some of their attitudes and beliefs both about grammar and about English language teaching in general.

3.6 Reasons for teaching grammar explicitly

Answers to this question were varied, both in the diversity of reasons given and the amount of detail, ranging from the terse but sweeping: 'Fundamental to everything' from an English Language graduate to quite copious responses offering three or four reasons. Although multiple rationales were not common, one particularly detailed answer incorporated several of the reasons that were offered across the overall sample:

1. Because since studying language in depth I have been more articulate in my writing.
2. Because English cannot be rubbishised if it uses labels and categories; if it can be analysed it is leaning towards a science.
3. Grammarians get a buzz out of language study. Some kids do too!
4. Language study is closely linked with history, and for that reason alone, kids should know about it.

Number of reasons given

Of those who answered 'Yes' to question D1, a majority [56%] gave only one reason; 27% [28] gave two reasons and 17% [18] gave three or four. Two gave no reasons. The responses of those who disagreed were less detailed: of the 21 negative responses, 17 [81%] offered one reason, and none offered more than two. One disagreed, but offered no reason.

Types of reasons given

The types of reasons given for teaching English grammar were coded into eight categories. An additional category was necessary for the caveats included by respondents who supported the teaching of grammar, but made stipulations about how it should be taught. Table 10 [overleaf] shows the numbers and percentages of respondents citing each category of reason. In addition it shows which reasons were most commonly cited by those who had studied grammar at H.E. level compared to those who had not.

For those endorsing the teaching of grammar, reasons were most commonly expressed in terms of two broad areas: ‘knowledge about language’ and ‘skills’, particularly in written expression. For those with TESOL experience of grammar, ‘knowledge about language’, and particularly ‘structure’, was [proportionately] the reason most frequently offered. However, because this group numbered only 11 in total, this may not be meaningful. For those with undergraduate grammar learning and those without, reasons 1 and 2 were equally popular. Both of these categories encapsulated a number of different focuses, which need to be explored before drawing any ideological inference from these answers. The remaining reasons are more straightforward in terms of interpretation, although 9 did not fit within existing categories, and were counted as ‘other reasons’. A number of respondents added caveats, qualifying their positive reasons for teaching grammar.

Knowledge about language and/or language structure

Overall, the most commonly cited reason for teaching grammar was to give pupils access to knowledge about the English language. These subdivided into five sub-categories:

- 1.knowledge of the structure of English/ how English works
- 2.knowledge for the purpose of learning other languages
- 3.acquisition of a metalanguage/ describing or explaining language
- 4.analysing texts/close text reading
- 5.consciousness of own lack of knowledge

Higher education experience made no significant difference to the numbers expressing reasons in terms of subject knowledge. The proportion of the TESOL-trained group

reasons for teaching grammar	% of times cited [of 165 citations]	number of respondents giving reason [of 100]	proportion giving this reason who studied grammar in degree [of 38 inc. 5 TESOL ⁵¹]	proportion of those without degree or TESOL experience giving this reason [of 56]	proportion of those with TESOL training giving reason [of 11]
1. knowledge about language/structure of language	33% [54]	48 [48%]	50% [19]	39% [22]	64% [7]
2. skills, especially in writing	32% [52]	48 [48%]	47% [18]	48% [27]	36% [4]
3. demands of the system	11% [18]	16 [16%]	13% [5]	20% [11]	0
4. cognitive development	0.6% [1]	1 [1%]	3% [1]	0	0
5. teaching ESL students	0.6% [1]	1 [1%]	0	0	9% [1]
6. 'important', 'basic', 'fundamental'	6% [10]	10 [10%]	13% [5]	9% [5]	9% [1]
7. 'fascinating', 'fun'	1% [2]	2 [2%]	3% [1]	2% [1]	0
8. other reasons	5% [9]	9 [9%]	3% [1]	13% [7]	9% [1]
9. caveats	11% [18]	16 [16%]	18% [7]	16% [9]	18% [2]

Table 10: Reasons for teaching grammar in schools

prioritising structural knowledge was higher than for the other groups, but this represented only five out of seven respondents, so, again, might not be significant.

For a number of respondents 'knowledge about language' was a reason in itself, an addition to understanding which needed no further justification. Others connected knowledge about language with 'empowerment':

Power is language, everyone ought to have access to that. [Lang/Lit. degree]

I think it is important to give pupils the confidence to feel that they can use grammar correctly. Grammar to me should be about empowering children. [American Studies degree, no linguistics]

The issues of 'correctness' and prescriptive attitudes to grammar will be dealt with in a later section.

⁵¹ Included again in the final column of this table, but only counted once in the total [2nd] column.

Learning other languages

Two respondents felt that because grammar was taught explicitly in foreign language learning, the same should apply to English. This suggests a lack of understanding of how children learn the grammar of their first language, and in fact neither of these respondents had studied language at degree level. Teaching English grammar in order to facilitate foreign language learning was a rationale offered by nine respondents, four of whom had studied grammar at degree level and two as part of a TESOL course. For none of these respondents, however, was this the only reason for teaching English grammar.

Consciousness of own lack of knowledge

Ten respondents registered their own lack of knowledge as a reason for ensuring that their pupils were not similarly disadvantaged. Four of these had felt inadequate when faced with linguistics at degree level, and the five with no H.E. experience were conscious of their current lack of knowledge. One seemed to feel it particularly keenly:

Well, I mean look at me - I couldn't tell you what a preposition is or a conjunction. I have no idea what a modal verb is. The list goes on.

The one TESOL- trained respondent citing this reason had taught himself grammar while at secondary school, but the memory of his own sense of inadequacy remained:

I wouldn't want anyone else to feel so incompetent and suffer low self-esteem.⁵²

Describing and analysing language

Given that 30 respondents recorded that they had studied sociolinguistics at university, a stronger indication of the influence of descriptive linguistics might have been expected. Only six answers suggested the influence of sociolinguistics in perceiving grammar as a tool for describing language, and four of these came from respondents without any linguistics background. I examine descriptive constructions of grammar teaching in section 3.11.

Enhancing skills of expression

The second set of reasons justified the teaching of grammar in more directly utilitarian terms, as a means of improving skills, particularly in written expression. In terms of the overall response, this rationale was as popular as ‘knowledge about language’, but the skills-based reasons were more cohesive in focus, sub-dividing into four categories:

1. to improve written expression
2. to enable correct written expression
3. to enhance spoken expression
4. language as a tool for use

Most of the reasons in this set fell within the first two sub-categories, showing a strong connection for these trainees between grammar and writing. Only five respondents related grammar learning to improved or ‘correct’ speaking as well as writing. None referred only to ‘correct speech.’ Once again, there was no distinction between those who had studied linguistics and those who had not. Twelve respondents gave reasons from both of the two main categories, ‘knowledge about language’ and ‘expressive skills’.

It was in the equation of grammar with production skills that prescriptive attitudes were most likely to reveal themselves, and for this reason it was important to distinguish between ‘improving language skills’ and ‘correct English.’ While they may have had the same meaning for some respondents, a connection was not assumed unless explicitly stated. The meaning of ‘correct’ English appears unproblematic, at least for those using it and it can be assumed fairly safely to be synonymous with ‘standard English’. On the other hand, ‘improved writing’ is open to more diverse interpretation. In addition to ‘correct English’, it may refer to issues of style, genre or clarity of expression. Nevertheless, a number of responses classified under ‘improving skills’ did suggest a prescriptive approach to language, and this issue would need to be examined in more detail. What was particularly interesting in this set of ‘reasons’ was the uncritical assumption by most of the

⁵² Jon, part of the interview group, Chapter 6.

respondents of a connection between explicit grammar teaching and language production, a question which is still being debated [above, p. 45].

Grammar as a means of improving skills

For most respondents giving this reason, ‘improving pupil skills’ meant the improvement of school written work:

Knowledge of grammar is important for essay writing. [Lit. graduate, no linguistics]

Because it is very helpful in creative writing/essay writing. [Lang/Lit degree; no linguistics]

One Language/Literature graduate made a direct connection between learning grammatical terms and written performance:

Because it is helpful for children [and adults] to be able to identify components of language so that they might express themselves more coherently.

Another Language/Literature graduate referred back to their own experience:

Because since studying language in more depth I have been more articulate in my writing.

For seven trainees the important connection was between understanding language and improving performance. Typical of these were:

If people have a better understanding of their language they are better equipped to make use of it. [Lit. degree, with linguistics modules]

If children understand the basic principles behind the construction of their language they can use it more effectively. [Lit degree, no linguistics]

Three others believed that an understanding of grammar would extend the stylistic range and of pupils’ writing:

how to use different registers [Eng/History degree [no linguistics] plus TESOL]

It enables children to use a wider range of language in creative tasks [Art history graduate, no linguistics]

To give children the opportunity to widen their ability to express themselves. [Lit. degree, no linguistics]

Using language correctly

Those who saw ‘correct’ usage as a reason for grammar teaching were readily identifiable by their use of ‘correct’ or less frequently ‘proper’ English, or their reference to ‘errors’. Of those who connected grammar teaching with skills or performance, this sub-set was the largest, cited by 24 of 47 respondents, or 51%. It is puzzling that those who had studied linguistics at degree level were proportionately more likely to give this reason, [61% as opposed to 46% of those without a linguistics background], given that more than any other rationale it embodies a prescriptive approach to language. However, if responses in sub-categories 2 and 3 are aggregated, there is no difference between those who had studied linguistics and those who had not: in both groups 42% of those giving reasons for teaching grammar cited ‘improved or correct English’.

Grammar as a tool for use

Four respondents saw grammar as a ‘tool for use’. It is tempting to see this as a reference to a Hallidayan model of language, but the answers were too brief to justify this interpretation. What seemed to underlie these responses was, again, a connection between ‘understanding’ and application, but appearing to draw on a more liberal discourse of individual empowerment:

If people have a better understanding of their language they are better equipped to make use of it. [Lit. degree with linguistics]

I tend to think that words - especially technical terms - are tools. Once a person has access to a new tool, there is no saying how this term might be used. [Lit. degree, no linguistics]

Language is a tool - easier to use if you know how it works. [Lit. degree, plus basic TESOL]

Demands of the system

Any notion of ‘correctness’ in language use must carry at least an implicit reference to a set of social norms, which may be imposed formally or informally, or both in the case of Standard English. However, only 16 respondents referred explicitly to the demands made by the ‘twin’ systems of education and employment. Of these 11 had no linguistics background. Of the five who had studied linguistics, only one had reported feeling positive about these elements of his degree programme. This might suggest that for some respondents grammar is a ‘necessary evil’, but, again, there was insufficient data at this stage to confirm this.

Only eight trainees drew on external or social imperatives as the only rationale for teaching grammar. For the others, this was part of a multiple rationale. Thus the one trainee who referred to professional duties, placed this instrumental reason alongside a commitment to knowledge about language:

[Grammar is] a key tool to understanding language and its uses. It’s required of us as teachers. [English/Philosophy degree with linguistics]⁵³

Another referred less directly to pedagogical imperatives, but was aware of more immediate pressures:

It is very important if pursuing education at a higher level, especially PGCE. Everyone needs to have [a] basic grasp on correctness in speech and writing. [Lit. degree, no linguistics]

Only two respondents mentioned the importance of grammar in the examination system, and in neither case was it the only reason for teaching it. A more general reference was made to assessment by a Literature graduate:

It makes the reaching of it more measurable. Also clarifies areas which could otherwise be missed.

For others, the issue of ‘standards’ was paramount:

⁵³ Paul, one of the interview group, Chapter 6.

After having spent 4 weeks on diagnostic placement I have noted the appalling [sic] grammar of the majority of pupils at key stage 3 and 4!!!! [Drama degree, no linguistics]

Because if it is not reinforced, as with my experience, children forget over time and become lazy.[English/American Studies, no linguistics]

Although numbers were small, it was noticeable that trainees who had not studied linguistics were more likely to offer this kind of response as a single reason, rather than the composite reasons offered by those with linguistics backgrounds. Seven of the 11 [64%] graduates in this category gave 'single reason' responses. In addition to those already quoted, three saw future employment as a reason for teaching grammar:

Because grammar is essential for future employment success.[Drama/Theatre Studies]

For long-term use in job applications. [English/Politics]

It is my view that a good knowledge of grammar will help children in their future careers. A good grasp of the English language, of which grammar is an integral part, is essential to almost all fields. [English/Arabic degree]

Comparatively few trainees consciously rationalised the teaching of grammar in terms of an externally imposed set of standards. Lack of reference to the national curriculum or other educational measures could be put down to a lack of knowledge on the part of the new trainees. However, it seems unlikely that they were unaware of the mandatory nature of grammar teaching, not least because it was referred to in the question. What may be more likely at this stage is that PGCE students subscribe to a view of English teaching which privileges values other than examination success. Question E would explore in more detail the meanings that new trainees brought to the practice of English teaching.

Additional reasons

The remaining reasons were less popular than those already discussed, and some, listed in Table 10 as 'other reasons', were too vague or too idiosyncratic to categorise more

precisely. However, there were other rationales which, though offered by few respondents, reflect additional perspectives on grammar teaching.

Cognitive development

Only one respondent claimed that grammar study could assist intellectual development in a general sense, but for him it was by far the most important reason for teaching it. Although he was alone in offering this rationale, the response is given a distinct category in Table 10, rather than being included in the ‘catch-all’ category ‘other reasons’. In terms of the research sample, this might be perceived as an idiosyncratic response, and this respondent’s educational history was unusual in that he received his secondary education in a German ‘gymnasium’. However, it is a rationale that has not only been popular in the past among educationalists, but has emerged in more recent debate [Cameron, 1997b]. Nick’s response is examined in more detail in Chapter 6.

Teaching ESL pupils

Again only one respondent, TESOL-trained, saw a connection between grammar teaching and the teaching of pupils for whom English was a second language. This was an overwhelmingly ‘white’ sample, but a greater awareness of the role of English in a multi-ethnic society might have been expected, especially from those with TESOL training. However, given that respondents were coming to the end of a fairly detailed questionnaire survey, and the majority of answers to this question were single-reason responses, this reason was not likely to occur with any frequency. The respondent for whom it was an issue placed it at the end of a composite answer:

Children need to know how language works, grammar of speech also; raises language awareness, improves spelling, how to use different registers, helps with learning modern foreign language, helps pupils who don’t speak English as their first language.

Grammar as ‘important’

Ten trainees felt that grammar was ‘important’, ‘basic’ or, in one case ‘fundamental’, but did not explain why.

Grammar as ‘fascinating’ or ‘fun’

Just two trainees equated grammar learning with pleasure. Both had taken combined Language/Literature degrees, and for both enjoyment was only one reason for teaching grammar. One response has already been quoted in full [p.104]. The other had clearly acquired her enthusiasm for descriptive grammar at university:

1. Because I knew nothing about it when I started university and was at a severe disadvantage compared to my English counterparts.⁵⁴
2. It’s fascinating.
3. How can you explain something without correct terminology?

Other reasons

Nine other reasons were either too vague or too idiosyncratic to classify.

Caveats

The apparent contradiction between trainee teachers’ feelings about being taught grammar at school and/or in higher education and their general concurrence in its inclusion in the school curriculum has already been noted. The analysis of positive responses to question D2 indicated a range of understandings of the purposes of grammar teaching and the complexity of meanings ascribed to ‘grammar’ itself. Sometimes the potential contradictions were revealed in single answers, where respondents agreed with the explicit teaching of grammar, but added caveats or provisos, mainly related to teaching methods. Since the phrasing of question D2 assumed a ‘yes/no’ response, respondents had to make an additional point specifying any reservations. It is, of course, possible that more might have responded in this way if asked, but the fact that a number volunteered their reservations suggests both that these trainees had thought through the implications of the question, and that they had some awareness of the potential conflicts.

Only one trainee was openly ambivalent about teaching grammar, offering reasons in both ‘for’ and ‘against’ slots. She had had no formal tuition in grammar, either at school or at

⁵⁴ This respondent was a Scot.

degree level, but showed more understanding of the development of grammatical competence than many graduates with a linguistics background. The key issue for her was clearly ‘explicitness’:

I can see the value of teaching the terms to help with learning to structure sentences and foreign languages. I can also see that children automatically know how to construct sentences and grammar confuses them.

Another 16 respondents agreed with the explicit teaching of grammar but added stipulations about how it should be taught. Again, prior study of linguistics was not a factor in the overall response, equally shared between those who had studied linguistics and those who had not. Most respondents in this group showed a sense of ambivalence about teaching grammar and only two, both of whom had taken Language/Literature degrees with a substantial linguistics component, were strong supporters of explicit grammar teaching. The first⁵⁵ shared the common association of grammar with pupils’ writing; for the second language description was the main focus:

Because since studying language in depth I have been more articulate in my writing...Grammarians get a buzz out of language study. Some kids do too.....For those kids that show a flat resistance to grammar studies, I think there should be a flexible approach, i.e. if they have not been used to studying it in depth at a previous school this should be allowed for.

I think it should be taught in a language context, and in a descriptive fashion rather than prescriptive. I think students should learn how their language works and what effects it can have. For more interesting elements of language study, you need to understand some grammar.

Six of the nine respondents with no linguistics background who added caveats saw written performance as the main rationale for teaching grammar. For five of this group and three others who had studied linguistics, it was important to teach grammar ‘in context’, either integrating it into current English work or using pupils’ work as a practical focus:

Standards of grammar in schools seem to be really bad. [However grammar still needs to be taught in a context, no useless grammar exercises or drills.]

⁵⁵ Already quoted above, p. 104.

I agree as it is an important part of English, although I would teach grammar built into my topic, using practical examples which pupils will be able to relate to, i.e. the use of metaphors or similes [in] everyday language. [Media degree with linguistics + 'A' level English Language]

I wouldn't say 'This is going to be a grammar lesson', but I do think they should be able to recognise the structure of language so that they may self-correct.....but the main focus will be on the topic they're writing about. [Lang/Lit degree + TESOL]

Two trainees, among a small group who mentioned standard English, also felt it was important to acknowledge 'dialects':

Shouldn't just revolve around S.E. - should encompass dialects. [Lit. degree, no linguistics]

There ought to be a standard English, albeit not at the expense of dialects. [Lang/Lit degree]

For one respondent, 'appreciation of dialects' appeared to be the main purpose of grammar teaching:

It is important that people have an understanding of the structure at the heart of the English language in order to truly understand and appreciate dialect etc.. [Lit. degree, no linguistics]

These 'cautionary notes' about grammar teaching give some indication of trainee teachers' ambivalence about grammar and the potential difficulties they perceived in teaching it, difficulties which are stated more emphatically by those who believed that it should not be taught.

3.7 Reasons for not teaching grammar explicitly

Twenty trainee teachers disagreed with the teaching of grammar, 16% of those who answered question D1. One, already mentioned, was 'unsure', giving reasons for and against. Again, prior study at degree level did not appear to be a factor, with 16% of both groups [those who had studied linguistics and those who had not] disagreeing. However of the 9 who had encountered grammar in their degree programme and felt that it should not be taught in school, six had done little linguistics and/or had reacted negatively to it. That

said, numbers here are small: nine answering ‘no’ to question D1 had done some linguistics; 11 had not.

Reasons for not teaching grammar fell into three broad categories [Table 11]:

1. that there was no need to teach grammar;
2. that it would inhibit pupils’ creativity or enjoyment;
3. that it should be taught alongside texts and pupils’ written work.

The third issue has been raised by a number of respondents as a caveat to their general approval of grammar teaching. The fact that four trainees saw it as a reason for not teaching grammar suggests a misinterpretation of ‘explicit’, apparently reading it as ‘separate from’ other activities in ‘English’, for example:

Grammar should be taught alongside/coincidental to texts, as and when an interesting point arises. [Sociology degree, some linguistics]

I feel it grammar is taught too rigidly and explicitly, children can see it as a separate issue to ‘English’, and consequently not apply what they have learnt to their work. [Lit/Education degree, no linguistics]

reasons for not teaching grammar	trainees who had studied linguistics	trainees with no linguistics background	total numbers & proportions of 20 trainees who disagreed with teaching grammar	
1. no need	4	5	9	45%
2. inhibiting	3	4	7	35%
3. should be taught alongside texts/written work	2	2	4	20%

Table 11: Reasons for not teaching grammar

No need to teach grammar

Of the nine trainees who felt that there was ‘no need’ to teach grammar, four saw terminology as unnecessary. These trainees did show a clear understanding of ‘explicit’ as the teaching of grammatical terms, for example:

Specific terms confuse the learning process. Pupils concentrate on names rather than what they represent. [English/Psychology degree, no linguistics]

Necessary in developing a person's ability to write an understandable text. However it is not necessary to know the technical jargon of how they did it. [Lit. degree; some linguistics, perceived as 'difficult']

I feel it is important to be able to speak/write in formal English - you are judged on this - I don't think grammatical terms are important. [English/History/Politics degree, no linguistics]

This respondent enlarged on his concerns at the end of the questionnaire, reflecting on his experience in school [It is unclear whether he was recalling his own schooling or experience as a student teacher]:

I have reservations about the importance of grammatical terminology or its purpose. I have experience of teachers openly telling pupils that teaching it is a waste of time and boring before they do it [in their own words 'because it has to be done'] It has also been used as a threat/punishment if behaviour in lesson is bad.

Two respondents explicitly questioned the place of grammar within the subject 'English':

I feel that English can be taught much more enjoyably without focusing intently on terminology and technical terms. Leave that to mathematicians and scientists. [English/History degree; no linguistics]

I don't think it is the be-all and end-all of English and other areas should be emphasised. [Lit. degree, no linguistics]

Other responses suggested a mismatch between grammar and 'enjoyment' which echoed the feelings of many trainees about their own grammar learning at school.

Grammar as inhibiting

Respondents suggested two ways in which grammar could inhibit pupils: getting in the way of enjoyment or 'fun' and hampering creativity. These perceptions again represent 'grammar' as antipathetic to the central values and meanings of 'English':

Not absolutely essential to understanding. Many kids have other priorities - need to have fun! [Humanities degree, no linguistics]

Not essential, should be an option [so that it] does not hinder the learning of English as an enriching experience. [Communication Studies degree, no linguistics]

Being 'taught' the way you speak can hinder your writing. It makes children less confident as they puzzle over whether they have formed a sentence using a subordinate clause, etc. [Creative Arts degree, English Language 'A' level]

Finally, for a Literature graduate, the lack of enjoyment in grammar was directly related to its perceived 'difficulty':

I feel that it is too confusing for pupils to learn with any amount of enjoyment. It would certainly have put me off English.

It is apparent in the analysis of trainees' arguments for and against explicit grammar teaching that they are part of a complex framework of attitudes, values and meanings. Question D5 aimed to generate more data on the meanings of 'grammar' for trainee English teachers and in the process to clarify and extend the analysis of their attitudes to grammar teaching. Perceptions of grammar and grammar teaching could then be set alongside responses to the final questions which asked for views on approaches to English, to examine areas of compatibility or conflict.

3.8 Defining grammar

Various constructions of grammar and grammar teaching have been described in Chapters 1 and 2. Answers to question D5: *How would you define grammar?* could be expected to reflect some of these approaches. Table 12 gives an overview of the definitions offered in response to question D5. As expected, very few definitions gave more than a hint at a theoretical model of grammar. However, three categories did emerge:

- an aspect of language itself, specifically the 'structure' of language;
- an area of language study, especially language description;
- correct usage.

Table 12 shows that 51% [53] of the trainees who answered this question referred to ‘language structure’ in their definitions. Thirty [29%] saw it as correct usage and 20 [19%] defined it in terms of language study or language description. The two responses listed as ‘other’ were metaphorical descriptions which, though imaginative, were difficult to place with any certainty. These were ‘The DNA of language’ and, rather more obscurely, ‘The oil in the engine’. The figures show that prior learning did not appear to be a determining factor for those offering ‘structural’ definitions. However, those who had studied language [and/or TESOL] were statistically more likely to see grammar in terms of language study and less likely to regard it as a set of rules for correct usage.

	Structure of language		study of language/system for describing language		rules for correct usage	
No prior learning of grammar [of 16 trainees giving defs]	10	62%	3	19%	8	50%
School learning only [of 40 trainees giving defs]	20	50%	2	50%	14	35%
Degree linguistics and/or TESOL [of 48 trainees giving defs]	23	48%	15	31%	8	17%
Totals [of 104 definitions, inc. 2 ‘other’]	53		20		30	
	[51%]		[19%]		[29%]	

Table 12: Correlations between trainee definitions of grammar and prior learning

Because these categories were broad ones, I realised that it would be unsound to draw any conclusions about ‘prescriptive’ or ‘descriptive’ attitudes. This would be especially unwise in the case of the largest category, ‘language structure’, which Crystal [1985] describes as ‘the usual popular interpretation of the term’ as well as ‘the traditional linguistic sense’. It is, of course, possible to see grammar both as ‘the structure of language’ and as a set of prescriptive rules [Graddol, 1996: 4]. The word ‘rules’ can also be interpreted in different ways. Grammar is a system of rules, though descriptive linguists have preferred the more liberal ‘conventions’ or ‘principles’, and it was not always clear whether it was being used

in this sense or in the prescriptive sense of ‘rules of usage’. For these reasons, and because prescriptivism is a central issue in the teaching of grammar, I decided to use an alternative method in an attempt to more accurately determine trainees’ attitude to grammar.

3.9 Prescriptive and Descriptive attitudes to grammar: mapping trainees’ discourse

Trainees’ responses to questions on their feelings about their own learning of grammar, at school or university, their reasons for teaching or not teaching grammar, placed alongside their ‘definitions’, revealed approaches to grammar which seem to coincide with the distinctions made by linguists between ‘prescriptive’ and ‘descriptive’ attitudes to grammar. Given the pedagogical implications of these opposing positions [Chapter 2], it was important to identify as accurately as possible where trainees located themselves. The issue of validity is important here: the analysis was based on written responses, often brief, to a questionnaire. I could not ask the direct question, ‘Do you favour a prescriptive or descriptive approach to grammar?’, since this would not assume a general familiarity with these notions on the part of beginning trainees, a majority of whom had not studied linguistics. Subsequent interviews would help to validate my analysis of questionnaire responses, but it was important at this stage to provide a clear interpretative framework in which to identify trainee attitudes. For this purpose the questionnaire was treated as a text and patterns of discourse tracked across key sections. Linguistic markers of descriptive and prescriptive positions were taken from sources describing approaches to grammar. Since I would be selecting elements of discourse from across individual questionnaires, some replication of examples used in previous sections might be unavoidable. However, I would avoid duplication as far as possible.

Linguistics offers various definitions of grammar set within various models of language and language study [Chapter 2]. However, there is general agreement not only on the distinctions between ‘prescriptive’ and ‘descriptive’ approaches to grammar, but on the alignment of modern linguistics with the descriptive model [Crystal,1995]. Though the descriptions of the two approaches can appear simplistically oppositional and stereotypical, they have quite different implications for English teaching, specifically for

teaching the ‘knowledge about language’ requirements of the national curriculum, but also for the negotiation of teacher and pupil identities.

A selection of definitions and explanations from contemporary linguists shows a broad consensus in the interpretation of prescriptivist and descriptivist positions:

Prescriptivism is based on a view that one variety of language is inherently superior to others and that this more highly valued variety should be imposed on the whole of a particular community. The favoured variety is usually a version of the ‘standard’ written language and is promoted with reference to grammar and vocabulary and, particularly frequently, with reference to punctuation. Those who speak or write this variety are deemed to be the ‘correct’ users of the language. Prescriptivists frequently stress the importance of rules which cannot under any circumstances be deviated from. Descriptivism is based on a view that the assignment of superior status to one variety of language is often arbitrary and is more likely to be the result of historical or socio-economic factors than of intrinsic linguistic factors. Descriptivists attempt to describe the language as they find it, demonstrating that all varieties of a language are valid for the particular purposes they serve, that language use is relative to the requirements of different contexts and that all languages and dialects are equally rule-governed and complex in both their historical development and current use. [Carter, 1995, 35-36]

Modern linguists make a clear distinction between *descriptive* grammars, which aim to give an objective description of how people actually speak, and *prescriptive* grammars, which lay down rules about how people ought to speak. The notions of ‘bad’ and ‘good’ grammar belong to the prescriptivist tradition. [Graddol et al, 1994]

There are rules or grammars prescribing the forms people ought to use when they speak or write [prescriptive grammars]. And there are rules or grammars describing the forms people actually use [descriptive grammars]. We believe that prescriptive grammars take subjective statements about attitudes to language and attempt to make them into objective statements about grammar. Descriptive grammars tell us what the actual language use of speakers is like without any remarks about right or wrong, good or bad. [Andersson and Trudgill, 1992]

These attitudes are still with us, and they motivate a widespread concern that linguistic standards should be maintained. Nevertheless, there is an alternative point of view that that is concerned less with ‘standards’ than with the *facts* of linguistic usage. This approach is summarised in the statement that it is the task of the grammarian to *describe*, not *prescribe* - to record the facts of linguistic diversity, and not to attempt the impossible tasks of evaluating language variation or halting language change. [Crystal, 1987, 2]

A major distinction between prescriptive and descriptive models of grammar is that in making judgements about grammatical ‘correctness’, prescriptivism relies on a single, autonomous model of language and literacy⁵⁶ based on the written form of Standard English. For descriptivists, Standard English is only one variety of English among many and is itself subject to variation and change. The descriptive approach recognises and validates plurality and diversity in grammatical usage.

prescriptive - single model grammar	descriptive -plural model grammar
correct English correct writing correct standard English right and wrong good and bad linguistic standards rules about how language should be used	describing/analysing language describing/studying language variation recognising/validating diversity in language, including dialects recognising/describing change in language studying language in context

Figure 2: Discourse markers for prescriptivist and descriptivist positions

To what extent did respondents’ discourses match the prescriptive/descriptive models?

Examination of recurring discourse features across the questionnaires revealed the influence of prescriptivism in respondents’ constructions of grammar. The language used to discuss ‘grammar’ in 49 [39%] of the questionnaires included one or more of the ‘prescriptivist’ discourse markers in Figure 2. ‘Descriptivist’ formulations were also in evidence, though to a lesser extent, and they did not lend themselves quite so readily to categorisation. This was to be expected, since, as Figure 2 shows, the term ‘descriptive’ signifies a broad approach to language study which encompasses a number of different focuses. Nevertheless, a descriptivist approach was discernible in 17 [13%] of the questionnaires. Roughly half [61] of the questionnaires seemed to fit squarely into neither of these two models. Thirty-four [27%] of these offered what could be termed a ‘structuralist’ understanding of grammar. These respondents differed from the others not only because they expressed their understanding in different terms, but more importantly

⁵⁶ Above, p. 57

because their formulations appeared ideologically less marked, their attitudes to grammar and grammar teaching less foregrounded than those of both the prescriptivists and the descriptivists, and sometimes not apparent at all. This did not, of course, mean that their attitudes towards grammar were ideologically neutral, merely that they were not overtly demonstrated in their questionnaire responses. For a small number who might also be categorised as broadly structuralist in their approach grammar was equated specifically with the ‘mechanics’ of language. Though only 9 [7%], they represented an interesting sub-category in terms of their formulation of and feelings about grammar. A final group of 18 respondents [14%] whose views were either too briefly or too idiosyncratically expressed were left as ‘unclassified’.

Mixed formulations

There was inevitably a degree of overlapping in the formulations which in some cases made categorisation difficult. The idea of grammar as ‘structure of language’ occurred across the categories. Where there were additional discourse elements reflecting an attitudinal positioning, responses were classed accordingly [i.e. as prescriptivist or descriptivist.] Thus, for example, a response in which grammar was defined as ‘a term to define the structure of language’ was placed in the ‘prescriptivist’ category because this trainee’s reason for teaching grammar was based clearly on the notion of ‘correct language’:

To help with correct structure of writing. [no H.E. linguistics]

Other responses defined grammar as ‘structure of language’ but suggested a very specific and narrow definition of ‘language’, usually as written English:

The conventions of speech and written English...Because when mistakes occur... [no H.E. linguistics]

The knowledge of language construction, use of punctuation... Knowledge of grammar is important for essay writing. [Lit. degree, some linguistics]

Chart 5 shows the categories described above as proportions of the total survey sample of 127.

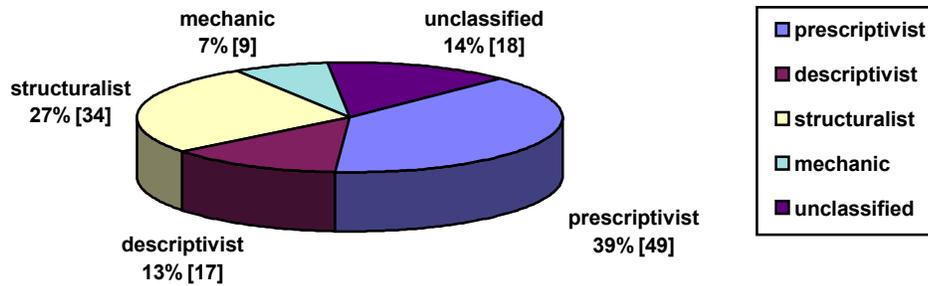


Chart 5: Constructions of 'grammar': all trainees

3.10 Prescriptivist constructions of grammar

Those trainee teachers whose discourses on ‘grammar’ involved the kinds of ‘prescriptivist’ formulations outlined above represented the largest group in the sample of 127. Again using the discourse markers above, it is possible to sub-categorise them in terms of their specific focuses, but what they all share is a concern with the role of grammar in language production, especially in writing, and a tendency to conceptualize grammar [and sometimes language itself] in terms of a single, homogeneous entity rather than the pluralistic model invoked by descriptivists.

Table 13 shows the variations in prescriptivist discourse which were identified alongside their distribution within this group.

Prominent discourse markers	Number	% [of 49]
correct writing	30	61
correct speech and writing/language	8	16
standard English	7	14
‘standards’	4	8
Totals	49	100

Table 13: Variations in prescriptivist discourse

Correct writing

The equation of grammar with ‘correct writing’ emerged as the most common of the ‘prescriptivist’ formulations. Those who had taken English language modules and/or TESOL qualifications were less likely to offer these explicitly prescriptivist constructions than those who had not [see Charts 5a and 5b], but there was evidence of shared discourse patterns across the prior learning categories:

Helps children to write properly. [Literature degree with language modules]

Using the correct structures and combinations of sentences in formal written English. [Lit. degree with language modules]

So children know when they are writing grammatically correct sentences. [no H.E. linguistics]

The right way to construct sentences, word order and punctuation. [no H.E linguistics]

One trainee felt that grammar teaching would not only help pupils to write correctly, but would provide them with additional linguistic resources. While the notion of adding to the pupils’ linguistic repertoire is an interesting one, the wording suggests rather a simple and mechanistic view of grammatical development:

It enables children to use a wider range of language in creative tasks - if they know what grammar is available they will apply more.

For another, again, creative writing was the main focus, but there was a clear sense of conflict between grammar and creativity:

It can improve their writing skills. However, I do not believe grammar [sic] should take precedence [sic] when examining the quality of the text. Creativity and imagination is [sic] more important.

For three other trainees grammar teaching was associated with the correction of errors. One saw the correction of grammatical errors as a tool for assessment;

The system of rules for communicating in a language...It makes the teaching and learning of it more measurable.

Two tempered the prescriptive tenor of their answers with caveats relating to teaching methods:

Because when mistakes occur, there is a theory to refer back to. I think it needs to be taught in a practical and interesting way so that it does not become dry and obscure.

I wouldn't say 'This is going to be a grammar lesson', but I do think they should be able to recognise the structure of the language so that they can self-correct and think about their work. But the main focus will be the topic they're writing about.

The assumption that grammar teaching enhances written performance was taken a stage further by one respondent, who although she 'didn't particularly like it' when she was at school, seemed to view the teaching of 'correct sentence structure' as a kind of vaccination against sloppy linguistic [perhaps dialectal?] habits:

Because if it is not reinforced as with my experiences children forget over time and become lazy.

A more explicit reference to the detrimental effects of 'dialect' came from a respondent who had 'particularly enjoyed the language elements' of her degree course, and particularly sociolinguistics:

Too often, some pupils will never grasp the fundamental rules of English grammar, especially if they speak a dialectal form of English. The correct grammatical structures are essential in their formal writing, particularly in exams.

Correct speech and writing/correct language

Only a small number of trainees included the notion of 'correct speech' in their formulation of 'grammar', reflecting again the equation of grammar with written rather than spoken language:

I think it is necessary to teach children how grammar works for them to use it correctly in speech and writing..... A set of rules which helps us to use language correctly.

The information/technicalities necessary for children to be competent in written and spoken English.

For one trainee in this category the immediate situation seemed more pressing than the needs of future pupils:

It is very important in pursuing education at a higher level, especially PGCE. Everyone needs to have a basic grasp on correctness in speech and writing... The 'correct' way to speak and different elements that make up language.

While the majority of respondents in the 'prescriptivist' category were in favour of explicit grammar teaching in schools [only eight of 54, 15% were against], one adhered firmly to traditional notions of 'correctness' while denying the relevance of 'grammatical terms':

I feel it is important to be able to speak/write in formal English - you are judged on this. I don't think grammatical terms are important. .. Understanding the importance of expressing yourself correctly. Formal speech and writing. I don't believe in the new lax views on grammar. I believe in correcting speech that is grammatically incorrect, however politically incorrect this may be.

In all these examples, as in the overwhelming majority of 'prescriptivist' responses, the discourse reflects a single, dominant model of language. For a further seven trainees the 'single model' was identifiable as 'standard English':

Grammar as 'standard English'

Those trainees who equated 'grammar' with written language were implicitly drawing on 'standard English' as their model of 'correct English'. However, only six trainees used the term explicitly. At first sight this was surprising, given that it is a term in general use. It is possible that trainees associated the term with media criticisms of English teaching.

Grammar and 'standards'

The notion of grammar teaching as a bulwark against falling standards has been part of

press and politicians' discourse for some years [Chapter 1]. The ideological link between 'standards' and 'standard English' is strongly suggested in one respondent's understanding of 'grammar':

I regard it as a foundation for accurate communication - it is important to maintain specific standards to ensure meaning is conveyed accurately.

Other respondents echoed more clearly the popular discourse:

After having spent 4 weeks on diagnostic placement I have noted the appalling [sic] grammar of the majority of pupils at key stage 3 and 4!!!!⁵⁷

The 'rules' of speech and writing..... Children need to be aware of and understand speech and the written word to progress and succeed in education and the world of work. English grammar should also be taught from a MFL point of view. If English schools are to improve within this field then grammar needs to be taught in English lessons.

Only four trainees made an explicit reference to 'standards', suggesting, perhaps, that most of these intending English teachers preferred to distance themselves from largely negative media discourses on English teaching.

Prescriptivist grammar and ideologies of 'English'

While for some respondents there was no apparent difficulty either with the notion of grammar as 'correct English' or in teaching it as such, for others there were signs of potential conflict. Given that the majority of respondents who had been taught grammar at school had negative memories of the experience [p.79], it would be surprising if intending teachers did not feel something of a mismatch between the idea of teaching grammar and their own image of the teacher they would like to be. Add to this the influence of the 'personal growth' philosophy in English teaching in the past three decades [Chapter 1] and the long-established opposition to traditional grammar teaching among English teachers themselves, and even those with no background in descriptive linguistics might be expected to draw back from positioning themselves within the traditional, authoritarian

⁵⁷ Respondent's own apostrophes.

model which is generally associated with grammar teaching. The final part of the analysis of Questionnaire One would examine the ideologies of English teaching that respondents brought to their initial teacher training with a view to exploring in more detail any conflicts between those ideas and trainees' ideological constructions of grammar and grammar teaching. In the meantime, there were glimpses not only of the nature of the contradictions but also of some attempts at reconciling them.

That said, only one respondent in the entire sample actually registered her sense of conflict by stating that she was 'unsure' about whether grammar should be taught explicitly.⁵⁸ The more obviously prescriptivist responses tended to focus on 'correct English' and the need to bring pupils' language [especially written] skills up to 'standard'. Others, while offering a 'single', right-or-wrong model of grammar, used a more pupil-centred discourse, and preferred to see grammar teaching as enabling understanding:

Helps them to understand why sentences are formed in the way they are. 'Knowing the 'rules' should make explanations from teachers about grammatical errors much clearer.

For some trainees, understanding would be achieved through teaching methods which were context-related and relevant to pupils' work, suggesting that prescriptive grammar teaching might be reconciled with modern ideologies of 'English' if the teaching methods were right:

Standards of grammar in school seem to be really bad. However, grammar still needs to be taught in a context, no useless drills or exercises.

I wouldn't say 'This is going to be a grammar lesson', but I do think they should be able to recognise the structure of the language so that they can self-correct and think about their work. But the main focus will be on the topics they're writing about.

Because when mistakes occur there is a theory to refer back to. I think it needs to be taught in a practical and interesting way so that it does not become dry and obscure.

⁵⁸ The example is cited above, p. 114.

A few trainees took the ‘enabling’ discourse a stage further in positioning ‘correct grammar’ within a notion of pupil entitlement or empowerment. This allowed two trainees to rationalize an emphatic support of prescriptivism by framing it within a pragmatic discourse of social imperatives:

I feel it is important to be able to speak/write in formal English - you are judged on this.....I don't believe in the new lax views on grammar. I believe in correcting speech that is grammatically incorrect, however politically incorrect this may be.

[This is a ridiculous question.] Obviously I answered yes. [To the question ‘*Should grammar be taught explicitly?*’] I believe grammar should be taught explicitly because if one cannot communicate correctly in written form one will be misunderstood or not taken seriously.

Others focused on the demands of employment and educational progress:

Children need to be aware of and understand speech and the written word to progress and succeed in education and the world of work... If English schools are to improve within this field then grammar needs to be taught in schools.

Because grammar is essential to future employment success.

In other questionnaires a more general discourse of pupil entitlement was employed:

I think it is important to give pupils the confidence to feel that they can use grammar correctly. Grammar to me should be about empowering people.

It should be taught to give pupils an advantage. I sometimes feel disadvantaged because of my lack of knowledge.

I think it is a basic tool of life that once mastered will be an advantage for the rest of their lives.

Only one respondent in this group said varieties other than Standard English should be included in grammar teaching.

Important that grammar should be taught using precise terms but they should also made aware of dialect and other varieties of language.

The descriptivist tenor of this answer is then put into question by the ‘definition’ of grammar as ‘The writing and reading of English in its correct technical form’, suggesting a conflict still to be resolved.

Two trainees saw the conflict in terms of grammar versus creativity. For one the solution lay in ensuring that grammar was kept to a necessary minimum; the other felt simply that it should not be taught:

I do not believe grammar [sic] should take precedence [sic] when examining the creativity of the text. Creativity and imagination is [sic] more important.

Rules/regulations hamper creative writing.

The latter was one of only four trainees in the ‘prescriptivist’ category [49 in total] who disagreed with explicit grammar teaching. Those who perceive grammar as ‘proper’, ‘good’ or ‘correct’ English should find themselves quite comfortable with the content and discourse of the national curriculum. But they might also find that the pedagogical implications of prescriptivism are at odds with their ideas both of themselves as English teachers and of what English teaching means to them. They could also find that English classroom and the national curriculum are very different places, and that the classroom will offer considerably more diverse meanings of ‘the English language’.

Grammar as ‘structure

Of the 34 respondents categorised as ‘structuralists’, 59% [20] had studied linguistics at university and/or as part of a TESOL qualification. This compared to 26% [13] of those offering prescriptivist views. Prescriptivist responses generally focused on the need to master ‘correct English’, often using modal verb forms such as ‘need to know’, ‘should be able’, ‘must be taught’, ‘a good knowledge of grammar will help.....’, along with present tense forms also expressing categorical modality, for example:

It is essential that....

Otherwise children remain confused..

It makes the teaching...more measurable.. also clarifies....

If it is not reinforced...children forget over time and become lazy.

It is important....

‘Structuralists’ were noticeably less emphatic in their views on the importance of grammar and were more likely to express their support for grammar teaching in terms of pupils’ understanding rather than the need to inculcate the specific forms of written Standard English. While the majority of trainees in both groups connected grammar teaching with pupils’ use of [especially written] English, for some ‘structuralists’ ‘knowledge about language’ was sufficient rationalisation:

A system of rules and principles which gives structure to speech and writing...
To raise their awareness of how their language is constructed.

Pupils should be given the opportunity to understand the structure of language

Such formulations offer the possibility that grammar might be used in reading as well as writing. Only three respondents in the ‘structuralist’ group made this explicit:

Because it is very helpful in creative writing/essay writing. Also helpful in close text reading.

The building blocks [names of] parts of sentences/words... Grammar should be taught alongside/coincidental to texts as and when interesting points arise.

Rather than looking at literature, we look at the way that literature has been constructed, e.g. sentence structure, words, relationship between words and sentences.⁵⁹

The majority of ‘structuralists’, like their more prescriptivist colleagues, justified grammar teaching in terms of its practical use, and particularly as an aid to pupils’ writing [61% or 20]. However, the ‘structuralists’ generally expressed the relationship between grammar teaching and written performance more tentatively:

I believe it can help in a child’s use of language.

Helps to give ideas of structure.

A significant difference between ‘structuralists’ and ‘prescriptivists’ emerged in the relationship between respondents’ ideas about grammar and their beliefs about English

⁵⁹ Radha, one of the interview group, Chapter 6.

teaching. It seemed that those who saw grammar in the more ideologically neutral terms of ‘language structure’ were better able to frame their support for grammar teaching within a ‘personal growth’ or pupil-empowerment model of English teaching. Their discourse therefore was less likely to exhibit the kinds of ideological conflict apparent in a number of prescriptivist responses. Those trainees who saw grammar teaching as a way of enlarging pupils’ understanding of language rather than as a vehicle for prescription were able to employ a discourse of pupil-empowerment with little overt sign of conflict:

Will help children to understand and develop their writing skills. Will find it easier to acquire a second language.

Pupils should be given the opportunity to understand the structure of language.

I tend to think that words –especially technical terms- are tools. Once a person has access to a new tool, there is no saying how this tool may be used.

Only three respondents in this group disagreed with explicit grammar teaching, one because

‘technical terms are not explicitly [sic] relevant’. A second seemed to misinterpret the meaning of ‘explicit grammar teaching’ in asserting that ‘grammar should be taught alongside/coincidental to texts as and when interesting points arise’, while the third felt that ‘grammar kills the fun/play of language.’ This respondent, who had had no prior language study, was the exception in perceiving grammar as inhibiting rather than empowering. This, however, was the majority opinion among the small group who saw grammar as ‘the mechanics of language’.

Grammar as the mechanics of language

This small group could be viewed as a sub-category of the ‘structuralist’ group. However, the ‘grammar as mechanics’ group offered a more limited definition of grammar, and one which appeared for most of them to be incompatible with the broader purposes of English teaching. Six of the nine respondents in this category disagreed with explicit grammar teaching, a far higher proportion than in any other group, and one agreed only half-heartedly:

To be able to use language it is helpful but not compulsory to see how it works.

For others in this group the study of grammar was unrelated to meaning or use:

The mechanics of language... So that grammar can be applied independently of writing – in theory.

The mechanics of language, other than its semantic meaning.

How language is composed, focusing on technical terms rather than practice.

The idea of grammar as alien to ‘English’ was expressed unequivocally by one trainee:

English can be taught more enjoyably without focusing on technical terms. Leave that to mathematicians and scientists.

The contrast between the ‘naturalness’ of English and the artificiality of science was implied in other responses, reflecting an established, if currently contested definition of grammar as the ‘science of language’:

Not essential, should be an option [so that it does not hinder the learning of English as an enriching experience.

For another respondent, ‘naturalness’ was implicitly associated with creative writing:

[Grammar] should be introduced naturally, as part of creative writing.

Although the apparent antagonism within this group towards grammar teaching can be explained either by lack of linguistic background [five of the nine had no H.E. Linguistics] and/or by negative memories of school learning [five of the seven who expressed feelings about school grammar had negative memories], most of the respondents in this group understood what ‘explicit’ grammar teaching entailed, and some of their reservations echoed an important part of the current debate, one which most respondents seemed to take as given: the extent to which explicit grammar teaching helps or hinders written performance⁶⁰:

⁶⁰ Above, p. 45.

[Grammar is] necessary in developing a person's ability to write an understandable text. However, it is not necessary to know the technical jargon of how they did it.

Being 'taught' the way you speak can hinder your writing. It makes children less confident as they puzzle over whether they have formed a sentence using a subordinate clause etc.

Specific terms confuse. Pupils concentrate on names rather than what they represent.

Single and plural models of grammar and language

The 92 formulations of 'grammar' categorised as 'prescriptivist', 'structuralist' and 'mechanical', differed in terms of their breadth of definition, their degree of prescription and the extent to which they complied with the perceived aims of 'English'. However, what they generally shared was a 'single-model' approach to language and therefore to grammar. It was rare to find among these responses an awareness of the different varieties that constitute 'English grammar'; for most respondents 'English language' meant standard written English. In the only prescriptivist response which mentioned varieties other than Standard English, a clear contradiction emerged:

Important that grammar should be taught using precise terms but they should also be made aware of dialect and other varieties of language... The writing and reading of English in its correct technical form.

A 'structuralist' questioned the way 'grammar' was equated with Standard English when he was at school. But here, again, Standard English is presented as the dominant form:

Study of syntax, semantics and morphology... [At school] I remember that some pupils were completely 'lost' and found grammar boring and useless. Perhaps this was due to the feeling that a perfect standard was being forced on them – when they spoke a broad dialect? I think it is important that children know about the structure of the language, even if they choose not to conform to it.

Another response in this category [from a trainee with no formal background in linguistics] offered what would be accepted by most modern linguists as an accurate definition of grammar, but, again, it implied a single, autonomous model of language:

I see grammar as the basic structure of the language – how the language components are and can be combined to make meaningful propositions.

3.11 Descriptivist constructions of grammar

Like their ‘structuralist’ colleagues, trainees whose formulations of grammar coincided with broadly descriptivist approaches to grammar were more likely to have studied linguistics at university and/or TESOL level than those expressing prescriptivist views [11 of 17 or 65% compared with 26%]. While both prescriptivists and structuralists related grammar primarily to the teaching of writing, for most descriptivists the main application of grammatical knowledge lay in reading and/or analysis. Three trainees in this group saw a role for grammar in improving written performance, though in all cases this rationale was framed within a ‘pluralistic’ model of language:

Because it is helpful for children [and adults] to be able to identify components of language so that they might express themselves more coherently... A system for explaining the ‘rules’ of language, which is in a constant state of flux. It therefore adapts and varies, but retains certain systems.

The majority of respondents in this group associated grammar teaching with reading and textual analysis. The emphasis for most was on the study of language rather than its production:

A way of describing how a language is spoken and written... I think students should learn how their language works and what effects it can have. For more interesting elements of language study you need to understand some grammar.

Grammar is a structured way of talking about language... Giving pupils a metalanguage to help describe what they are saying/writing.

In order to more effectively analyse a text.

Three trainees in this group referred to the prescriptivist/descriptivist debate. Others mentioned the importance of varieties other than standard English:

The [sometimes arbitrary] rules governing the use of language... Deviance from that guide is not necessarily wrong, but justified by e.g. register, dialect, creativity etc..⁶¹

The rules and regulations which govern a language. These are variable according to dialect, written and spoken forms, etc.

Two respondents appeared to move from the basic ‘varieties’ position towards a discourse of resistance:

Differs – the way a dialect/language is put together. Each has their own... shouldn’t just revolve around S.E. – should encompass dialects etc.... once you know the rules you can break them effectively.

The DNA of language... So that a base standard of a language can be accepted and referred to in speech and writing. So that uses ‘away’ from that rule can retain a creativity and potency.

Here the relevance of grammar to the study of literature becomes apparent. In relation to language study, there was only one response within the entire first questionnaire sample which could be said to offer a ‘critical’ approach to language in the sense advocated by linguists such as Fairclough [1989, 1992b]:

The description of the way language works and is used in a variety of discourses.. to enable students to analyse texts with an increased set of critical practices.

While it could be argued that respondents were asked about grammar teaching at key stages 3 and 4, where a critical linguistics approach might not be considered appropriate, given the number of trainees in the overall sample who had encountered language analysis at university, one might have expected a more radical attitude towards the use of language in contemporary society.

Attitudinal categories and reasons for teaching grammar

It was noticeable that respondents offering descriptivist constructions of grammar gave more reasons for teaching it. Table 14 shows that the median number of reasons given by

⁶¹ Jon, Chapter 6.

‘descriptivists’ was 2 while for both ‘prescriptivists’ and ‘structuralists’ it was 1. ‘Descriptivists’ were significantly more likely to offer more than one reason for teaching grammar than those in the other groups. This could be interpreted in at least two ways: it could indicate that those trainees who adopted a descriptivist position were more enthusiastic and more confident about grammar teaching; it could also mean that those

	Prescriptivist [of 45 who gave reasons]	Structuralist [of 29 who gave reasons]	Descriptivist [of 16 who gave reasons]
median number of reasons given	1	1	2
% giving more than one reason	18% [8]	27%	56%

Table 14: Correlation between numbers of reasons for teaching grammar and attitudinal categories

offering more detailed responses to this question were more likely to be placed in the ‘descriptivist’ category, and that if other respondents had developed their answers more fully, they might have been reclassified as ‘descriptivists’, especially those in the ‘structuralist’ category where clearly defined attitudes were least apparent.

‘Unclassified’ responses

The majority of the questionnaires placed in the ‘unclassified’ group were insufficiently detailed and/or too vaguely expressed to classify in terms of their attitude to grammar. Most [15 of 18] did not offer a definition of grammar, while three used metaphors which hinted a structuralist notions, but, again too briefly to classify with any certainty:

Framework for language
It’s the oil in the engine
Arcane building blocks of limited use overall

Five respondents in this group disagreed with explicit grammar teaching [33% of the 15 who gave their opinion], and generally the perception of grammar was a negative one. Of those who commented on their own prior learning, 86% [13 of 15] had negative memories, including two of the four who had taken language modules at university. An exception was

the English Language graduate who ‘loved grammar’ and considered it ‘fundamental to everything’. Unfortunately she gave neither reasons nor definition, making this unusual and interesting response impossible to classify in terms of ideological orientation.

Another interesting response was placed in this group because it appeared to contain a mixture of perspectives: a structuralist definition alongside an ideological positioning which seemed to combine both prescriptivist and descriptivist notions:

The structure of language. There ought to be a standard English, but not at the expense of dialects. Power is language, everyone ought to have access to that.

Although ‘unclassified’, this response reflects the kinds of conflict about grammar teaching apparent in many of the questionnaires, and especially in those adopting a prescriptivist position. Most respondents in the ‘unclassified’ group, however, displayed uncertainty about their own knowledge of grammar and/or the desirability of teaching it.

3.12 The influence of prior learning on trainees’ formulations of grammar

Charts 5a, 5b and 5c show the distribution of attitudinal categories among those with and without degree or TESOL linguistics.

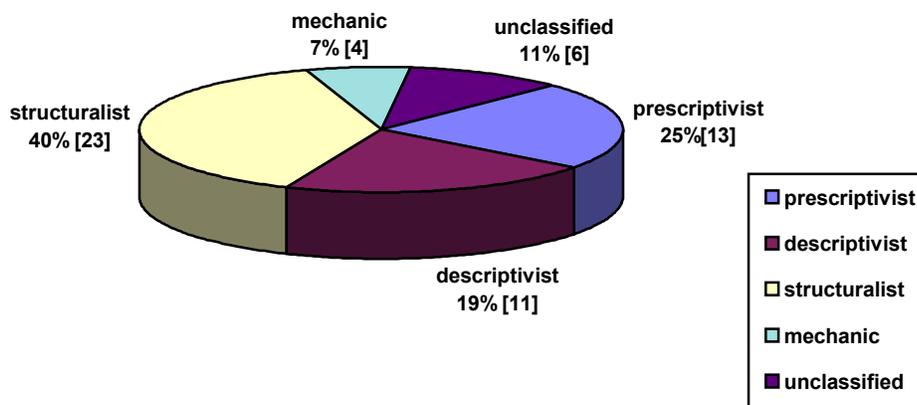


Chart 5a: Constructions of 'grammar' among 57 trainees with degree and/or TESOL linguistics

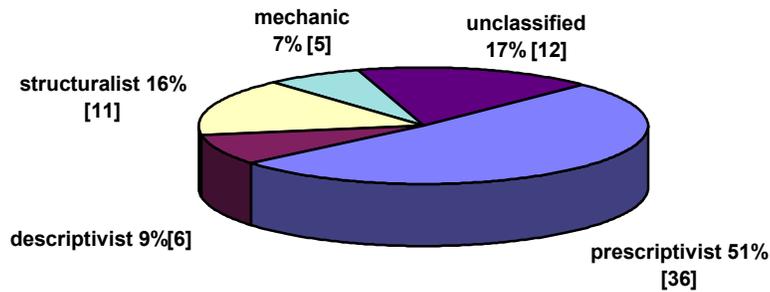


Chart 5b: Constructions of 'grammar' among 70 trainees without degree or TESOL linguistics

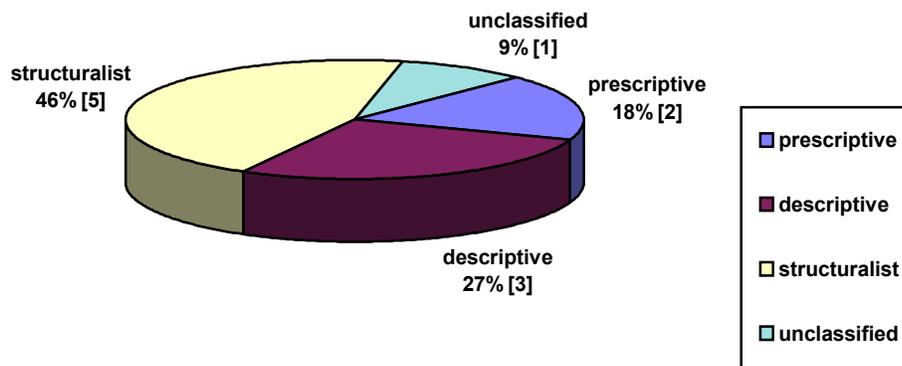


Chart 5c: Constructions of 'grammar' among 11 trainees with TESOL qualifications

Prescriptivist constructions of grammar appeared most frequently both across the total sample [Chart 5, p.125] and in responses of the 70 trainees without degree or TESOL experience of English language study [Chart 5b]. Those with degree and/or TESOL experience were statistically more likely to offer a descriptive formulation than those with none, though for the largest proportion [40%] in the former group [Chart 5a], the notion of

‘structure’ predominated. For both the total sample and those without H.E. linguistics, this formulation appeared second in frequency to prescriptivist formulations. The most popular formulation for those who had taken a TESOL qualification [chart 5c] was a structuralist one, while this group was alone in containing more ‘descriptivists’ than ‘prescriptivists’. However, since this group numbered only 11 in total, the more reliable comparisons must be those observed in charts 5, 5a and 5b.

What is the comparative significance of higher education experience and school learning in trainees’ constructions of ‘grammar’?

That undergraduate and/or TESOL linguistics is the significant variable rather than school learning can be shown by comparing the responses of trainees within four groups: those with degree/TESOL experience only, those with both university and school grammar, those with school grammar only and those with no prior learning [Table 15].

	Prescriptivist		Descriptivist		Structuralist		Mechanic		Unclassified	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
1.H.E/TESOL only [of 21]	3	14	4	19	10	48	1	5	2	9
2.H.E/TESOL + school grammar [of 36]	10	27	7	19	13	36	3	8	4	11
3. school grammar only [of 50]	27	54	6	12	4	8	4	8	11	22
4. no prior learning [of 20]	9	45	0	0	7	35	1	5	1	5
totals	49		17		34		9		18	

Table 15: Constructions of ‘grammar’ in relation to prior learning

Although there was an unexpectedly high proportion of prescriptivist constructions in group 2 [those who had studied grammar both at school and at H.E. level], percentages of prescriptive formulations among those who had learnt grammar at school and those without prior learning were broadly similar, and noticeably higher than those who had studied grammar at degree and/or TESOL levels. The relatively high occurrence of prescriptivism among those who had studied grammar both at school and university offers the interesting possibility that learning grammar at school might encourage a

predisposition to prescriptivism which was either unaffected by H.E. study or re-emerged in preparation for school teaching.

Those who had learnt grammar at school were more likely to offer a descriptivist formulation than those with no prior learning, but not in the same proportions as those with degree and/or TESOL experience. Again, though, the proportions were highest among those with H.E. experience only.

Those offering a structuralist formulation of grammar were, again, more likely to have studied language at H.E. level, though group 4, those recording no prior learning of grammar, also contained a high proportion of 'structuralists'. However, it could be argued that the notion of grammar as 'the structure of language' is part of the general knowledge that PGCE students might be expected to have. It may derive from students' study of languages other than English, or from their PGCE course, or it may simply represent a popular, 'commonsense' perception. Moreover, as previously suggested [p. 65], the apparent ideological neutrality of 'grammar as structure' can easily co-exist with a traditional, prescriptivist attitude.

Those who perceived grammar as 'the mechanics of language' were both the smallest and the most diverse group in terms of background experience. In this sense the figures are not meaningful. What does emerge, however, is that this group was proportionately more likely to disagree with explicit grammar teaching in schools. Of the six trainees in this group who disagreed, only two had studied any grammar at university and one of these was a Literature graduate who found stylistics 'difficult to comprehend'.

Chapter 4: The Meanings of English: Re-thinking the Methodology

4.1 Analysing the meanings of ‘English’

Questions E1 and E2 on the first questionnaire: ‘What would you say are the main purposes of teaching English?’ and ‘What are your own reasons for wanting to teach English?’ were included in order to begin to examine the extent to which trainee teachers’ views on grammar and grammar teaching fitted into their wider understandings of what English teaching meant for them. I had been able to characterise their positions on grammar and grammar teaching by referring to prescriptive and descriptive formulations. I now realised that this had involved a change in my analytical method, from reading and categorizing questionnaire responses as ‘given’, to treating them as elements of specific discourses. The meanings of ‘English’ were to prove the most difficult to organise of any of the questionnaire responses and to force me to rethink my method, consciously reconfiguring it along the lines of my prescriptive/descriptive analysis and addressing the methodological implications.

It soon became apparent that it would be difficult to categorise the responses to questions E1 and E2 in terms of clearly differentiated models. The range and diversity of functions and meanings attributed to ‘English’ appeared to reflect Goodwyn’s [1992] conclusion that [practising] English teachers drew on a range of models of their subject. Of the 106 trainees answering question E1, 30 [28%] offered five ‘purposes’, while six gave more than the five requested, and two gave seven. On the basis of both the range of responses and their recurring themes, it seemed safe to suppose that this was not a new question for most of the trainees, but one which they had previously been invited to consider early in their PGCE training, and probably beforehand, at interview. There appeared no discernible patterns which might distinguish one university group from another, suggesting a broad consensus at this point across the five schools of education as to the multipurpose nature of English teaching. This would be an important issue in any subsequent generalisation from the data, but at the same time it would call into question the extent to which meanings could be attributed to individual trainees. I identified only one instance of word-for-word

duplication, where two respondents had clearly collaborated, but this, again, cautioned me to tread carefully.

Quantitative and qualitative techniques

After my initial coding, the responses to questions E1 and E2 had been processed using the computer programme, ESSR, along with the rest of the data from Questionnaire One. Although the quantitative results were to prove inadequate for a full interpretation of these responses, the categorisation of elements within the responses gave a useful indication of the popularity of specific formulations of ‘English’, and of trainees’ reasons for wanting to teach it. Because my task here was the interpretation of meanings, any quantitative findings would be interpreted within a qualitative framework. Coffey and Atkinson make the point that qualitative and quantitative data are not always easy to distinguish, but that the combination of techniques ‘can enhance validity, develop richer analyses, and lead to deeper insights’ [1996: 5]. In terms of credibility, my analysis could, I felt, only benefit from the presence of quantitative data, though from a ‘reflexive’ position I was fully aware of my own role in the selection and application of such data.

First stage investigation of responses to questions E1 and E2

My first attempt to ‘make sense’ of the detail contained in answers to questions E1 and E2 entailed coding the various ‘purposes’ and ‘reasons’ for quantitative analysis. [Appendices 7 and 8]. At this stage I had no clear interpretive framework to apply and this process would familiarise me with the data, and provide me with some useful initial insights. I intended my approach at this point to be ‘grounded’ in the data, but I was aware, once I began organising and coding the responses, that I was already drawing on my own understanding of the various ways in which ‘English’ has been constructed. It was clear, then, that if the notion of ‘grounded theory’ were applicable here, it would be not as a research method in itself, but as an initial orientation to the data, ‘a particular phase or aspect of the approach’ [Bryman and Burgess, 1994: 591]. In addition to the benefits already mentioned, it enabled me to some extent [taking into account the interpretative issues referred to above] to focus on what Gough and Scott have called the ‘emic’ aspect of research, which is ‘centrally concerned with the discovery of meanings attributed by

respondents' in contrast to the 'etic' approach, in which data is interpreted and presented 'in ways likely to be found meaningful by audiences outside the immediate research context' [2000: 342]. They further suggest that where researchers wish to address both aspects, 'there may be a need for two, distinct, but linked, phases to the coding process.' [ibid: 353]. I was to take their approach a stage further by employing not only two sets of codings, but two distinct methods.

In their discussion of data analysis, Coffey and Atkinson [1996: 10] draw on Mason's view of the 'three ways of reading data' as 'literal reading', 'interpretative reading' and 'reflexive reading'. The first stage of my analysis of responses to questions E1 and E2 came closest to a 'literal reading'; later it became clear that I would need to go further, to go 'through or beyond the data' [Mason, 109], for an 'interpretative reading', which would then necessitate the 'reflexive reading' referred to above and which underpins the 'dialogic' model of research described by Scott and Usher [1999]:

It is precisely through the interplay between one's interpretive frames or pre-understandings and the elements of the actions one is trying to understand that knowledge is developed. In other words, one's pre-understandings, far from being closed prejudices or biases [as they are thought of in positivist epistemology], actually make one more open-minded because in the process of interpretation and understanding they are put at risk, tested and modified through the encounter with what one is trying to understand. So rather than bracketing or 'suspending' them, we should use them as the essential starting point for acquiring knowledge. To know, one must be aware of one's pre-understandings even though one cannot transcend them. At the same time, however, they need to be left open to modification in the course of the research.[28]

4.2 Re-thinking the Method

After coding and quantifying responses to questions E1 and E2, my results appeared to coincide with previous findings that personal growth was the dominant pedagogical model, for trainees as well as practitioners. But personal growth, like any other 'model' is neither homogenous nor static [Green, 1993: 393], and I needed to be able to explain the 'nuances' that distinguished the way that current trainees saw their subject. The problem at this point was that I needed to go beyond existing studies of 'models of English'. These

had in any case, begun to feel rather insular, even incestuous, at least partly because the research methods were often deterministic in nature, using Lickert scales, for example, or pre-determined formulations with which respondents could concur or disagree but which were inadequate to explore the shifts and conflicts which could be present in any individual practitioners' version of their subject.

The idea that models of English imply different epistemological frameworks and specifically, different constructions of 'pupil, 'teacher' and 'state' [Ball et al,1990; Peel et al, 2000], means that any interpretation of 'the meanings of English' must be located within the historical context from which they emerge. While there would be continuities between 'models' described in the 80s and 90s [mainly those of practising teachers] and those presented in my own research, I needed to maintain this sense of 'historicity' in my account, to examine where these trainees' perceptions of English as a subject, its teachers and its pupils, intersected with the discourses that I had described in Chapters 1 and 2. This would mean that my approach to the data would need to shift: I would be focusing explicitly on the discourses underpinning respondents' constructions of 'English' and in consequence, I would be distancing myself from the 'individual voices' of my respondents. However, there were a number of reasons why, at this stage, I felt justified in changing my approach.

i. The problem with models

Morgan's *Critical Literacy in the Classroom* argues against the use of 'models' in English studies, in that it 'suggests a normative, even exemplary schema for English education and a predetermined form of practice, both of which exist apart from the person who teaches according to that 'model'.' The term 'discourses', on the other hand, implies both the patterns of talk characteristic of particular groups of people and their ideological signification:

those characteristic ways of talking and writing, hence thinking and being which are common to members of a particular socio-cultural group. These convey ideologies and thus enable members of the discourse group to make a particular sense of their experience and the world. [1997:2]

ii. Whose meanings?

Reflections on the provenance of trainees' beliefs about their subject had led me to question my interpretative practice, and to realise that I could not take these meanings for granted, simply attributing them to their 'authors'. I had not asked trainees where their ideas originated. Ideas, opinions and beliefs are notoriously difficult to 'pin down' in this way, partly at least because of what Fairclough ⁶² [1989, 1992b] has termed 'naturalization' in discourse practice and the ways in which ideologies are transformed into 'common sense'. This is not to suggest that trainees' perceptions were not thought-through, but the questionnaire method was not an appropriate research tool through which to ask respondents to reflect productively on the genesis of complex and possibly contradictory formulations. At this stage, then, it became problematic to simply 'read off' the meanings as owned by their respondent-authors. Issues of 'author – ity' would need to be addressed.

iii. Changing meanings

Another difficulty in interpreting meanings arises from their contingency. Meanings change both diachronically and synchronically: across time and across contexts. The meanings presented here appeared both to draw on shared assumptions and to re-write them in certain ways. The 're-writings' could be a function of the specific context of production, including the constraints of the questionnaire format and uncertainties about both the interrelatedness of the research project and the PGCE course, as well as future readership, but they could also reflect new conceptualisations of 'English'. For the trainees themselves, this was a period of transition and rapid change, when, like all apprentices, they were not only acquiring knowledge, but negotiating new identities. Lave and Wenger [1999] underline the relationship between practice and understanding for apprentices in general. At this early stage in training, lacking any substantial practical experience,⁶³ the PCGE trainees are very much on the 'periphery' of the teaching community. Their meanings are not 'lived' in the sense that they have not been mediated by experience

⁶² Following Gramsci, 1971

⁶³ They will have undertaken an initial 'school experience', but this would consist for the most part of lesson observation.

within the social practice of teaching in a specific school. To this extent their meanings will be both in transition and, at least partly, borrowed. Some of these meanings might be said to be more ‘owned’ than others, to the extent that they emanate from their own experience as learners. However, the separating out of such meanings would be extremely problematic methodologically, particularly in relation to questionnaire responses. In any case, subject meanings will differ within the different communities or subcultures of school, university and PGCE department, [Ball and Lacey, 1994] and during their training year [and beyond] apprentice teachers will be in process of negotiating a teacher identity from amongst a plethora of ideas and ideologies. Again, because this process is largely unconscious, the exploration of understandings as ‘personal beliefs’ is rendered problematic.

iv. Meaning and identity

A simplistic ‘reading off’ of meanings carries with it the assumption of a simplistic and unitary authorial identity. This notion of identity has been challenged comprehensively but one does not need to subscribe to the poststructuralist tradition in order to see that it is not appropriate to an apprenticeship or training context. Lavee and Wenger’s description of the complex inter-relationship of learning and identity was particularly pertinent here:

Learners can be overwhelmed, overawed and overworked. Yet even when submissive imitation is the result, learning is never simply a matter of the ‘transmission’ of knowledge or the ‘acquisition’ of skill; identity in relation with practice and hence knowledge and skill and their significance to the subject and the community, are never unproblematic.’ [34]

Not only was the questionnaire an inadequate instrument through which to explore notions of individual identity, but any attempt to address the individual as author of meanings would be fraught with difficulty.

v. Meaning, form and interpretation

Although the responses to these questions were data-rich in the sense that most consisted of several points, individual ‘reasons’ were often expressed in single word or phrase units. The format of question E1 had requested a list of five ‘purposes of English’, and there

was little space to elaborate, even if trainees had wished to prolong a lengthy questionnaire. There was certainly a number of both detailed and grammatically complete responses, but those responses which were presented in a fragmented form would raise issues not only of interpretation, but also of ethics.

For Gough and Scott [2000] data may be considered ‘meaningful’ in two ways: its meaning for the respondent and its meaning for the researcher, which means that any attribution of meaning to respondents would require checking for credibility [341]. This, of course, is not possible within a questionnaire survey, and although I was able to get closer to the individual understandings of trainees in subsequent interviews, interpretation of the questionnaire responses relied much more heavily on my own interpretation and theoretical alignment. For interpretivist researchers, ‘in the sense-making business’ and thus viewing truths as ‘historical rather than abstract, contingent rather than determinate’ [Scott and Usher: 28], this need not threaten validity. It would be crucial, however, both to be explicit about my selection of an interpretative framework, and to build in as far as possible a ‘reflexive reading’ of the data, the purpose of which, for Mason is to ‘locate you as part of the data you have generated, and...to explore your role in the process of generation and interpretation of data’ [1996: 109].

vi. Ideology

For most social science researchers, as patterns begin to emerge in respondents’ articulation of beliefs, they cease to be treated as ‘personal’ views, and those meanings which are perceived as ‘shared’ become the focus for investigation. For Halliday [1978] all meanings are ‘socially constructed’. Their interpretation therefore needs to be framed within an understanding of the beliefs or values shared by that society or community in a given context at a given time. Those belief systems are based on ideologies which ‘define for us what constitutes appropriate behaviour in a society and indeed construct for us what it means to be human’ [Carter, 1995:71]. Ideologies are bound up with language not only because using language is such an important component of social behaviour, but also because it is a form of social behaviour which relies to a great extent on ‘common-sense assumptions’. It is through these ‘taken-for-granted’ meanings that ideologies operate

most effectively. [Fairclough,1989: 2]. Because ideologies are both reflected in and constitutive of language use, making language, or ‘discourse’ the focus for research can help uncover the ideological meanings which underpin social behaviour, particularly within institutional settings like education [ibid: 72].

4.3 Discourse Analysis as Research Method

For all these reasons, I decided to reconfigure my analysis of questions E1 and E2, using the method advocated by Norman Fairclough called ‘Critical Discourse Analysis’, [CDA: 1989] and, more recently, ‘Textually-Oriented Discourse Analysis’ [TODA] [1992b]. In a later paper [1999] Fairclough explains how his version of discourse analysis can be used, not only for the analysis of language texts, but as a tool for social science research. It is relatively commonplace today for researchers from a variety of disciplines to employ the notion of ‘discourse’ in interpreting both written and spoken data. Jaworski and Coupland [1999] attribute what has been called ‘the linguistic turn’ in social science research to two main factors: a broadening of focus in linguistic research and the epistemological shift which has entailed ‘a falling off of intellectual security in what we know and what it means to know’ [3]. Foucault has explained how knowledge is constructed through processes of classification [1972]. Language, therefore, can no longer be taken for granted, or meanings treated as transparent. More specifically, language is no longer simply a vehicle for the communication of ideas; it constructs those ideas. Meaning must therefore be interpreted not as individual behaviour, but as a part of a social process:

The world is perceived differently within different discourses. Discourse is structured by assumptions within which every speaker must operate in order to be heard as meaningful. Thus the concept of discourse emphasizes the social processes that produce meaning. [Ball : 1990]

Definitions of ‘discourse’ have varied over time and across disciplinary boundaries [Jaworski and Coupland, ibid: 6-7]. However, central to the concept is the idea of meaning as both socially constituted and constitutive:

Discourse is language use relative to social, political and cultural formation – it is language reflecting social order but also language shaping social order and shaping individual’s interaction with society.’ [ibid: 3]

Fairclough's own definition of discourse as 'language as social practice' [1989: 20] both makes clear that discourse is more than simply 'language use' and reflects the multidimensional nature of his approach. In advocating TODA as a method for social science research, Fairclough aims to combine the close analysis of texts with critical social theory, to make it possible 'to investigate language dynamically within processes of social and cultural change' [1992b:2].

Another important defining element in discourse is its changeability. It is not sufficient to locate discourses within their specific social, historical and cultural contexts: discourses are not fixed in time, but always in process of change. This compares with what has been seen as Foucault's more rigid and over-deterministic categorisation of the elements of specific discourses [Ball, 1990:7]. Likewise for Fairclough:

A discursive formation does not define a unitary set of stable concepts in well-defined relation to each other. The picture is rather one of shifting configurations of changing concepts. [ibid: 45]

The characterisation of texts as 'heterogeneous' or 'hybrid' [Jaworski and Coupland: 39] entails not only the identification of the various discourse types traceable within a given text, but also an explanation of the ways in which discourse types inter-relate within the text to produce meaning. This intertextual dimension is central to Fairclough's approach.

Intertextuality

Fairclough sees intertextuality⁶⁴ as particularly relevant to the study of contemporary social and cultural processes:

The rapid transformation and restructuring of textual traditions and orders of discourse is a striking contemporary phenomenon, which suggests that intertextuality ought to be a major focus in discourse analysis. [ibid: 104]

In terms of research practice, intertextuality is both a component of texts and part of the method of analysis. Within texts, it is

basically the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated, or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth [ibid: 84].

As part of Fairclough's analytical method, intertextual analysis shows how texts draw selectively on discourse types to create new configurations of meaning.

Intertextuality and meaning

For Fairclough, intertextuality inevitably problematizes meaning, the 'multiple voices' within a given text rendering meaning elusive and ambivalent [1992b: 105] Intertextuality therefore becomes an issue both of production and interpretation [ibid: 84]. This makes demands on the discourse analyst in terms of both analytical precision and reflexivity:

The intertextuality of texts substantially complicates the process of text interpretation... for in order to make sense of texts, interpreters have to find ways of fitting the diverse elements of a text into a coherent, though not necessarily unitary, determinate or univalent, whole [ibid: 133]

Halliday's notion of 'meaning potential' [1978], offers Fairclough a way into interpreting texts which are 'open to multiple interpretations':

Interpreters usually reduce this potential ambivalence by opting for a particular meaning, or a small set of alternative meanings. Providing we bear in mind the dependence of meaning upon interpretation, we can use 'meaning' both for potentials of forms and for the meanings ascribed in interpretation.' [ibid: 75]

Intertextuality and ideology

Social constructivism, and in particular the construction of ideology, are the overriding concerns of Critical Discourse Analysis. Fairclough contrasts this approach to language with that of sociolinguistics which, for him does not venture beyond 'merely establishing correlations between language and society.' The object of CDA is to explore 'deeper causal relations', namely the effects on discourse of ideologies and power relations and the ways in which discourses in turn impact upon systems of knowledge and belief [1992b: 12].

⁶⁴ The term 'intertextuality', though usually attributed to Bakhtin, and central to his work, was first

Following Althusser, Fairclough sees ideologies as embedded in institutional discourse practices. They are most effective when ‘naturalized’, or when people within institutions perceive them as ‘normal’. But Fairclough warns against over-stating the stability of such discourses. Institutions are ‘sites of ideological struggle’; those struggles are, to a significant extent, played out in discourse, and Fairclough’s intertextual method is aimed at uncovering the often complex and contradictory discursive networks through which those struggles take place. Gramsci’s [1971] notion of ‘hegemony’ is also significant here. In a given institution at a given time, power relations may be working within texts to effect changes in discourse practice, moving them in the direction of hegemonic or dominant discourses [1995: 34]. This ties in with the process of ‘technologization’ in discourse practice, which Fairclough explains as an:

ongoing cultural process of redesigning existing discourse practices and training institutional personnel in the redesigned practices [ibid: 102].

Examples of ‘discourse technologies’ include interviewing, teaching, counselling and advertising. They reflect and are part of the hybrid nature of contemporary discourses. Fairclough would define such strategies as ‘ideological’ in the sense that they are driven by power relations at various levels of the institution and the state.

Intertextuality, ideology and subjectivity

Although discourse analysis is primarily concerned with the ‘social’ rather than with the ‘individual’, discourse practices have important implications for personal identity or the individual’s sense of ‘self’. For Fairclough, as for Althusser [1972] discourse ‘interpellates subjects’. Fairclough draws on Foucault’s description [1974] of the ‘felicitous ambiguity’ of the term ‘subject’ which carries two meanings: the agent or instigator of an action as well as one subject[ed] to authority [2001: 39]. One effect of discourse is to ‘position’ the social subject, or to inscribe her as a particular kind of person, even while she is engaging in and with the discourse practice as an active subject or agent. Again, the notion of change is crucial:

introduced by Julia Kristeva. [Fairclough, 1992: 102, citing Moi, *The Kristeva Reader*]

The social process of producing social subjects can be conceived of in terms of the positioning of people progressively over a period of years – indeed a lifetime – in a range of subject positions. [ibid: 103]

The positioning of subjects takes on added significance in institutional contexts, where being able to access and participate in the institutional discourse is crucial to being accepted into a ‘community of practice’ [Lave and Wenger: 28]. For Fairclough, however, the issue is not so much one of access to discourse practices and discourse communities, but the ways in which discourse practices operate to define and control the individual subject’s self-identity within the institution. It is significant that Fairclough rarely uses the word ‘community’, with its liberal connotations of shared practices and values. For critical discourse analysts contemporary institutions are characterized not by communal cultures but by power relations.

The Foucauldian idea that subjects are positioned by discourses has been criticized as deterministic [Ball,1990]. In *Language and Power*, Fairclough’s main concern is to reveal the ways in which subject identity is constrained by ideological discourse practices. He nevertheless insists that the individual is not a passive recipient and reproducer of those practices, but a creative interpreter and user.

The possibility of ‘resistance’ to dominant discourses is developed in Fairclough’s later work. In the 1989 edition of *Language and Power*, resistance is contingent on awareness of discourse strategies and their effects; in his more recent work, it is the heteroglossic and contested nature of discourse practice that gives scope for alternative interpretations and resistant voices. Fairclough contrasts his approach to that of earlier analysts such as Foucault who present an ‘exclusively top-down view’ of the way discourses operate and who ‘take their ideological effects for granted. [1995: 29]. Fairclough advocates instead ‘a dialectal view of discourse....and the possibility of transformation [which] becomes inherent in the heterogeneous and contradictory nature of discourse’ [ibid: 33].

Discourse, education and the construction of English

Fairclough identifies ‘three aspects of the constructive effects of discourse’:

1. contributes to the construction of social identities and subject positions
2. helps construct relationships between people
3. contributes to the construction of systems of knowledge and belief [ibid: 64].

For Fairclough, education typifies the constructive properties of discourse in all three areas. It is therefore, along with the media, a crucial instrument for the ideological work necessary to the maintenance of any centrally controlled political system.

In *Language and Power*, Fairclough uses the school as an example of how social structures both construct and are constructed by discourse practices. Firstly, the school has a social order and a set of discourse types, [the ‘order of discourse’], each of which has its purpose within the social order and each of which impacts on those relationships [teacher-teacher, teacher-pupil, pupil-pupil, etc.] permitted within the social order. These discourse types set up subject positions for teachers and pupils, defining and constraining behaviour according to what is seen as appropriate to the institutional context and, in the process, ensuring the reproduction of these subject positions. Of particular relevance to the study of ‘subjects’ within education is the notion of ‘discipline’, which embodies for Foucault the dual meanings of ‘knowledge and power’:

The discipline that is presenting a certain knowledge to the learner, and the discipline of keeping the learner present before the knowledge [Hoskin, 1990].

This connects with post-structuralist thinking on identity, or ‘subject positioning’. Its applicability to discourses of ‘English’ is especially interesting, in that the existence of various ‘models of English’ implies not only different constructions of the ‘subject English’, but also of the pupil, the teacher and the pupil-teacher relationship:

Each version of English contains and informs a particular political epistemology. The learner is placed differently in relation to subject knowledge, their teachers and the state. Each produces different kinds of students [and citizens] with different kinds of abilities and relationships with peers. In each version the root paradigm of meanings with and *about*⁶⁵ English differs and conflicts [Ball et al: 80].

⁶⁵ Writer’s italics

Ten years later, Peel's response to the question 'What is English?' would be to conflate the ideational and interpersonal aspects by suggesting that the subject matter of English was 'the self':

....the subject has legitimised itself by encouraging the self-questioning and exploration of the 'self' in the subject. If it is about anything, subject English is about the subject 'self' [2000: 7].

This suggests that at the beginning of the 20th century, 'personal growth' still remains the dominant model for English teachers. However this model continues to shift [Green, 1993: 393] and within it the construction of 'selfhood' shifts alongside changing constructions of what it means, and what it should mean, to be a person and a citizen.

Since the publication of *Language and Power* the relevance of education as a focus for critical discourse analysis has arguably become even more pronounced, with the systematic tightening of government controls on curriculum and pedagogy during the 1990s, in what has been called the 'global reconstitution of education' [Goodson and Marsh, 1996: 150]. In England, this ideological project has been managed through the implementation of the National Curriculum. Fundamental to its construction of English is a reorientation towards a utilitarian model which prioritises literacy over personal growth through literature [Peim, 2000: 30]. In such a climate the radical agenda of discourse analysis becomes both more difficult to implement and, for many educationalists, more pressing.

At this point in its history, the discourse of 'English', even among experienced practitioners appears particularly unstable and contradictory, and this reflects a broader set of insecurities about the content and purposes of education. Fairclough explains the relationship between the 'micro' and 'macro' contexts in terms of the heterogeneity of texts:

A relatively stable social domain allows for relatively normative ways of drawing upon orders of discourse, i.e. ways which entail sticking quite

closely... to the conventions of particular genres and discourse types.; less stable social domains give rise to relatively heterogeneous texts [1999: 206]

It would be expected, even in times of stability and consensus in education, that trainee teachers' discourses on their subject discipline would be provisional, incomplete and inconsistent. Most would have already participated in 'communities' of 'English', first at school and then at university. Some had qualified in and practised the teaching of English as a second language. Now they were repositioning themselves in response to new [and sometimes contradictory] constructions of their subject, from PGCE tutors, from their National Curriculum documents and from their [as yet brief] school experience. They were at a very early stage in negotiating new identities. As I noted above [p.148], the 'meanings of English' they articulated in their questionnaires were not yet 'lived'. They could talk *about* their subject, but were not yet talking from *within* it [Lave and Wenger, 29⁶⁶]. Their situation was complicated by what might seem for them a point of stability and reassurance: their experience as learners, and especially [for most] their status as graduates of English. However, as Goodson pointed out in 1988, [and which is even more true post-national curriculum], the subject as academic discipline is very different from its manifestation as school subject [235]. Thus the concept of 'subject community' is especially complicated in respect of trainee teachers. As 'apprentices' they have multiple 'masters' with conflicting agendas and preoccupations: PGCE tutors, the school, the government. The transition from apprentice to practitioner is a gradual one [Lave and Wenger: 22], and the PGCE course is only a starting point. Teacher training differs from Lave and Wenger's general 'apprenticeship' model in the sense that beginning teachers know that they will [despite school monitoring schemes for NQTs] in effect be 'thrown in at the deep end', and will be required to perform as teachers almost as soon as they enter a school. For them there would be no extended period of 'peripheral participation' [ibid]. Add to this the crowded nature of the contemporary PGCE programme and there would be few structured opportunities for trainees to reflect on narratives of English, and their own positions in relation to them.

⁶⁶ Authors' italics.

For all these reasons, the meanings of ‘English’ offered by the trainees were likely to be heterogeneous, fragmentary and inconclusive. They would also be ‘heteroglossic’, or multi-voiced [Bakhtin: 1981; 1986]. Among these ‘voices’ might be their PGCE tutors, the national curriculum, past English teachers and fellow trainees, as well as ‘expert’ voices from text books. This would therefore be a complex ‘text’ to interpret. However, it is important not to see this complexity as necessarily an interpretative minefield. There would in any case, need to be identifiable connections and coherences with pre-existing discourses and discourse types for discourse analysis to be feasible. A degree of ‘orderliness’ or coherence in hybrid discourses, would generally indicate the existence of a ‘dominant discourse’ or dominant IDF [‘ideological-discursive formation’: Fairclough:1995: 27]. In the contested field of ‘English’ we might expect to find more than one dominant discourse. At the same time, the heterogeneity of the responses could reveal not only the shifting processes of subject construction at this particular ‘moment’ but also possibilities for creative transformation. For Fairclough, the ‘fragmentation of discourse at local levels’ can have two consequences. On the one hand, it can open up the discourse to colonization by ‘discourse technologies’.⁶⁷ At the same time, the hybridisation of discourses can open up the possibility of more positive kinds of transformations, where people or groups may be able to exercise resistance in ‘turning around’ discourses, possibly by accommodating and subsequently marginalizing them. While it is not to be expected that apprentice teachers would engage in any coherently organized ‘transgressive’ discourses, it would be safe to assume on their part some awareness of the conflicts being played out around ‘English’, and to be on the look out for discursive markers of ‘problematization’.

Critical discourse analysis: critiques and ethical issues

Criticisms of critical discourse analysis have generally focused on three issues: political motivation, selection of evidence and determinism, Hammersley [1997: 239] agrees that political and personal ideals will always colour a researcher’s work to an extent, but rejects the idea that they should be its main or ultimate purpose. Fairclough in turn denies that political commitment is incompatible with rational, evidence-backed research and

⁶⁷ Above, p. 152

emphasizes the importance of openness and clarity, both in terms of the researcher's that position and the presentation of evidence [2001: 4].

Critical discourse analysis requires the close analysis of linguistic elements, often selected from a substantial amount of data and this can make generalisation problematic [Boyd-Barrett, 1994: 38]. In the case of my own study, I felt that the detailed analysis of questionnaire responses would provide an effective grounding for my discursive interpretations. Later, a series of face-to-face interviews would help me to explore them further [Sapsford and Jupp, 1996: 119].

The charge of determinism, the implication that, according to critical social science, people's lives and thoughts are controlled by powerful and irresistible discourses, has had less force in recent years, when there has been more emphasis on historical struggle, resistance and transformation [Gee, 1996: 137]. Linked to determinism is the issue of agency and the eradication of the individual from the investigation of social discourses [Moss, 1994]. Here, again, the transformative potential in discourse is important, not only because it foregrounds the changing nature of discourse practices, but also because it gives space for individual agency in the 'creative' remodelling of 'mixed' discourses. Discourse analysis inevitably moves the interpreter away from the individually 'authored' text towards the text [and author] as social construct, but my respondents had offered their views on 'English' and 'grammar' as personal perceptions. It was important not to lose sight of this, for both ethical and practical reasons. My inclusion of interview data would help both to keep in mind the role of the individual in discourse production as well as to generate additional material for analysis and ensure triangularity. I wanted as far as possible to follow a 'dialogic' research model [Cameron et al, 1999: 153], and to avoid the wholesale 'objectification' of respondents' perceptions. This poses difficulties for discourse analysis, with its focus on socially constructed meanings. The extent to which discourse analysis could be termed 'research *with*' as opposed to 'research *on*' [Cameron et al: 153⁶⁸] is therefore clearly limited, not least because I would be modelling respondents' discourses in ways which they could not be expected to recognise, since it

cannot be assumed ‘that people are aware of the ideological dimensions of their own practice.’ [Fairclough, 1992b: 90]

The ‘critical’ dimension in discourse analysis presents another dilemma for the non-positivist researcher who wishes to research ‘with’ her respondents. Cameron et al partially answer this by comparing research with classroom practice:

Discourse after all is a historical construct: whether or not intervention changes someone’s opinion, it is arguable that they gain by knowing where their opinions have ‘come from’ and how they may be challenged or more powerfully formulated. Clearly, it is a principle we use when we teach: not only do we *engage* with students’ views, we engage with them *critically*. The question we are raising, then, is whether there is some merit in extending that practice from the context of the classroom to that of research. [ibid: 156]

The fact that critical discourse analysis interprets language use as social rather than personal, ought to mean that individuals are protected from criticism. However, this is by no means an absolute safeguard, since critical discourse analysis, and particularly Fairclough’s ‘textually- oriented discourse analysis’ relies on close analysis of specific ‘texts’. For Fairclough, the validity of the approach depends on the precision of textual analysis as well as the identification of historically situated discourses which are drawn on in the production and interpretation of the text.

4.4 Critical Discourse Analysis as Method

The questionnaire as text

For Hollinger [1994, cited in Scott and Usher, 1999: 28-9], interpretivist research entails ‘reading society and social behaviour like a complex text’. For Fairclough discourse is indeed a mode of social action [1992b: 64] and therefore his approach fits readily into the broader interpretivist tradition. His analytical method, however, is more precisely oriented towards language use and relies on close analysis to connect linguistic features to the social and ideological discourses drawn on within the text. In this sense his method coincides with that of critical linguistics in its concern with:

⁶⁸ Authors’ italics.

recovering the social meanings expressed in discourse by analysing the linguistic structure in the light of their interactional and wider contexts. [Fowler et al, 1979: 195-6]

Critical linguistics has, however, been concerned predominantly with texts which might be described as institutional products, such as news reporting, advertisements, political texts and official documents. Here it is relatively easy to characterise the text as an ideological construct. Where analysts have used spoken texts, again, they have used relatively obvious examples of institutional discourses such as interviews or interrogations. In such examples it is not difficult to identify the power relations which drive the discourse structures. The analyst is able, therefore, to present a coherent account of ideology ‘at work’ in such texts. My own ‘text’, presented as sets of personal beliefs about ‘English’ and ‘grammar’ presented no easy coherence, even after a preliminary computer analysis. The inherent ‘bumpiness’ of the text [Fairclough, *ibid*: 104] would at the same time be a feature of the questionnaire ‘text’ under analysis and present more problems of interpretation than the material generally used for linguistic analysis. However, Fairclough reminds us that ‘coherence is provisional’ and ‘is not a property of texts, but a property which interpreters impose upon texts’ [*ibid*: 81]. Moreover, the heterogeneous nature of the responses, both across the sample and within individual questionnaires, urged its compatibility with the intertextual method of discourse analysis.

Textual features

Of those textual features listed by Fairclough [1992b, Ch. 8], I selected the following as most relevant to my analysis of trainees’ discourses on English and grammar: interdiscursivity, wording and grammatical features.

Interdiscursivity

Given the inherent and well-documented heterogeneity of ‘subject English’ [Chapters 1 and 2], the characterisation of trainees’ formulations of ‘English’ and ‘grammar’ as intertextual data would seem both feasible and necessary. Fairclough’s further distinction between *manifest intertextuality* and *interdiscursivity* is also useful in this context. ‘Manifest intertextuality’ refers to ‘the explicit constitution of texts from other specific

texts', for example specific reference to the national curriculum in teachers' discourse. In the 'interdiscursive text', the process of drawing on other texts will be less explicit, and traceable through the elements of orders of discourse that are drawn on to constitute the heterogeneous text [Fairclough, *ibid*: 85]. For the PGCE trainees, at least at the early stage of their training, intertextual links are likely to be implicit rather than explicit, rendering an interdiscursive interpretation of their constructions of 'English' and 'grammar' both feasible and necessary.

wording

Fairclough distinguishes between 'keywords and 'wording' [ibid: 236-7], although both are used by discourse analysts to explore the relationship between vocabulary and meaning. The categorisation of data in terms of 'keywords' has been a favourite tool of qualitative researchers, and Jaworski and Coupland warn against over-reliance on this method which can involve 'gross coding of language forms and expressions which hide significant functional/contextual/inferential differences' [36]. It was partly an awareness of the inadequacy of my initial codings in terms of key words and phrases that had led me to reconfigure my own analysis. For Fairclough, the analysis of 'wording' moves beyond the interpretation of meanings through 'keywords' to the broader ways in which meanings are expressed in different texts, and the interpretative perspectives implicit in contrasting formulations. The presence of contrasting metaphors may, for example, exemplify contrasting ideological positions [ibid: 237]. Meanings may also be seen to be undergoing *transformations* over time, or within different contexts [ibid: 130]. Previous research has mapped numerous transformations in the construction of English through the twentieth century [Chapter 1]. A synchronic process of transformation may be seen in PGCE trainees' construction of 'teaching' in the two spheres of English and grammar.

Grammatical features

The ways in which meanings are represented in grammatical form. This might include issues of *transitivity*, the representation of agency, attribution and process, for instance the use of active and passive voice and nominalization [Fairclough, *ibid*: 235-6]. The concept of *modality* will be useful in the analysis of data containing statements of personal feeling

and beliefs. Modality carries both ideational and interpersonal meanings, and may be realised through a variety of grammatical constructions, [for example modal auxiliaries, tenses], but broadly it refers to the ways in which speakers or writers position themselves in relation to propositions [ibid: 158-62]. Again, the differences in trainees' constructions of 'English' and 'grammar' may be realised by distinctive modal forms. Use of irony or 'metadiscourse' can also signify individual orientations towards contested issues.

Analysing the questionnaire responses

In his guidelines for analysis [1992b, Ch. 8] Fairclough offers a series of questions that might be applied to intertextual data. The following appeared most relevant to my questionnaire responses:

- 1. Is there an obvious way of characterising the sample overall?*
- 2. Does the sample draw upon more than one genre or discourse type?*
- 3. Is the discourse sample relatively conventional in its interdiscursive properties or relatively innovative?*

I decided to begin my analysis by applying these questions to trainees' responses to questions E1 and E2: 'What are the purposes of English teaching?' and 'What are your own reasons for wanting to teach English?'. This I hoped would provide me with a discursive map of 'PGCE English'. I would compare these discursive constructions in terms of their relative effects on: a. the construction of English as a system of knowledge and belief; b. the construction of social identities and subject positions [teacher and pupil]; and c. the construction of relationships [e.g. teacher-pupil; pupil-pupil]. The same method would be employed to compare trainees' constructions of 'English' and 'grammar'. Finally I would look for evidence of transformative potential in trainees' construction of English and grammar.

4.5 Trainees' discursive constructions of subject English

That trainees' responses to questions E1 and E2 were readily interpreted as heterogeneous, ambivalent and contradictory could be perceived as reflecting not only the respondents' position as 'apprentice' teachers making the transition from degree to school

English, but also the frequently documented problem of defining a subject characterised by complexity and plurality [Protherough and Atkinson, 1994, 1995; Kress, 1995; Peel et al 2000]⁶⁹. However, alongside evidence that both practising and intending teachers subscribe to a multi-purpose model of classroom English, there is a general acknowledgement of the overriding influence of the ideology of ‘personal growth’.⁷⁰ Its survival, even through the utilitarian nineties, is testimony to its philosophical breadth and its adaptability to change, as well as to its enduring popularity within the profession. For the trainees in this study it was still personal growth, or personal development, that best defined their overall perspective on English, but its discursive construction reflected the cultural, social and political changes that had occurred over the preceding four decades and which surfaced here as elements of other discourses.

Figure 3 is an attempt to represent the main discourse types identifiable in trainees’ formulations of English and to tentatively model the reformulations of personal growth which seemed to be emerging. The diagram is intended to reflect the discursive construction of English as a dialectic process: hence the use of two-way arrows and the delineation of discourse boundaries by broken lines.⁷¹ Inevitably, a diagrammatic representation tends to reify what is discourse-in-process, and to impose on it a sense of coherence which is not generally characteristic of trainees’ responses as a whole or individually. Among the tensions implicit in the model is the conflict between a version of English centred on a belief in individual expression and prescriptivist views on grammar. This conflict is represented by the horizontal line bifurcating the trainees’ ‘new formulation of personal growth’, and separating prescriptivist constructions of grammar from descriptivist and critical approaches. These demarcations cut across a vertical axis representing the relationship between the individual and society, from social conformity at the top to social critique at the base of the diagram. Paralleling this vertical axis is another, complementary, distinction between unitary and plural constructions of language and

⁶⁹ The specific research context of the questionnaire must also be considered a factor in the fragmentary nature of many of the responses. [See above, pp. 149-50]

⁷⁰ Chapter 2.

⁷¹ I considered using more distinct boundaries [even black borders!] around the ‘national curriculum’ discourse, but decided to represent its relative fixity as a box rather than an oval.

AUTHORITY: DOMINANT DISCOURSE

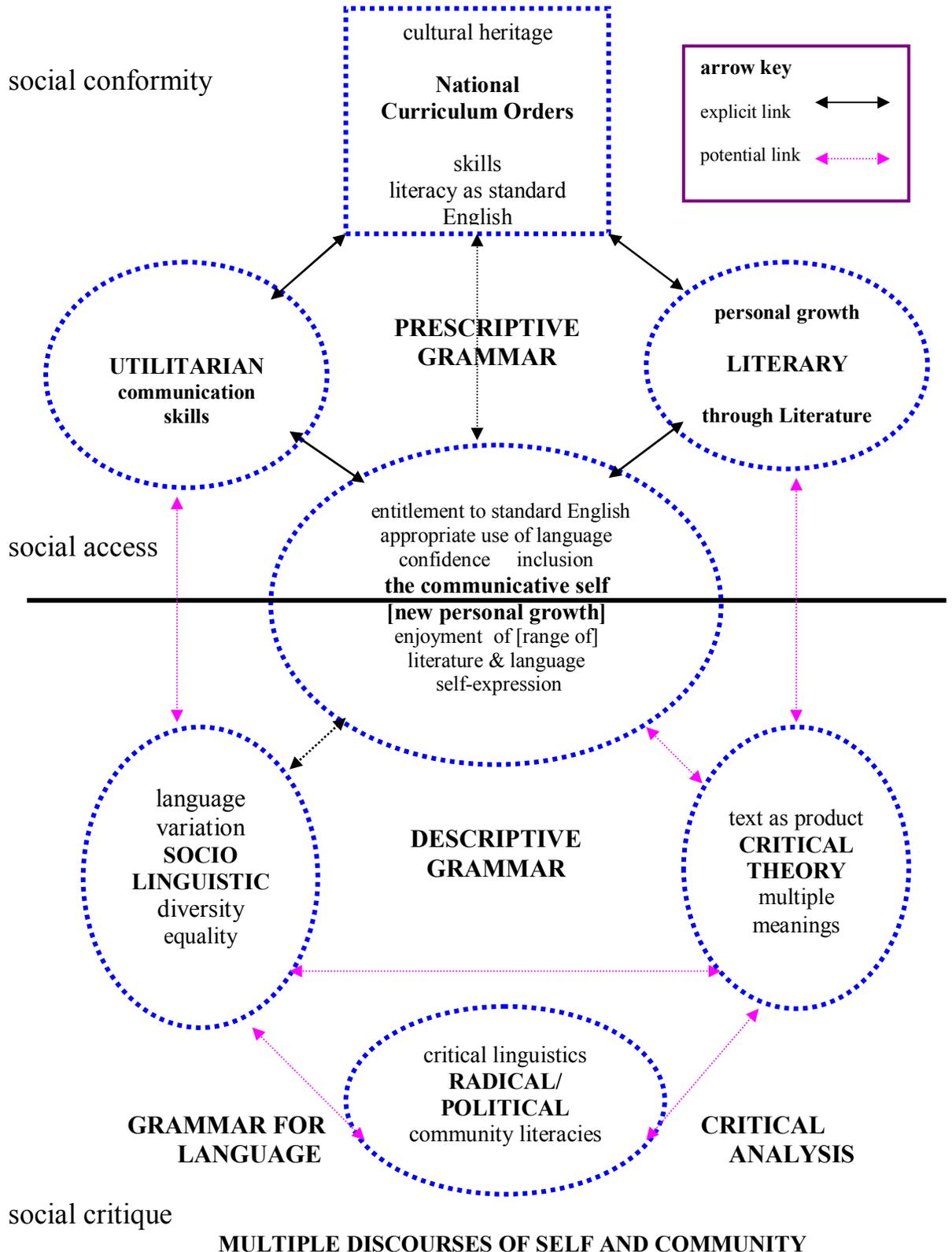


Figure 3: Trainees' Construction of English

literacy⁷² : standard English as the dominant form in the top half of the model in opposition to the multiple literacies described in contemporary ethnographic studies and used by advocates of critical literacy to challenge dominant, or ‘standard’ forms. The influence of the hegemonic discourse of the National Curriculum was more diffuse than is apparent in Figure 3. Although its influence was readily identifiable in trainees’ responses in the form of curriculum content [for example ‘literature’ and language skills], their representation of the pedagogy of English drew more emphatically from the personal growth tradition. For this reason, at this stage, the National Curriculum is shown both as a direct influence on trainees’ discourse and as mediated through the discourses of ‘skills’ and ‘personal growth through literature’, both of which ‘traditions’ pre-dated the National Curriculum. ‘Literature’ and ‘language’ were the most problematic of the discursive elements to locate. Along with language skills, literature is a central component of the National Curriculum. However, trainees did not generally concur with the ‘cultural heritage’ version of ‘literature’ promoted in the government orders. Their more inclusive understanding of ‘literature’ was likely to have been drawn from their undergraduate [and possibly school] study of English. Its inclusivity did not, however, extend as far as the early personal growth models of the 60s and 70s, when it was seen by some teachers as encompassing pupils’ own writing [Ball et al: 55]. There was also a sense that for most trainees ‘Literature’ meant ‘imaginative fiction’. The capitalization reflects this meaning, rather than either ‘cultural heritage’ or the inclusion of non-fiction texts, mentioned by only a small minority. In many answers, ‘language’ appeared alongside literature, perhaps reflecting the influence of the ‘traditional’ personal growth or ‘progressive’ model, but without the underpinnings of Vygotskian theory. Another approach, which can also be categorized as ‘progressive’⁷³, shows the influence of descriptive linguistics, or sociolinguistics. This was evident in only a small number of questionnaire responses despite the fact that a number of the trainees had encountered it in their degree

⁷² The diagram originated as a re-working of the bi-polar model of Ball et al [1990] which represented effectively the dynamic and contested nature of English. It retains their vertical axis [‘authority/state’ v. ‘authenticity/self & community’], but instead of the ‘self v. collective’ axis it locates ‘the self’ as central to trainees’ discursive constructions.

⁷³ Figure 1, p. 66.

programmes. References to ‘language’ appeared to reflect the ‘non-technical’ meaning characteristic of personal growth. The ‘critical’ perspectives were least discernible in trainees’ constructions of English and are therefore shown as potential rather than direct influences on trainees’ construction of English. While the absence of radical theories of language and literacy was not unexpected, the lack of reference to literary theory was surprising⁷⁴, given that [like sociolinguistics] many had encountered it at first degree level. It should be noted, however, that these questions were geared towards school English rather than higher education.

To return to Fairclough’s questions, what emerged from trainees’ responses to questions E1 and E2 was inevitably a complex and incomplete version of English, containing elements from various discourses whose intertextual links were discernible but seldom made explicit. The influence of the National Curriculum was clearly apparent, especially in the numerous references to ‘skills’, but there was a sense of connection with other ‘traditions’, most obviously ‘personal growth through literature’, and to a lesser extent, linguistics. These are represented in Figure 3 among a range of discourses available [both actually and potentially] to trainee English teachers. On the strength of my analysis I would make a tentative case for the emergence of a revised form of ‘personal growth’, maintaining its allegiance to literature as central to the individual development of the pupil, but presenting an alternative version of the ‘self’ alongside the uniquely individual person that was the focus of the personal growth movement. The construction of ‘self’ underpinning the National curriculum, and reflected in trainees’ numerous references to ‘communication’, is as a social being first and foremost, and the purpose of English is to furnish her with the cultural and linguistic capital to enjoy a successful life, as worker and responsible citizen. I would examine the construction of ‘self’ in the various discourses of English. First, however, I would try to assess the relative influence of each of the discourses shown in Figure 3 on trainees’ constructions of English, bearing in mind that the boundaries which separate these ‘models’ of English are more fluid and indistinct than their diagrammatic representation suggests.

⁷⁴ Leach [2000] identified a similar absence [above, p. 63].

The National Curriculum

The overlapping and interconnectedness of discursive formulations of English is most apparent in the triangle of discourses at the top of Figure 3. The National Curriculum [1995] could be said to combine ‘Literacy’⁷⁵ with ‘Literature’, with the heavier emphasis on the utilitarian, or ‘communication skills’ agenda [Peel, 2000: 105; Peim, 2000a: 30]. Unsurprisingly, discursive elements from the National Curriculum surfaced repeatedly in trainees’ responses to question E1. Even at this early stage in the PGCE programme, what Peim characterises as the process of induction into the dominant model of English had clearly begun in earnest:

Through the PGCE training year the graduate of English is reintroduced to what comprises English in schools. These courses are increasingly focused on the main National Curriculum subject to be taught. [22]

To this extent, trainees’ discourse could be described, in Fairclough’s terms, as relatively conventional. Of course, the National Curriculum cannot be read as a unitary or even fully coherent model of English. Stables [2000:104] describes it as ‘more of a middle way of compromise and loose ends than a coherent manifesto for a subject’. It attempts to avoid the issue of prescriptivism by stressing ‘appropriateness’ in language use, yet presents standard English as the only ‘accurate’ variety of the language; it advocates variety in the teaching of literature, but offers a detailed list of canonical texts for study; in general it cloaks a utilitarian economic agenda in the mantle of personal growth. So it would hardly be surprising if trainees’ own formulations were characterised by gaps and inconsistencies. It was in the area of language skills that the trainees’ discourse mirrored most closely that of the National Curriculum. Their construction of ‘literature’ diverged somewhat from the National Curriculum model, both in terms of its definition and its relative importance within the subject English.

⁷⁵ Although the term ‘literacy’ was not to be used explicitly in the English Orders until the revised version [1999]

Literary English/Personal Growth

The meaning of ‘literature’ in university English departments has long shifted away from the ‘literary heritage’ or ‘great tradition’ model. Most English graduates would have studied a wide variety of literature in English, as well as being introduced to modern critical theory. It would therefore be surprising if the English canon featured prominently in the purposes of English teaching. The fact that there were only seven references to literature from other cultures could reflect its lack of prominence in the English Orders. On the other hand, the National Curriculum’s references to the moral purpose of English [DfEE, 1995:19] was generally ignored. Whether this could be construed as resistance to the dominant model was uncertain, but such a perspective would undoubtedly have conflicted with the version of English that Literature most graduates brought to their PGCE year. The reluctance to ascribe moral purpose to literature teaching mirrored Hardman and Williamson’s findings in 1993 that, in comparison with the teachers in Goodwyn’s [1992] survey, PGCE students were ‘much less likely’ to see literature as having ‘a civilising and moral influence’ [283]. Overall, the trainees’ construction of literature felt more coherent and confident than that presented in the National Curriculum. Underpinning this sense of assurance were two connections integral to the personal growth model of English: between literature and personal development and between literature teaching and a participative pedagogy which emphasizes the sharing of experience rather than the transmission of knowledge.

Forty-four percent of the trainees gave as a reason for wanting to teach English their wish to share their enthusiasm for the subject, making it by far the most popular of the personal motivations, and of these 74% placed it first in their list of reasons. Fifty-two percent mentioned literature specifically, literature graduates not unexpectedly comprising the largest proportion within this latter group [Appendix 8]. The emphatic inscription of the teacher-pupil relationship in these responses contrasted markedly with the pedagogical discourse underpinning the National Curriculum Orders, a contrast which is explored below.

My initial analysis had suggested that references to ‘language’ could be linked with two

principle discourses: personal growth and the ‘language skills’ model prioritised in the National Curriculum. There was evidence to suggest that, for the most part, ‘language’ was defined in terms of the acquisition and use of skills rather than as the vehicle for individual development which is its main purpose in personal growth English. This coincides with the redefinition in the National Curriculum of the development of the self as a social rather than an individual project. The fact that there were relatively few references to pupils’ creative or imaginative use of language underlines the pull away from personal growth in the construction of language teaching.

Utilitarian English and communication skills

The trend towards utilitarianism in education has been widely documented.⁷⁶ Fairclough has described its principle effect on educational discourse as ‘commodification’, in which a ‘vocabulary of skills’ is used to separate education or training into discrete units or packages which are ‘in principle separately teachable and assessable , and can be bought and sold as distinct goods in the range of commodities available on the educational market’ [1992b:209]. The division of ‘English’ into *speaking, listening, reading and writing* in the National Curriculum exemplifies this process, and is part of a widespread, if not global, emphasis on ‘functional literacy’ [Lankshear, 1997].

Along with the re-inscription of ‘cultural heritage’, the redefinition of language as ‘communication skills’ marked the official separation of the National Curriculum from Dixon’s personal growth model of English.⁷⁷ It also formalized one of the distinctions between the university and school subject [Peel et al 2000: 150]. However, the dual-purpose ‘skills + literature’ model had been familiar to most practising teachers even before it became the framework of the influential Bullock Report in 1975. Although Goodwyn’s [1992] sample of teachers had placed Cox’s ‘adult needs’ low on their list of preferred models of English, teaching language skills had always been part of the job. Hardman and

⁷⁶ For example, Apple, 1988; Carr and Hartnett, 1996; McKenzie, 2001.

⁷⁷ Medway [1990], found that language teaching in 1968 was ‘never for the mere attainment of competence’ [17]. Long before its formalization in the National Curriculum, the shift towards ‘skills’ had been signalled in the Bullock Report [Ball et al [1999: 69]]

Williamson's PGCE trainees in 1993 not only affirmed its importance in the classroom, but also saw no conflict between the adult needs and personal growth models. Leach had found a similar lack of acknowledgement of potential conflict in trainee teachers' construction of English in 2000⁷⁸ I would return to this issue in the examination of interview data; in the meantime, discourse analysis could sidestep the question of trainees' thought-processes to focus on the meaning potential [cohesive and contradictory] in their discursive formulations.

Communication: language skills for personal expression and citizenship

The initial coding exercise had revealed that the most common of the pupil skills mentioned in E1 were various aspects of 'communication' [Appendix 7]. The fact that this came first in a third of the responses, appeared to echo the prominence given to it in the [1995] National Curriculum. My initial investigation had suggested, however, that trainees were drawing on a range of potential meanings beyond 'language skills'.

In the revised National Curriculum Orders in 1999 'communication' would become a 'key skill' [1999: 8], but it was already prominent in the 1995 version as a set of skills to be acquired and used. This social dimension of language use distinguishes it, again, from the personal growth model, with its primary focus on the individual 'creator' of language. [Dixon, 1975: 128]. The meaning potential of 'communication' is, however, considerably broader. Cameron's study 'Good to Talk?' examines the cultural significance of communication as 'talk', while in trainees' discourse, as in the National Curriculum, it encompasses both spoken and written language. However, the significances that Cameron attributes to spoken communication not only proved entirely relevant to my data, but offered me a means of identifying the meanings implicit in the various occurrences of 'communication' in trainees' discourse.

In the first instance, trainees' repeated use of 'communication' appeared simply to reflect

⁷⁸ Above, p. 63.

the ‘commodified’ discourse of skills which frames the National Curriculum, and which prioritises the ‘adult needs’ or vocational model of English. The notion of communication-as-commodity is reflected in the ways in which trainees worded their responses: of the 55 who included it in their answers to question E1 and/or E2, 32 [58%] expressed it in nominalized form, either as a single unmodified noun, or alongside ‘skills’ or ‘effective’. A further 13 used a non-finite verb form [e.g. ‘to communicate effectively’; ‘to communicate in speech and writing’]. These formulations were more or less identical to those used in the 1995 National Curriculum. They also connected implicitly with references to ‘skills for life and/or work’, although far fewer mentioned this as a purpose of English than did ‘communication’ [Appendix 7]. It is partly this connection which extends the meaning of communication beyond that of literacy skills. Cameron links the cultural significance of communication to structural changes in the economy, specifically the shift from the traditionally male-dominated manufacturing base to the ‘feminized’ service sector, in which communication skills are no longer merely a useful attribute in a productive workforce [though more desirable at management than shop floor level], but the product itself. This is where the interpersonal function of communication comes into play, and where ‘communication’ can be seen as a potential bridge between personal growth and utilitarian discourses of English. This connection is implicit in Cameron’s claim that ‘The educational value claimed for communication skills lies not only in their relevance to students’ job prospects, but also... in the contribution they are thought to make to students’ personal, social and – for some commentators – moral development.’ [126].

Cameron also identifies a connection between the apparently ubiquitous discourse of communication and Giddens’ [1991] notion of ‘the reflexive project of the self’, in which individual identity is a continuous project founded on the interplay between self-awareness and relationship with others, having as a central goal the achievement of the ‘perfect relationship’, and increasingly reliant on ‘expert systems’ such as medicine and therapy. Cameron suggests that ‘communication’ might similarly be considered an ‘expert system’ [4], though later she prefers to use Fairclough’s term ‘discourse technology’ to characterise the way in which ‘communication’ moves across and helps to construct

various domains [22-3], disseminating and reproducing meanings across domain boundaries while at the same time being reconstructed from within them. It is possible to see how, in the discursive construction of English, 'communication' carries with it meanings not only from the domains of work and language skills teaching, but also therapy, which operates as a discourse technology in its own right [Fairclough, 1989:222]. Thus discourses and discourse technologies interconnect and feed from each other. The usefulness of 'communication' as a discourse technology operating within English, is that it can reach across two otherwise conflicting philosophies: personal growth and 'skills'. At the same time it can invoke two images of the self: as an individual as well as a social subject. As a concept 'communication' both embodies conflicting meanings and mediates among them. This dual constitutive-mediative function is represented in Figure 4 overleaf.

The notion of communication skills typically embodies a prescriptivist approach to language use [Cameron, *ibid*: 3]. A 'communicative' model of English might yet contain within it the prospect of a broader vision of social change, but it would need to move beyond the rhetoric of inclusivity in the National Curriculum towards an education programme which reconceptualized the 'social' in terms of action for the collective good.

The 'linguistic' discourse in Figure 3 represents the descriptive approach to language characteristic of sociolinguistics. It embodies both an objective, 'technical' approach to language as an object of study, and a liberal/progressive ethos which validates linguistic and social diversity. Although 'knowledge about language' [the most common formulation among those trainees who mentioned language in their 'purposes of English'] presupposes an objective positioning of the student in relation to the subject-under-study similar to that of the linguist, this could more realistically be located within the discourse of the National Curriculum. There were few traces in trainees' construction of the purposes of English of the technical/analytical approach to language fundamental to modern linguistics, but which also features in the National Curriculum, especially in relation to grammar teaching. This could be an indication of the relative unimportance of 'grammar' in trainees' constructions of English at this stage, or even of its incompatibility with their preferred model. I would examine this further. In the meantime, a more practical interpretation is possible: they had

already answered a number of questions on ‘grammar’, and may therefore have felt that they could legitimately focus on other issues.

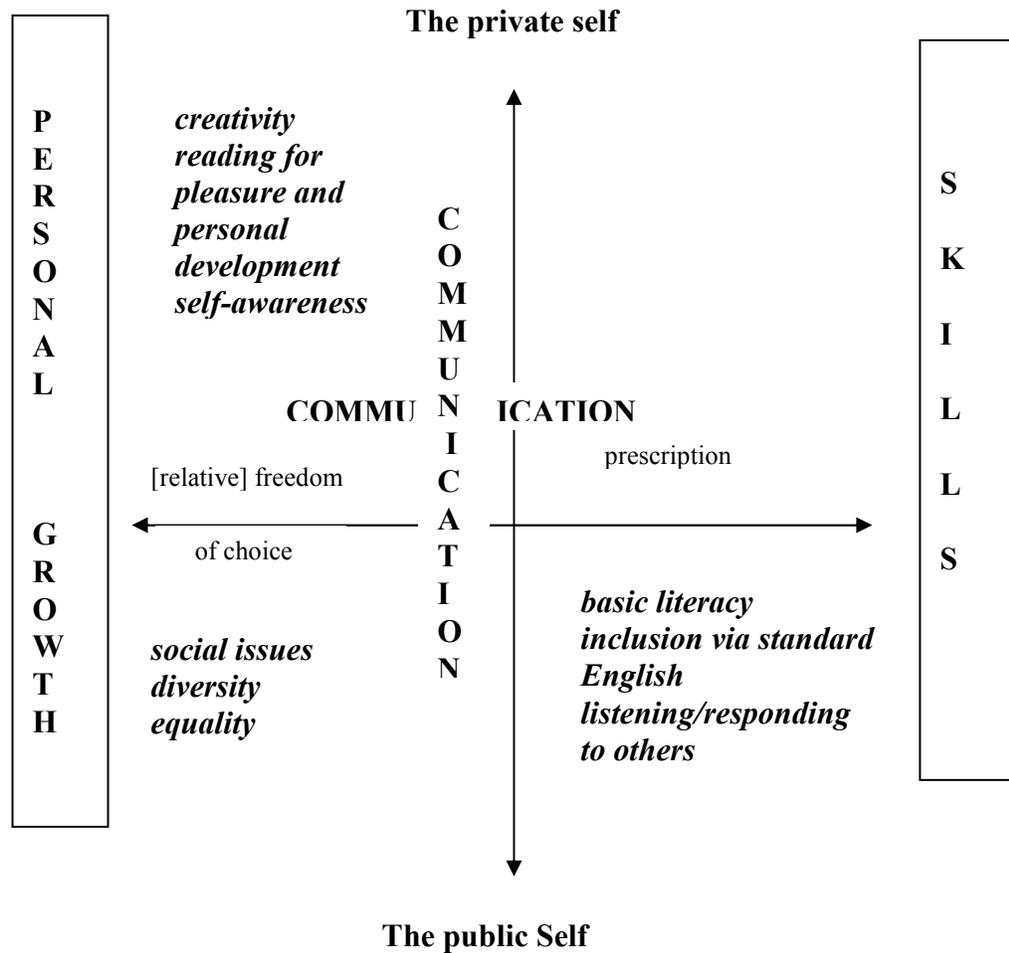


Figure 4 : The Mediating role of ‘communication’ in trainees’ construction of English Sociolinguistic discourse of English

A more surprising omission from all but four of the ‘purposes of English’ was the notion of language variation. This, again, seemed to reflect the ‘pull’ of the National Curriculum, and its insistence on standard English as the default variety. Thus while there is some evidence of the influence of sociolinguistics on trainees’ construction of English, the discursive influences are not nearly as emphatic as those from either the ‘skills’ or

‘literary/personal growth’ traditions. For this reason, Figure 3 shows the ‘sociolinguistic’ connection as a broken line. Nevertheless, the connections, though few, are significantly stronger than any emerging from the more radical discourses of critical theory or critical linguistics, which feature at this stage only as possibilities or traces of meaning..

4.6 Interpersonal constructions of English

Part of Fairclough’s analytical method entails an investigation into the effects of discourses on ideational and interpersonal meanings, or the ways in which we construct ‘knowledge’ and how we position ourselves and others in relation to it. I have already dealt with the ideational meanings in trainees’ construction of subject English. My next sections will examine the interpersonal function, relating aspects of trainees’ discourse to the construction of the pupil, the teacher and teacher-pupil relationship. Figure 5 overleaf summarizes these meanings.

i. Constructing the Pupil-Subject

The kind of pupil that emerged from trainees’ first questionnaire responses was, like their construction of English itself, heavily influenced by the skills-based National Curriculum model. Still creative, still developing self-awareness, and learning about the world through literature, but no longer the ‘unique experiencing subject’ that for Medway characterised the pupil of 1968 [19]. Self-actualization was no longer the primary objective to be pursued in English lessons; private enjoyment of literature was still important, but effectiveness in the public arena was now at least as important. In Dixon’s terms, the pupil was no longer a spectator, drawing from experience whatever would enhance his/her individual awareness, but a participant with a range of social roles to play [1975: 123]. The ‘role moratorium’ provided by personal growth [Medway: 32] had been rescinded: they were now to be equipped with the skills for life and, especially, work.

Personal growth discourse recurred in references to ‘self-expression’ and ‘self-awareness’, but now individual confidence was premised more on the development of competence in the public arena than on the validation of personal experience. There were few references

Subject English	The English teacher	The English pupil	the teacher-pupil relationship [pedagogy]
communication literature [variety of texts] skills [range of] cultural experience creativity	love of subject; wanting to share it and to continue learning/reading [especially literature] sharing enthusiasm inspired by own learning/teachers of English	effective and confident communicator aware of self and others developing skills [social and linguistic] for the future learning about the world [through literature]	sharing encouraging helping fostering developing enabling
Special characteristics of English core subject diverse flexible enjoyable transferable	enjoy seeing children progress encourager helper enabler developer communicator benefactor	creative/imaginative developing views appreciating/enjoying literature knowledgeable about language able to access other subjects	empowering having fun enriching experience communicating

Figure 5: Ideational and interpersonal meanings in trainee constructions of English

to the development of individual identity, and still fewer to the role of community or social group membership in its development. In this sense the trainees' construction of the pupil contrasted with the personal growth and sociolinguistic formulations, both of which validate experience and language outside mainstream social groups.

Above all, the successful pupil of English would be an effective communicator. To that extent, therefore, trainees' construction of the pupil coincided with that of the National Curriculum whose general requirements placed 'effective communication' before reading.

However, where trainees emphasized the enjoyment to be gained from reading, the National Curriculum pupil-reader is endowed with more serious intent:

English should develop pupils' abilities to communicate effectively in speech and writing and to listen with understanding. It should also enable them to be enthusiastic, responsive and knowledgeable readers. [DfEE:1995:2]

For almost half the trainees English was to be 'enjoyed', and for most of these, whatever their degree specialism, literature was the principle focus of enjoyment. Here, then, was still the notion of a 'private' self and an 'enchanted reader' [Peel, 2000: 177]. This could represent a site of potential conflict for trainees. However, in terms of the construction of the pupil-as-future-citizen, pleasure and skills need not, of course, be oppositional: skills give access to work and work is now the primary route to self-actualization, materially and psychologically. 'Literature' or 'culture' can assist in the development of the self, [and the National Curriculum controls this to an extent by prescribing literary texts,] and they can be drawn on later as additional benefits or rewards for those who have achieved success. Pleasure is an important commodity in the global marketplace. Thus 'literature' becomes commodified along with 'skills', and both contribute to the making of what Peel [155] calls the 'self-reflective, self-regulating' citizen. In both Dixon and Giddens, the 'self' is a liberal-humanist construction, whose identity, though subject to change is unitary and unique. For Dixon, the aim of English teaching was to nourish the unique individual by exposing him⁷⁹ to real and fictional experiences in the classroom. Giddens' 'new individual' [1998] is first and foremost a citizen, encouraged to better him/her self through participation in the 'free' marketplace, but cognisant of his/her responsibilities as a worker and parent: a socially effective individual, functionally and emotionally literate. Nick encapsulated this 'Third Way' notion most clearly in his first questionnaire:

Make pupils proficient readers/speakers/listeners in the English language;
Develop skills of expression and communication;
Develop self-awareness and independent thought and instil an interest in engaging with the world around us;

⁷⁹ Pupils were still generically male for Dixon, even in 1975.

Develop a sense of cultural identity and instil a respect for and interest in other cultures and identities;

Develop a love for language in all its various forms and for the literature and oral traditions of this language.

Language is the primary way we express our thoughts and communicate. I therefore feel that English can empower children to become aware of themselves and their own thoughts and to engage successfully in all sorts of social relationships. I want to teach English in order to encourage pupils to become reflective, independent and mature people making their own decisions and to become responsible and positive members of our society.

A national curriculum cannot be other than a social project, and New Labour's agenda for education was soon to be further strengthened by the extension of the 'literacy strategy' into secondary schools and the introduction of 'citizenship'. In the meantime, the 1995 English Orders, in presenting 'standard English' as the only 'accurate' variety of the language, declared that 'self-expression' was no longer to be a creative endeavour, but one bound by social rules. This was something that the incoming government would not need to change. Already there were traces of 'Third Way' ethics in the intermingling of social prescription and inclusivity:

In order to *participate confidently* in public, cultural and working life, pupils *need to be able* to speak, write and read standard English *fluently and accurately*. All pupils are therefore entitled to the full range of *opportunities* necessary to *enable* them to develop competence in standard English. ['General Requirements for English', p. 2].⁸⁰

At key stage three, pupils would be expected to actively engage in conflict reduction:

...in discussions, they should be encouraged to take different views into account.. in taking different roles in group discussion, pupils should be introduced to ways of negotiating consensus or agreeing to differ. They should be given opportunities to consider their choice of words and the effectiveness of their expression....in order to develop as effective listeners.. pupils should be encouraged to ask and answer questions in the light of what others say. ['Speaking and Listening': Key Skills, p. 17]

⁸⁰ My italics.

For Cameron this aspect of communication is particularly worrying. She associates it with ‘citizenship’ training in PSE classes, where it can be a means of regulating potentially disruptive pupils. She quotes Marianne Talbot of the [UK] Forum for Values in Education and the Community:

We need young people to be truly educated, not just to read and write, but to be trustworthy and reliable. Communication is vital to teaching values and values must be at the heart of the curriculum.[in Cameron, 2000: 135]

Cameron is not suggesting that values have no place in education, but that the assumption that ‘everyone has a right to their opinion’ presupposes an egalitarian society and ignores the fact that inequalities exist and need to be challenged. If people are not taught to argue, they will be disempowered, rather than empowered. The discourse of ‘entitlement’ and ‘opportunities’ in the National Curriculum and in trainees’ construction of English appears to be a democratic one, but it is founded on the notion of ‘inclusivity’ rather than ‘equality’, on individual access rather than collective responsibility for identifying and remedying social ills:

As many commentators have noted, the existence of systematic power inequalities is difficult to accommodate within a liberal individualist framework. The liberal axiom that we are all positioned similarly and possessed of ‘equal rights’ leads to a view of conflict as essentially a local disturbance between individuals rather than as one instance of some more global contest between social collectivities over power [ibid:164].

It was interesting to note that, although the questionnaire responses displayed little sign of ‘collectivity’ there were a number of references to ‘empowerment’ [Appendix 7]. This does not occur in the national curriculum discourse and might suggest a stronger element of democratization in the trainees’ discourse. However, there was little suggestion in the questionnaires or interviews that trainees saw English teaching as a means of political action, or their pupils as potential political activists. In Nick’s response, above, ‘empower’ implies access rather than opposition. What is being modelled here is, in the end, a compliant citizen, one who will be granted inclusion provided that s/he obeys the rules and looks for consensus rather than conflict. This is not far removed from the adaptable,

flexible pupil who, in the National Curriculum, ‘should be introduced to ways of negotiating consensus or agreeing to differ.....encouraged to ask and answer questions and to modify their ideas in the light of what others say’ [1995:17].

Nevertheless, the pupil constituted in the questionnaire responses was by no means a National Curriculum clone. The trainees’ pupil was still basically a Romantic, though now toting her Rationalist back-pack of skills. S/he still enjoyed reading more than anything else in the English curriculum, and still found a way to use her imagination. And nobody expected her to be neat, except for one [presumably facetious] respondent.

In some respects, however, this pupil pre-empts the up-dated version of the 2000 English Orders, with its greater emphasis on communication and being able to transfer English skills across the curriculum. In this sense, the ‘reconstitution’ of the ‘English pupil’ could be said to be well advanced. However, the continued dominance of the Liberal-Humanist notion of the unique individual self, though essential to the contemporary national and global economies, will always carry with it a potential threat to any system which appears to privilege institutional power over individual rights. It is a perpetual struggle for governments: balancing consumer power and institutional control, and education has become one of the main battlegrounds. In English, the ideological supremacy of the notion of a uniquely experiencing self, and the investment of English teachers in that construction keep open possibilities for resistance. If the pupil-as-individual had begun to shrink within the totalising discourse of the economic agenda, the special relationship between English was strongly marked in the trainees’ construction of the teacher and the pupil-teacher relationship.

ii. Constructing the teacher and the teacher-pupil relationship

In Figure 6, ‘The construction of the subject in the National Curriculum Orders’, the ‘teacher ’column is left blank. This is because the teacher is absent from the discourse of the National Curriculum. The pupil appears throughout as the passive subject [‘Pupils should be taught’, ‘Pupils should be encouraged’, ‘Pupils should be given opportunities’,

etc.]. The agent, presumably the English teacher, does not feature grammatically.⁸¹ The extirpation of the teacher and the ‘passivization’ of the pupil reflect simultaneously the prescriptive nature of the curriculum orders and the commodification of a discourse which

English	The Pupil	The Teacher	The teacher-pupil relationship
<u>skills</u> vocabulary and grammar of standard English standard English as entitlement compositional skills formulation and expression of ideas in appropriate language communication of meaning evaluating language use <u>Literature</u> variety [brief mention of lit from other cultures] access to literary heritage moral and emotional understanding perspectives on society <u>non-fiction texts</u> [including]analysis and evaluation of [high quality] media texts	effective communicator fluent, accurate and confident user of standard English enthusiastic, independent, knowledgeable, responsive, appreciative and discriminating readers critical readers of own and others’ work good listeners, taking others’ views into account rational thinkers adaptable aware of audience neat writer entitled to Standard English and literary heritage good citizen		teacher as authority: transmission model ‘Pupils should be taught’. [to a lesser extent]: encouraged to enabled to introduced to be given opportunities to

Figure 6: The Construction of the subject in the [1995] English Orders

⁸¹ Similarly in the National Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training, the apprentice teacher is a passive subject: ‘Trainees must be taught....’ [DfEE, 1998]

privileges skills over processes or people. In the 'skills' model, the value of the teacher lies not in their knowledge or expertise, and certainly not in any inspirational qualities, but in their function as vehicles or transmitters of the skills package. That is not to say that the discourse of the National Curriculum is one of unalloyed commodification. Although standard English is to be *taught*, other aspects of English are to be *developed* or *encouraged*; pupils are even to be *given opportunities*. What we see in the National Curriculum is a co-option of the discourse of Personal Growth to manage a fundamentally prescriptive and utilitarian programme:

In order to be able to participate confidently in public, cultural and working life, pupils need to be able to speak, write and read standard English fluently and accurately. All pupils are therefore entitled to the full range of opportunities necessary to enable them to develop competence in standard English. [1995, General Requirements: 2]

Pupils should be encouraged to develop both their communication skills and their ability to evaluate language use. [Speaking and Listening: 17]

Pupils should be encouraged to read more demanding texts and to be discriminating in what they choose to read. [Reading: 19]

Pupils should be encouraged to extend their confidence in writing for a variety of purposes and to develop their own distinctive and original styles. [Writing: 23]

The English teacher that appeared in trainees' questionnaire responses was indeed predominantly a teacher of English as personal growth. Rather like the footballer who, according to the commentator, does everything but 'kick', this teacher did everything but 'teach'. She was a facilitator, helping, enabling, fostering and encouraging. These verbs were used by 60 of the trainees in describing the 'purposes of English' and by 48 in their reasons for wanting to teach it. Across both questions, the verb 'teach' was used 11 times, and only 3 times in response to the more personal final question. The majority had graduated in English, and might therefore, for stylistic reasons, have opted for different forms than the one used in the question. Nevertheless, its absence recalls Medway's [1990] observation on the pedagogical discourse of personal growth, that 'by 1968 English

teachers did not obviously *teach* anything' [28].

English teachers were also perceived as benefactors, giving, providing and, especially, sharing their enthusiasm for their subject. The idea of learning as a collaborative enterprise provides a direct link back to Dixon:

In every lesson..... there is an opportunity for the class teacher to draw from the audience an appreciation of what was enjoyed, of what went home, and thus to confirm in the individual writer or group a sense of shared enjoyment and understanding [1975:8]

Only rarely was the teacher perceived as 'sharing knowledge'. In most cases it was 'enthusiasm for' or 'enjoyment of' literature that trainees wished to share. This blurring of the definitions of 'teacher' and 'pupil' was further reflected in trainees' desire to 'learn more' about their subject:

I want to learn more about the subject. It's a learning process for me and the children.

It was, of course, not surprising if at this stage in their training, trainees' pedagogical construction of English was only partially pupil-centred and the final question had, in any case, asked them about their personal motivations. Nevertheless, there was a strong sense of allegiance to the subject reminiscent of the 'missionary' perspective described by Mathieson [1975], as well as the tendency to 'deep conviction rather than cool analysis' that Davies found to be characteristic of English teachers [1996:12]. The 'piety and pretension' that Davies found in his survey of English teachers' attitudes towards their subject was evident to an extent here, in that the trainees collectively, and often individually, endowed the subject English with an over-ambitious agenda, including, for example, 'understanding the world through literature'. However, many were cautious about expressing themselves too extravagantly, especially in giving their own reasons for wanting to teach English. They saw themselves as 'encouraging' rather than 'inspiring' their pupils, 'enabling' rather than 'enriching'. While they happily accredited subject English with various life-enhancing capabilities, they were generally disinclined to position

themselves as agents in the process. Thus the three trainees who used the verb ‘enrich’, gave it as a ‘purpose of English’, rather than positioning themselves as the ‘enrichers’. Like Hardman and Williamson’s trainees in 1993, and Davies’s teachers in 1996, these trainees tempered dedication with pragmatism, indicating an awareness not only of the more functional nature of the English that they were soon to teach, but also that in the 1990s it was not cool to be zealous:

I love the subject and hope to foster some of that enjoyment in my students.
Idealistic, I know.

Neither apparently was it cool to be radical. There was little evidence of the English teacher as an agent of social change, or of Marshall’s ‘Critical Dissenters’ [2000b]. In the few instances where a social agenda was discernible, the ideological emphasis was on access rather than change, on inclusion rather than social critique.

The positioning of the teacher as facilitator rather than transmitter of knowledge correlates with the pedagogy of personal growth. The use of tentative modal structures in trainees’ references to the teaching process may reflect the uncertainty of the novice, but they are also entirely compatible with personal growth English:

I believe literature provides access to all aspects of the world
I think I can communicate my knowledge to the children
Hopefully acquired enough skills in the language to be able to teach it successfully
I feel I have a passion for the subject which I *could* communicate to others and *hopefully*
inspire them as my teachers inspired me.
I would like to think people can share in the pleasure I get from my subject
I want to try and promote enjoyment in English...
To try to make children’s time in school as good and enlivening as possible⁸².

Only rarely were high modality forms used to make unequivocal statements:

It is of prime importance because without English a child’s base of learning is non-existent. English provides the platform to achieve potential.

⁸² My italics

In other cases, a high modality form was preceded or followed by a less assertive, low modality construction:

I *believe* its importance is paramount: to understand literature and the world around you, you must have a knowledge and appreciation of language, words, literature.

The teaching of appreciation of literature and interesting language is vital. I *want to try* and promote....

The same cautious self-positioning on the part of PGCE trainees was later characterised by Leach as being ‘all a bit in the lap of the Gods’ [2000: 150]. Although in some discourses the presence of low modality constructions might suggest lack of conviction, this was clearly not the case either with Leach’s trainees or my own respondents, whose expressions of affection for English were typically unqualified. However, enthusiasm and enjoyment are not skills to be transmitted from teacher to learner; they imply a different kind of teacher-pupil relationship: the more personal, collaborative pedagogy of personal growth. These trainees were being inducted not only into a course of training, but also into a new identity, one at the same time directed by and excluded from the hegemonic discourse of the National Curriculum. It seemed that the final question, in asking explicitly for a personal response, enabled them momentarily to re-inscribe themselves into the process, to remind themselves of the English they knew as learners. The implicit contradictions within trainees’ constructions of English on the one hand and themselves as teacher-learners of English on the other suggested that the difficulties in ‘re-orientating their subject perceptions’ described by Davies in 1993 [414] had become even more problematic since the arrival of the National Curriculum.

To summarize: while trainees’ discourse constructs both subject and pupil broadly within the discursive parameters of the National Curriculum, their construction of both teacher and pedagogy owe more to the personal growth model of English.

4.7 Constructing the subjects: English and grammar

Figure 7 overleaf compares trainees' constructions of English and grammar in terms of their ideational and interpersonal meanings. The categories used in the first two columns necessarily involved a degree of generalisation, and were modelled on the most frequently occurring discursive elements in trainees' responses. Thus the small set of questionnaires offering a 'descriptivist' construction of grammar are not represented here. The construction of grammar within the National Curriculum [column three] was narrower and therefore comparatively easier to summarize.

A number of conflicts emerged from the first stage questionnaires which are broadly comparable to the conflicts between skills-based and personal growth models of English. Though the acquisition of skills featured prominently in trainees' lists of the purposes of English, grammatical skills featured scarcely at all. Especially when asked about their own reasons for wanting to teach English, personal feelings for the subject [their own and their pupils'] took precedence over the desire to increase literacy or knowledge about language. Thus, although recognising what one trainee called the 'practical and artistic' aspects of English, the trainees generally prioritised affect over cognition. One of the clearest contrasts was between English as enjoyment and grammar as difficult; English for pleasure and grammar for [hard] work. In the questionnaire responses the commodification of grammar as product tended to be contrasted both with the personalization of subject English and its representation as 'process' or 'development'. The wording, particularly of question E1, 'How would you define grammar?' would, of course, have encouraged the representation of grammar as commodity or product rather than process [in grammatical terms relying on nominalization rather than verb structures.] However, the preponderance of single definition answers reinforced both the sense of grammar-as-commodity and as an undifferentiated monolith:

The structure of language

The construction of language

The structure of language rather than its meaning

	Trainees' construction of English and grammar		The construction of grammar in the National Curriculum
	English	Grammar	
subject	skills enjoyment of literature and language process pleasure open to all/inclusive communication diverse affective [self-awareness & self-expression] romantic	rules/structures knowledge product work/study difficult for less able correct English/errors right and wrong unitary cognitive rational/technical	'principles' of standard English speaking and writing formal and informal usage dialects and other languages useful insofar as they increase understanding of standard English.
teacher	enthusiastic collaborator facilitator learner	instructor authority figure teacher	
Pupil	reader first developing individual private and public self participant in learning creative and literate	writer first adult public self receiver of instruction/knowledge literate	fluent, accurate user of standard English
Teacher-pupil relationship [pedagogy]	participation [sharing]	transmission	mainly transmission

Figure 7: Ideational and interpersonal meanings in the most commonly occurring trainee constructions of English and Grammar [omitting the small and therefore unrepresentative 'descriptive' group]

The rules for how language is structured.

A system of rules and principles which gives structure to speech and writing

The structure in which all language is governed.

Metaphors confirmed the idea that grammar existed ‘out there’, unconnected with people or use, accessible to cognition, but fraught with complexity, an area of knowledge at the opposite end of the curricular spectrum from English:

The science of language

Building blocks of language

The DNA of language

The mechanics of language

An exclusively technical exercise.

Structural and construction metaphors again underlined the association of grammar with traditionally masculine enterprises. One even invoked car mechanics, defining it as ‘the oil in the engine’, another the building site: ‘The mortar that holds the bricks [language] together’, while for one trainee it was a DIY project:

Before one can assemble a table that will not collapse, one first requires the appropriate pieces in the correct order.

Where verb forms were used, as in the final example above, they were generally high modality structures, rendering meaning as definitive or closed. This was especially apparent in those responses reflecting prescriptivist or structuralist positions⁸³:

A good knowledge of grammar *will help* children in their future careers. A good grasp of the English language, of which grammar *is* an integral part, *is essential* in almost all fields.

Kids *should learn* the terms, the metalanguage for grammar, because *it enables* them to understand the language they speak, and to learn other languages better.

⁸³ My italics.

The minority of responses offering a descriptivist orientation to grammar were more likely to employ low modality forms in which meaning could be open to qualification.

Grammar is the *attempt* to make sense of how any given language operates. [

Nick]

The [*sometimes arbitrary*] rules governing the use of language... [Jon]

A system for explaining the 'rules' of language, *which is in a constant state of flux*.

'Descriptivists' were also more likely to offer multiple constructions of grammar or reasons for teaching it:

To give a better understanding of how language works. Giving pupils a metalanguage to help describe what they are saying/writing.

Language cannot be rubbished if it uses labels and categories; if it can be analysed it is leaning towards a science.

Grammarians get a buzz out of grammar. Some kids do too! Language study is closely linked with history and for that reason alone kids should know about it.

In psychoanalytic theory the acquisition of language marks the child's induction into the 'Law of the Father'. It could be argued that the characterisation of grammar as 'rules' [along with 'structure' the most popular formulation], confirms its ideological location within a patriarchal, authoritarian value system. In the English of personal growth, on the other hand, the boundaries are looser, expression freer and therefore potentially more open to the multiple, shifting and potentially anarchic voices of the 'repressed feminine'. A sense of these oppositions is inscribed in the few responses which dismissed the explicit teaching of grammar:

Rules and regulations hamper creative writing.

Grammar kills the fun/play of language. Too confusing for pupils to learn with any amount of enjoyment.

Can't remember much, only that it reminded me of Maths, with rules, etc.

The pupil-learner of English and grammar

When asked about their own learning of grammar, at school or at university, trainees regularly positioned themselves as bored, uninterested and struggling, and these formulations contrasted markedly with their self-representations as ‘lovers of English’.⁸⁴ Likewise their own pupils-to-be tended to be represented in negative terms as far as grammar was concerned. Particularly for those identifying with prescriptivist grammar, the potential learner was framed within a deficit model of language production:

Too often, some pupils will never grasp the fundamental rules of English grammar, especially if they speak a dialectal form of English.

It is essential that children can express themselves in a coherent manner.

Standards of grammar in school seem to be really bad.

The majority of British pupils lack any real knowledge of grammatical terms.

After having spent four weeks on diagnostic placement I have noted the appalling grammar of the majority of pupils at key stage 3 and 4!!

Because if it is not reinforced, as with my experiences, children forget over time and become lazy.

While personal growth positions the pupil as developing child, grammar teaching joins with the National Curriculum in presenting her as potential adult:

A good knowledge of grammar will help children in their future careers.

If one cannot communicate in written form one will be misunderstood, or not taken seriously.

I feel it is important to be able to speak/write in formal English – you are judged on this.

Children need to be aware of and understand speech and the written word to progress and succeed in education and the world of work.

Thus grammar becomes part of the package of presentational skills that pupils must carry into adulthood and work. It is the [often reluctant] responsibility of the teacher to supply

⁸⁴ See above for examples from the first stage analysis of questionnaires, p. 82.

those skills, to fashion the subject as commodity for public consumption. The private inner self, 'nourished' by literature appears to belong to a different value system as well as a different conception of the self. At this stage there was little sign of the cynicism that might lead teachers to see Peel's 'enchanted reader' as merely another version of the consumer.

The teacher and teaching of English and grammar

The facilitator and enthusiast in trainees' construction of the English teacher contrasted with the idea of the grammar teacher as uninspiring, unsympathetic and in some cases, frightening. For most trainees this emerged from memories of their own grammar learning at school and university:

Disliked specific grammar [school] lessons. Teaching method was boring and uninvolving.

I remember that some pupils were completely 'lost' and found grammar boring and useless.

Perhaps this was due to the feeling that a perfect standard was being forced on them.

The formal [university] lessons on grammar lost me completely – it was too complicated and assumed a higher knowledge than most of us had.

very boring and badly taught [school]

scared of teacher – rote learning. Still remember definitions I had to learn

Found first year [university] grammar very difficult as it was assumed we already understood the metalanguage.

We were told about things. Questioning wasn't geared to see if we understood the workings of the language. [university]

The sense of the teacher's personal engagement with subject English was not apparent here, nor in trainees' constructions of themselves as potential teachers of grammar, at least at this relatively early stage in their training. On the whole, in fact, trainees seemed to avoid positioning themselves as teachers of grammar in Questionnaire One, representing

grammar as a separate entity, a body of knowledge rather than part of a process of teaching and learning. Again this reflected the reified discourse of the National Curriculum rather than the personal and affective meanings of personal growth English. In the few responses which included observations on the pedagogy of grammar teaching, the conflict between these two models surfaced:

Standards of grammar in schools seem to be really bad. However, grammar still needs to be taught. No useless grammar exercises or drills.

I wouldn't say 'This is going to be a grammar lesson', but I do think they should be able to recognise the structure of the language, so that they can self-correct.

Being able to write properly....Should be taught in relation to current work so children can see its relevance and not get bored.

Because when mistakes occur, there is a theory to refer back to. I think it needs to be taught in a practical and interesting way, so that it does not become dry and obscure.

Though few in number, these responses all came from trainees who displayed prescriptivist views on grammar. The statements are inherently contradictory, yet they could also be read as attempts to mediate between the transmission model of grammar teaching and the pedagogy of personal growth. One response employed the discourse of personal growth in much the same manner as the National Curriculum, invoking notions of 'confidence' and 'entitlement'. The contradictions are more apparent here, though, and less seamlessly articulated:

Not because knowledge of language makes you a better person per se, but I think it is important to give pupils the *confidence* to feel that they can use grammar *correctly*. Grammar to me should be about *empowering* people.

In some respects trainees' construction of grammar in Questionnaire One appeared more prescriptive than its counterpart in the National Curriculum. For example, where trainees presented grammar as 'rules', the National Curriculum prefers 'principles'. However, the apparently liberal tone of the National Curriculum can be viewed as a function of its cooption of the language of Personal Growth discussed above [p.183]. Whether key Stage

3 and 4 pupils are to be ‘encouraged to be confident’ or ‘given opportunities to analyse their own writing’, it is clear that the categories of ‘grammar’ on page 24 [DfE, 1995] are commodities to be *taught*. Other varieties of English [as well as other languages] are useful only as deficit versions of the standard. Despite the avoidance of [the politically incorrect] ‘correct’, the prescriptive agenda surfaces explicitly in the construction of the pupil as ‘a fluent, *accurate* user of standard English’ [ibid.: 18]. The pedagogical model here, then, is at odds with both English as personal growth and trainees’ version of it; it does, however, correspond much more closely to trainees’ construction of the pedagogy of grammar teaching.

Taken together, trainees’ constructions of ‘English’ and ‘grammar’ could be said to exemplify the contradictions which, though pushed into prominence by the National Curriculum, have long been present in English teaching. A generalised model of trainees’ discourse, such as the one given in Figure 7 [above, p.188], serves to highlight the dislocations. However, closer examination gave evidence of re-alignments of meaning in the direction of a more coherent discourse.

Contradictions, Transformations and Coherences

I had already identified contradictions both within trainees’ constructions of grammar and grammar teaching and between their constructions of ‘English’ and ‘grammar’. The latter were most prominently displayed in the responses of those aligning themselves with prescriptivist grammar, the largest of the groups identified in my analysis of trainees’ attitudes. Figure 8 overleaf demonstrates the contradictions in both the ideational and interpersonal constructions of grammar and English. However, these overtly contradictory formulations were outnumbered by responses [from the same ‘prescriptivist’ subset] in which there were signs of mediation between the two polarities [Figure 9, p. 196]. Particular words and phrases appeared to have a transformative function, the most popular being ‘communication’, and particularly ‘effective communication’. Thus where unmediated prescriptivist epithets [for example ‘correct English’; ‘proper English’] had been used to define grammar, more liberal terms were applied to English language skills. Here again ‘communication’ was functioning ideologically as a mediating discourse,

Grammar	English
It is essential that young people can express themselves in a coherent manner	Develop young people's appreciation of literature Express ideas in a creative fashion Enrich students' experiences through social issue based texts. I enjoy English and feel that it is essential for young people to appreciate the diversity of English.
I do think they should be able to recognise the structure of the language so that they can self-correct	To introduce pupils to other people's experiences through literature etc. To make [or rather encourage] pupils to want to learn. I want to learn more about the subject. It's a learning process for me and the children.
To help with correct structure of writing	Everyone has equal opportunities to access all aspects of literature. To share my enthusiasm of [sic] literature with others and the challenge of how to teach it excites me. Also to learn more about the subject.
The way writing is put together in a standard, acceptable form. So children know when they are writing grammatically correct sentences.	To teach kids about themselves. To love and understand literature.
The writing and reading of English in its correct technical form.	Stimulate a child's interest in literature. Encourage pupils to use their imaginations. Make pupils aware of language in its different forms. I want to teach English because I have a passion for the subject which I feel I could communicate to others and hopefully inspire them as my teachers inspired me.
Rules of the standard structure of English	Self-expression and development of identity. To learn to communicate in all social environments. Pure enjoyment

Figure 8: Contradictory formulations in prescriptivist constructions of grammar and English

Grammar	Purposes of English
Using the correct structures and combinations of sentences in formal written English	To teach pupils to communicate effectively
Knowing how to write correct standard English and understanding how to structure your work	To teach people how to communicate effectively To learn how to write correctly and effectively
Unless it's demonstrated with examples, the danger is that many will not 'catch' the grammar.	To allow children to express themselves. To empower children into being eloquent and articulate in speech and writing
Rules and regulations of English A way of standardising how we speak.	Equip people with the knowledge to take a role in society. Enable us to communicate successfully in different situations.
Being able to write properly so that your work makes sense and is understood by others.	To be able to read and write satisfactorily
Rules and structure of the English language	Building confidence in communicating with others
The basic set of rules that we use to construct the English language and therefore meaning	To encourage confident speakers and effective listeners
A good grasp of the English language, of which grammar is an integral part, is essential in almost all fields.	Develop pupils' knowledge of language Enable them to use language in a variety of ways. Create an enjoyable atmosphere for study.
The rules which govern how standard English is composed in a written form.	Interpersonal communication Expression Enabling people with a medium for communication.
The information/technicalities necessary for children to be competent in written and spoken English.	Enables children to communicate effectively.
Using correct sentence structure with right use of tenses etc.	Read and write fluently
rules of the standard structure of English	To learn to communicate in all social environments.
Grammar is how to make your sentences make sense. It enables the writer to write in a more powerful way.	It enables students to get heard.

Figure 9: Transformations in the construction of English: from prescription to communication

smoothing the transition from grammar-as-rules to English as social tool and the key to individual empowerment. It is in this negotiation of meanings that we might observe the regulatory influence of the National Curriculum on intending teachers' constructions of their subject, themselves and their pupils, and the way it is achieved through the discursive reconstruction of trainees' own meanings. The incorporation of the pedagogy of personal growth within the National Curriculum provides a medium through which this normalization process can be accomplished. 'Proper English' becomes 'encouraging effective communication', 'entitlement' and 'access'. English can continue to be 'all things to everybody': personal fulfilment and public acceptability – a blueprint for the citizen of the 21st century.

Alternative coherences: the potential for a liberatory model of English and grammar

Up to this point, my description of trainees' constructions of English and grammar had been based for the most part on those discursive elements most commonly employed in the questionnaire responses. These could be broadly characterised as a combination of National Curriculum content and personal growth pedagogy, though with a broader definition of 'literature' and a more explicitly prescriptivist grammar. However, a small number of responses, from the group I had categorised as 'descriptivist', seemed to offer the possibility of a more radical formulation. Figure 10 overleaf summarizes the discursive elements which emerged from this subset. Here not only is 'English' conceived as diverse and fluid, but language and [most significantly] grammar as well. One of the group in particular exemplified the descriptivist approach, describing grammar as 'a system for explaining the 'rules' of language, which is in a constant state of flux. It therefore adapts and varies, but retains certain systems'. The pupil, in accessing the system, is not merely able to present herself as a competent social subject and user of standard English, but as an independent thinker, possibly a dialect speaker and capable of 'breaking the rules'. Knowledge of grammar was important partly for its own sake, and as a tool of expression, but also because it provided a metalanguage with which to analyse language or texts. Here, grammar comprised less a body of knowledge [or a commodity] than a set of tools to facilitate a process by which the pupil can gain control over language or discourse.

	Grammar	English
subject	description of the way language works and is used in a variety of discourses key tool for analysis metalanguage dynamic variation: including dialects multiple systems difficult at first, then enjoyable	Language [literature to a lesser extent] wide-ranging Communication
teacher	helping pupils to understand and analyse language understanding of prescriptive and descriptive grammars	Enthusiasm and interest for English language and literature
pupil	interested reader and writer analyst of language/texts clear, reflective, critical thinker able to break the rules	confident articulate creative enjoying language and literature preparing for the future
pedagogy	transmitting knowledge making language accessible and enjoyable encouraging critical perspectives	developing critical and creative abilities

Figure 10 : Descriptivist constructions of English and grammar

Interestingly, only one trainee in the entire sample used the word ‘discourse’, and this was the one who came closest to a critical pedagogy of grammar teaching:

To enable students to analyse texts with an increased set of critical practices. The description of the way language works and is used in a variety of discourses.

Learning and applying the metalanguage could be made enjoyable, but it was also a cognitive endeavour. Thus the pedagogy was represented as a mixture of transmission and personal growth.

In broadening the definition of grammar, in presenting it as a tool for analysis as well as ‘effective communication’, those who positioned themselves as descriptivists were able to offer a more coherent overall construction of English. Prescriptivist formulations of

grammar either sat in unresolved opposition to formulations of English, or the two were yoked together by discursive elements from the National Curriculum. The response of a trainee whose knowledge of English grammar had been largely self-taught⁸⁵, suggested how a descriptivist approach to grammar could fit within an English curriculum which included not only literature and ‘knowledge about language’ as content, but also the space to develop both creative and critical approaches all framed broadly within the pupil-centred, English-for-enjoyment pedagogy of personal growth:

Grammar:

The [sometimes arbitrary] rules governing the use of language, or a guide to language use, the purpose of which is to standardise that use in such away that communication can take place... Deviance from that guide is not wrong, but is motivated and justified by e.g. register, dialect, creativity etc.

Purposes of English:

To increase the range of personal expression/to make children comfortable with language.

To generate an interest in and enthusiasm for language.

To create an interest in reading.

To make learners knowledgeable about English language.

To develop learners’ critical and creative abilities.

Own reasons for wanting to teach English:

To help learners become more self-conscious about language use [in a positive, constructively critical sense].

To make the analysis of language and literature [whether that be academically rigorous or simply playful] an enjoyable experience.

To make language seem comprehensible and user-friendly rather than arcane and stuffy.

The framing of grammar within a descriptivist orientation to language has the potential to transform it from a mechanism for public assessment and self-regulation into a set of tools to assist understanding of texts of all kinds and, potentially to offer both the skills and the theoretical perspectives from which to evaluate not only texts themselves, but the ideological processes which operate through them.

⁸⁵ Jon, one of the interview group. See Chapter 6.

There are a number of shifts in the construction of English which are only hinted at in these responses: from literature to texts [and possibly even discourses], from grammar as 'rules' to grammar as critical apparatus; from standard English to a plural and dynamic model of literacy, from an authoritarian pedagogy masquerading as pupil-centred to a liberating, inclusive one.

Though there is a significant ideological gap between the formulations presented here and the pedagogy of critical literacy, they could, in circumstances favourable to such a shift, serve as a discursive bridge between descriptivist and critical positions. At the least, programmed discussion of the issues during the PGCE year could help trainees negotiate the transition from university English to school English. It remained to be seen whether the trainees offering these more progressive constructions of grammar and language could carry them into their practice as English teachers, or whether the process of naturalization, already in evidence in these questionnaires, and pushing constantly in the direction of the national curriculum, would submerge these traces of a more progressive discourse. The gaps and inconsistencies reflected in my analysis could facilitate this process. At the same time, they could open up spaces for alternative meanings. Discursive themes such as 'communication' and, less frequently, 'empowerment', operate as discourse technologies, assisting in the process of naturalization and mediating between conflicting ideological representations. Their vagueness, the fact that they contain within them a range of possible meanings, facilitates this process. But it also leaves room for their inscription into a more progressive model of English. The next stages of my investigation would allow me to examine more closely the orientations of trainees towards English and grammar and to check the validity of my theorizing up to this point.

Chapter 5: Findings from Questionnaire Two: Bringing Grammar into English

5.1 The survey

The second questionnaire was distributed in May 1999 to ensure completion before the end of the PGCE year. Of the 123 returns, 108 were from trainees who had participated in the first questionnaire survey. Thus 85% of the sample completed both questionnaires. The difference between the two sets of returns resulted mainly from a shortfall of 11 from one university group. However, this was off-set by slight increases in returns from three of the other groups. The return rate for the largest group was identical to that of their first survey, though four of their trainees participated only in the second. Since completion of the second questionnaire was not contingent on participation in the first, I included all the second stage questionnaires in my analysis, including the 15 new participants. The age and gender profile remained virtually unchanged.

My principle aims in conducting the second survey were:

- to identify the extent of trainee teachers' involvement in grammar teaching during their main teaching practice;
- to review their feelings about grammar as they came to the end of their PGCE course;
- to further explore trainees' constructions of 'grammar' and 'English'.

5.2 Trainees' experience of grammar teaching during their main school practice

Seventy-four [60%] of those completing the second questionnaire reported that they had done some grammar teaching during their main school practice. Table 16 overleaf shows what they taught under the heading of 'grammar' and that for many of them 'grammar' was an umbrella concept, covering a diverse range of literacy skills. The catch-all nature of the trainees' definition of grammar suggested that it owed more to the [1995] National Curriculum than to modern linguistics.

features taught	% [of 74] trainees who taught feature [nos in brackets]	year groups taught				
		[as % of trainees in column 1] [nos in brackets]				
		7	8	9	10	11/12
word classes	65% [48]	75% [36]	33% [16]	19% [9]	12% [6]	
sentence structure	23% [17]	65% [11]	53% [9]	41% [7]	23% [4]	9% [1]
paragraphs	16% [12]	58% [7]	25% [3]	42% [5]	25% [3]	
tenses	19% [14]	50% [7]	50% [7]	28% [4]	28% [4]	
punctuation	81% [60]	47% [28]	52% [31]	27% [16]	[25% 15]	
spelling	31% [23]	35% [8]	61% [14]	17% [4]	17% [4]	5% [1]
Standard English	9% [7]	[4]	[3]	[2]	[6]	
dialect differences	12% [9]	[2]	[4]	[1]	[2]	
language analysis [media/poetry]	7% [5]	[1]	[4]			[3]
literary devices [eg alliteration, metaphor]	9% [7]	[2]	[5]	[1]	[1]	
other	36% [27]					

Table 16: Aspects of 'grammar' taught by trainees during main teaching practice

The two most popular areas mentioned were punctuation and word classes, the latter including specific terms such as nouns, verbs and adjectives as well as the generic 'word classes' or 'parts of speech'.

Punctuation

Eighty-one percent of the 74 trainees answering this question mentioned punctuation as part of their grammar teaching. While this was mainly to years 7 and 8, roughly a quarter of this group had taught punctuation through to Key Stage 4. The apostrophe was a

popular concern, 18 [30%] of this group having taught it, mostly across the secondary age range.

Word classes

Sixty-five percent of those answering question 2 reported that they had taught word classes, principally in year 7. This was one of the few areas in which trainees employed linguistic terminology to describe their 'grammar' work. The majority mentioned specific classifications, the most popular of which were nouns, verbs and adjectives, while five used the broad categories of 'word classes' or 'parts of speech'. Fourteen [19%] specified that they had taught verb tenses.

Spelling

Thirty-one percent [23] included spelling. Linguistics have tended to treat this separately from grammar. However, although only one used the term 'morphology', a number of trainees indicated that they were referring to word grammar. Others gave examples of homophones such as they're/their/there and two/too/to, where explanations would presumably involve some reference to grammatical function. Five used the term 'homophones'.

Sentence structure

Only 17 trainees [23%] reported that they had taught sentence structure, mostly to years 7 and 8. Within this category, five mentioned 'clauses' and one 'adverbial phrases'. Twelve [16%] mentioned 'paragraphs', but it was unclear whether they were referring to the structuring of sentences within paragraphs or whole text [discourse] structure.

Standard English and dialect differences

Only seven trainees mentioned 'standard English' and nine [12%] 'dialect differences'. Most had taught them across the secondary age bands.

Language analysis

Only five trainees indicated that they had used grammatical analysis in working with texts in the classroom. One specified that she had done so in relation to both poetry and media

texts; another had looked at dialect features in poetry. One had studied ‘Black English’ in American literature with sixth form students. A slightly larger group [7] understood ‘grammar’ to include literary devices such as metaphor, alliteration, simile and even onomatopoeia.

Others

Additional features included in responses to question 2 further illustrate the generous compass of trainees’ definition of ‘grammar’ [Table 17].

	% of [74] trainees [nos in brackets]	additional details
vocabulary	4% [3]	connotations of key words in ‘Macbeth’; double meanings in Shakespeare
pupil/common errors	5% [4]	
essay writing/study skills	4% [3]	
descriptive language [adjectives]	4% [3]	
instructions/imperatives	[1]	‘A’ level
subject/object	[2]	
knowledge about language	[1]	
formal/informal	[1]	
the gerund	[1]	
person [1 st , 3 rd]	[2]	
history of language	[2]	
speech	[2]	
Old English case system	[1]	‘A’ level

Table 17: ‘Other’ responses to question 2 [Additional grammar-related features taught by trainees]

The content of trainee teachers’ lessons is, of course, seldom dictated by personal choice. Thus the responses to question B2 could have had more to do with the preoccupations and policies of the school, than the preferences and/or expertise of the trainees. It would be unfair to conclude, on the basis of these answers, that schools were not fully implementing the National Curriculum in respect of grammar teaching: they might have been teaching it to the letter, but preferred to use experienced teachers. Alternatively, trainees might have

been given the opportunity to teach it, but declined. What remained, however, from those who saw themselves [if only intermittently] as teachers of grammar, was the general sense of uncertainty and imprecision as regards its definition that had characterised their responses to the first questionnaire.

Teaching methods

Table 18 shows the various methods employed by those trainees who had taught grammar during their main school practice.

	Method	% trainees [of 74 responses] [nos in brackets]
1	separate lesson	65% [48]
2	integrated into current work	92% [68]
3	as and when you thought necessary	85% [63]
4	using grammatical terms	86% [64]
5	using non-technical explanations	84% [62]
6	taught to the whole class	97% [72]
7	taught to individual pupils	53% [39]
8	using grammatical exercises	73% [54]
9	using drills	4% [3]
10	using games	54% [40]
11	correcting errors in writing	93% [69]
12	correcting errors in speech	27% [20]
13	exclusively the grammar of standard English	50% [37]
14	including other dialects & varieties	43% [32]
15	discussion of non-fiction texts	65% [48]
16	discussion of literature texts	66% [49]
17	preparing for written tasks	62% [46]
18	any other methods?	13% [10]

Table 18: Methods used by trainees in teaching grammar

For question 3, trainees were asked to circle ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers rather than to use their own words. Only ten offered additional methods, including worksheets [two of the five producing their own], drama/role play [2] and ‘peer-assisted learning’ [1]. One trainee had used ‘skills packs’ devised by the school and which 7, 8 and 9 year pupils worked on in timed sessions. For the most part, however, issues of grammar appeared to be addressed as they arose, and integrated into current work. There may have been some misunderstanding of ‘separate lesson’, given the apparent contradiction between responses to methods 1 and 3⁸⁶. It is possible that respondents read teaching grammar ‘as a separate lesson’ as teaching to the whole class, or that they had simply planned beforehand to deal with specific grammatical points that had arisen in pupils’ work. The fact that 73% had used grammatical exercises and 54% games implied that they had prepared to cover specific aspects of grammar, and that ‘as and when necessary’ did not imply an ad hoc approach. The fact that over 80% had employed both grammatical terms and non-technical explanations in their grammar teaching suggested pragmatism and flexibility, as did their willingness to teach not only standard English but the grammar of other dialects and varieties. However, their use of non-technical terms could equally have been a reflection of their own uncertainty about terminology. A number certainly seemed unclear about boxes 13 and 14, answering ‘yes’ [5] or ‘no’ [7] to both, again suggesting a confusion about the relationship between grammar, dialects and standard English.

There seemed little confusion about boxes 11 and 12, with 93% correcting errors in written work and significantly fewer [27%] doing the same with spoken English. This apparent reluctance to explicitly teach spoken standard English recalled trainees’ association of grammar with writing in Questionnaire One. It was also a reminder of the problems inherent in implementing the National Curriculum requirement to teach a prescribed variety of spoken English.

Given that so few had specified language analysis as an area of grammar work in question

⁸⁶ Although 85% of those answering this question claimed to have taught grammar ‘as and when necessary’, 65% had taught it as ‘a separate lesson’, implying systematic lesson planning.

2, it seemed odd that over 60% of those teaching grammar appeared to have used it in discussing both non-fiction and literature texts. It was possible that they had focused on punctuation and word classes in such discussions; it is also possible that they read boxes 15 and 16 as general areas of English teaching rather than ones specifically involving grammar.

One area where there seemed little confusion or disagreement was in the almost unanimous rejection of grammatical drills as a teaching method.

Pupil, trainee and school responses to grammar teaching

Table 19 summarizes trainees’ responses to questions B4, B5 and B6:

How did pupils respond?

How did you feel about teaching grammar?

What impression did you get of the school’s view on grammar teaching?

Pupil response

The majority of trainees reported that their pupils had responded positively to grammar. For seven, the positive response was contingent on an ‘integrated’ approach to grammar teaching. Two noted that any explicit reference to ‘grammar’ appeared to put pupils off, while nine found that games and ‘activities’ enhanced pupil enjoyment. Where pupil response was negative, ‘boredom’ was a factor in four cases [all, interestingly, from the same PGCE group]. In two cases the work was seen to be ‘difficult’ for less able pupils,

	positive % [of 74] responses [nos in brackets]	negative	Mixed	no response
pupil response	63% [47]	17% [13]	16% [12]	[2]
trainees’ feelings	66% [49]	20% [15]	8% [6]	[4]
school perception	53% [39]	13% [10]		[3]

Table 19: Pupil, trainee and school responses to grammar teaching

although another trainee recorded a positive response from his SEN pupils:

Pupils often hear the word ‘grammar’ and instantly turn off. However, though the pupils in my class [SEN] found the work difficult, I believe they did eventually grasp the concepts and seemed grateful for it.

Although the notion of gratitude was unexpected in this context, it did hint at issues of access and entitlement expressed elsewhere in trainees’ description of grammar as ‘important’ or ‘necessary’.

Trainees’ feelings

Again, the majority of trainees involved in grammar teaching felt positive about it, although the proportions of positive trainee responses ranged from 54% to 100% across the five PGCE groups. Given the variation in group size, and the number of factors which could influence individual trainees’ attitudes, it would not be possible, within the scope of this study, to suggest reasons for the different responses patterns. In 55% of cases, trainees’ positive responses coincided with positive attitudes on the part of their host schools, but, again, no direct causal effect could be assumed.

Seven trainees made it clear that they supported an ‘integrated’ approach and six saw grammar teaching as ‘important’, ‘necessary’ or ‘vital’. Those who responded negatively gave various reasons including ‘nervousness’ [4], and dissatisfaction with the [non-integrated] approach adopted by the school [2]. Others had felt pressured into teaching grammar [2]; one saw grammar as ‘a necessary evil’ and another conceded that it was ‘part of my job – not my favourite part’. Four of the ‘mixed’ responses cited nervousness or lack of confidence.

School perceptions

Roughly half the schools in which trainees had taught grammar were felt to have a positive view. Fourteen trainees stated that their schools saw grammar as ‘important’ ‘essential’ or ‘necessary’. In one school, teachers saw grammar teaching as ‘vital’, but regretted that they had insufficient time for other aspects of English. In ten of the schools the emphasis

was on integrating grammar into the English curriculum, while three adopted a more 'traditional' approach, with separate lessons based around grammatical exercises. In two cases the emphasis was on 'basic skills', while another school felt grammar to be more suitable for able pupils. In only a few cases did trainees' answers suggest that teachers actually enjoyed grammar teaching, with two English departments described as 'enthusiastic' and two others exploring new ways of teaching it.

Where school views were felt to be negative, attitudes included:

Boring but necessary
Get it over with quickly
Not essential

One school had tried to dissuade a trainee from teaching grammar. In another, where the younger teachers admitted to struggling with it, the trainee had found that all English staff were happy for her to 'do the grammar', evidence that in this school at least, grammar did not attract the kind of proprietorial or 'pet subject' response sometimes associated with other aspects of the English curriculum.

In five cases, trainees could discern no particular views on grammar; three schools left it to individual teachers, and one trainee felt that it was 'unintentionally neglected'.

A response to a later question [D1: *What do you consider the most important thing you have learnt about grammar on your PGCE course?*] addressed the issue of teacher motivation. The trainee felt that 'not enough time was allocated to grammar in the school timetable' and that

if the teacher's attitude is one of disinterest, then this is transferred to pupils, consequently hampering the learning process.

Overall, therefore, a mixed picture of grammar teaching emerges from trainees' school practice. While this brief and incomplete account of trainee teachers' experience could not pretend to be either systematic or representative, it did suggest that implementation of the

National Curriculum Orders in relation to grammar teaching was variable, and that where it was being implemented, it was subject to widely diverging responses from schools in terms of both teaching methods and teacher attitudes.

5.3 Trainee responses to statements about grammar and grammar teaching

Section C in the second questionnaire invited trainees to give their views on a range of statements about grammar and grammar teaching. The Likert scale offered five options for each statement: *strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree and strongly disagree*. Responses were aggregated and summarized in terms of trainees' agreement, disagreement or uncertainty. Table 20 overleaf shows the responses, as percentages of the 123 trainees who completed second stage questionnaires.

In my first questionnaire I had used open-ended questions to explore trainees' constructions of grammar. In the final stage of the study I wanted to test trainees' perceptions against a broader range of ideological meanings and constructions of 'grammar' than could be accommodated within individually phrased responses. Some of these meanings had already emerged from the earlier questionnaire; others I had gleaned from my literature search and my own experience.

Research methods: the Likert scale

Although the Likert scale is an effective research tool in terms of both data generation and relatively straightforward analysis, [Anderson, 1998] there are potential pitfalls, especially where, as in this case, respondents are asked to work through a fairly long list of statements. All research into people's opinions must trust to the cooperation and sincerity of its subjects, but few researchers can expect all their informants to share their enthusiasm for the research topic. Thus it might be tempting to resort to ticking boxes in a random fashion, or to simply ticking all or most of, the 'unsure' boxes. I tried as far as possible to identify any aberrant responses and found only one example of excessive indecision, where the respondent declared himself 'unsure' about statements 5 to 26, and a second where interest had evidently palled after statement 7, and the writer had abandoned the

	statements about grammar	agreed [% of 123]	disagreed	unsure
1	The main purpose of grammar teaching is to ensure that pupils write in correct Standard English.	56	22	22
2	Explicit grammar teaching can help pupils to structure their ideas.	62	10	28
3	Grammar can be as enjoyable as literature	45	31	23
4	Terminology should not be taught out of context.	59	19	21
5	Only the more able students can be expected to discuss patterns of syntax.	11	64	24
6	Grammar teaching may be useful in promoting discipline in the classroom.	16	55	28
7	An understanding of grammar need to be built systematically into the school's curriculum.	81	7	11
8	Grammatical terminology is a crucial tool in the analysis of literature texts.	56	23	20
9	Knowing about the structure of English is important for its own sake.	49	21	30
10	Talking about grammar gets in the way of appreciating literature.	13	72	15
11	A knowledge of English grammar is important for foreign language learning.	73	5	22
12	Grammar teaching hampers creativity.	6	72	21
13	People need a knowledge of grammar in order to understand how language can be used to manipulate them.	58	14	28
14	An explicit knowledge of grammar is essential to understanding how language varies according to context and use.	69	9	22
15	Most pupils find grammar boring.	49	19	32
16	Standard English is only one dialect of English.	85	5	10
17	The requirement to teach grammar is part of an authoritarian model of English promoted by Government in response to a supposed decline in standards.	36	31	32
18	Learning about grammar can help foster better relations between ethnic groups through recognising that all languages and dialects are rule-governed and systematic.	32	15	52
19	Explicit teaching of grammar does <i>not</i> improve pupil performance.	19	40	41
20	Being able to talk about grammar can aid discussion of social issues.	26	27	47
21	Every encounter with every text ought to be inviting pupils to comment on the writer's use of language, including grammar.	57	24	19
22	Literature is part of the study of language.	82	4	14
23	Dialect features are not errors.	84	3	13
24	It is important that children should be able to speak standard English.	71	15	14
25	I would only teach grammatical terms if I had to.	12	70	18
26	Every intending teacher of English should undertake a course in linguistics.	54	22	23

Table 20: Trainees' responses to statements on grammar and grammar teaching

questionnaire. In arranging the list, I had tried to avoid a ‘run’ of statements which would be likely to evoke identical responses, and, apart from the two already mentioned, there were no continuous columns of ticks which might suggest that a respondent had not troubled to read the statements. Interpretation is another potential minefield, and poststructuralism has made precarious the apparently simple injunction to avoid ‘statements that can be interpreted in more than one way’ [Anderson, *ibid*:174]. Trainee teachers might be assumed to be familiar with some of the discourses represented in the statements, but because they would not all be familiar with all the ideas, misunderstandings were possible. I attempted to manage these potential problems in three ways:

- by being present to answer questions from the largest of the groups;⁸⁷
- by relying on weight of numbers to offset what I hoped would be a minority of individual aberrations;
- by wording the statements clearly and unequivocally;
- and finally by checking areas of uncertainty or contradiction in face-to-face interviews.

There was also the possibility that, without wanting to mislead in any way, where apprentice teachers recognised a construct as ‘politically correct’ they might register their agreement without testing it against their individual beliefs. In other words, they would say what they were expected to say. The potential for such circularity is inherent in attitudinal surveys and any attempt to distinguish ‘real’ opinions from those deemed politically correct would be both impractical and ideologically suspect. Anonymity is a useful safeguard for respondents who might want to buck the trend, but in the end the aim of this section of the questionnaire was to construct a broad picture of trainees’ perceptions.

⁸⁷ There appeared to be few problems in completing the questionnaires, except for question A3: *Where did you go to school?* It seemed that some respondents thought this referred to their teaching practice rather than their own schooling. This was to prove unfortunate, since it meant that I could not reliably cross-reference between individuals’ first and second questionnaires.

Trainees' responses to statements about grammar and grammar teaching

1. *The main purpose of grammar teaching is to ensure that pupils write in correct standard English.*

In the first questionnaire almost half the trainees had presented a prescriptivist view of grammar [p. 123]. The National Curriculum model promotes a single, homogeneous 'standard English' grammar. It would therefore be unsurprising if a majority of trainees at the end of their PGCE courses were to support this statement. Some might have balked at the phrase '*main purpose*'. Nevertheless, 56% supported it, and only 22% disagreed. This degree of concurrence is interesting in light of the fact that only 7 of the trainees who had taught grammar on school practice had included standard English in their responses to question B2: 'What aspects of grammar did you teach?'. It now seemed unlikely that its absence reflected either a dissociation of 'grammar' and 'standard English' or an ideological objection to the notion on the part of the trainees. That said, agreement with statement 1 might not necessarily mean that trainees believed it themselves, merely that they recognised it as a tenet of the national curriculum.

2. *Explicit grammar teaching can help pupils to structure their ideas.*

This had been very much a minority view in the first questionnaire. It has been cited by educationalists as a reason for teaching grammar. [Cameron, 2000]. A clear majority [62%] of trainees supported this statement, but it was unclear whether they saw this as an aid to cognition, as 'thinking skills', or as a tool for writing.

3. *Grammar can be as enjoyable as literature.*

There was more dissent to this proposition. Though the largest proportion [45%] were in agreement, 31% demurred. Nevertheless, given that the majority of trainees would have majored in literature, this could represent a significant shift in their perceptions of English teaching.

4. *Terminology should not be taught out of context.*

In the first survey a number of trainees had emphasized the importance of context in

grammar teaching, and the idea that grammar should be ‘integrated’ into current work rather than taught separately was repeated in trainees’ account of their school experience at the beginning of Questionnaire Two. Again, a clear majority favoured this approach to grammatical terms to the extent that more ‘strongly agreed’ than simply ‘agreed’ with it [39% to 34%].

5. Only the more able students can be expected to discuss patterns of syntax.

This notion was dismissed by a substantial majority [64% disagreed; 11% [14 in total] agreed]. Whether this was a comment on the accessibility of contemporary methods of teaching grammar or a commitment to egalitarianism, or both, is unclear. The 1999 National Curriculum would contain a strong emphasis on inclusivity, but in the 1995 version English skills were already being framed within a discourse of participation and access⁸⁸. Teachers surveyed for *The Grammar Papers* Project [1998] had expressed ‘widespread uncertainty’ about differentiation in grammar teaching, and evidence from that survey showed the teaching of sentence structure to be ‘patchy’ and that where it did happen, it was more likely to be implicit rather than explicit [1998: 30]. Only 17 trainees had actually reported having taught sentence structure during their school practice, and only five had mentioned ‘clauses’, suggesting, again, an implicit rather than an explicit approach. It is possible that in responding to the statement they had read ‘syntax’ as synonymous with ‘grammar’. However, lack of evidence for the kind of explicit teaching of sentence structure implied in the statement could suggest that the commitment to inclusivity was more influential than the practice itself.

6. Grammar teaching may be useful in promoting discipline in the classroom.

The fact that almost a third of the trainees said they were ‘unsure’ about this statement suggested that it might have been a new idea to them. One had reported in her answer to question B2, on pupils’ responses to grammar teaching, that it had ‘kept them quiet’, but the general opposition reflected, again, their liberal positioning. Fifty-five percent disagreed, of which half disagreed ‘strongly’.

⁸⁸ See, for example, page 2, para. 2, on the entitlement to standard English [DfE, 1995].

7. *An understanding of grammar needs to be built systematically into the school's curriculum.*

Although trainees had not been asked directly whether their schools had incorporated grammar into schemes of work, their answers to question B6 [*What impression did you get of the English department's view on grammar teaching?*] seemed to corroborate the findings of *The Grammar Papers* researchers, that systematic planning was, at this time 'patchy' [1998: 35]. The 81% of trainees agreeing with the statement had obviously registered, as incoming professionals, the need for a structured approach.

8. *Grammatical terminology is a crucial tool in the analysis of literature texts.*

Given the strong affiliation to literature expressed in the earlier survey, I wanted to probe further any perceived conflicts between literature and grammar teaching. Nearly a quarter did disagree with the statement, but over half agreed, which could indicate a moving away from the idea of grammar as antipathetic to literature teaching.

9. *Knowing about the structure of English is important for its own sake.*

The notion that grammatical knowledge is, like any other area of learning, useful and interesting in its own right was put forward [among other justifications for grammar teaching] in the Cox Report [1989]. Some ten years later, trainees seemed less convinced about the idea. Although almost half did agree, a third were 'unsure'. It was tempting to interpret this as a reflection of the utilitarian ethos in contemporary education, where everything needs to have goals or 'outcomes', but it could equally be explained by trainees' commitment to 'integrated' grammar teaching.

10. *Talking about grammar gets in the way of appreciating literature.*

Again, trainees' responses appeared to repudiate the literature/grammar split, with 72% disagreeing with the statement.

11. *A knowledge of English grammar is important for foreign language teaching.*

In the earlier survey, a significant minority had given this as a reason for teaching grammar, and only 5% disagreed with it at the end of their course. Seventy-three percent agreed.

12. Grammar teaching hampers creativity.

A substantial majority [72%] repudiated this idea, and only eight trainees [6%] agreed; twenty-two disagreed ‘strongly’. Again, this would seem to indicate a moving away from the arguments of those opposed to explicit grammar teaching. More specifically, this response reflected again the connection between grammar and written expression made by many in the first questionnaire: that pupils needed to be able to express themselves ‘effectively’.

13. People need a knowledge of grammar in order to understand how language can be used to manipulate them.

The majority [58%] support for this statement was surprising in view of the fact that very few trainees had made this connection themselves in the earlier questionnaire. The statement was chosen to represent the critical/analytical approach to language study and the earlier survey had indicated that few had encountered this as undergraduates. Although only 14% [17] disagreed, a fairly substantial proportion [28%] were ‘unsure’.

14. An explicit knowledge of grammar is essential to understanding how language varies according to context and use.

Only 9% [11 trainees] disagreed with this statement. The positive response [69%] suggests that this idea, fundamental to sociolinguistics, was a familiar one to trainee English teachers. It is possible that those who were ‘unsure’ [22%] were put off by the words ‘explicit’ and/or ‘essential’, but the general support for this pretty unequivocal statement was significant. It also suggests that ‘context’ and ‘use’ had become part of the discourse of English for most trainees.

15. Most pupils find grammar boring.

The fact that almost half [49%] agreed with this statement appeared to contradict trainees’ assertions in answer to question B4 that 63% of their pupils had responded positively to grammar teaching. Although only four of those registering negative pupil responses had mentioned ‘boredom’, here it seemed that ‘boredom’ and ‘grammar’ retained in trainees’ minds the association that many had made in Questionnaire One when they were describing their own learning experiences. Even though they had denied that grammar

inhibited creativity [statement 12], it seemed that pupil boredom could still be one of the expectations that trainee teachers brought to grammar teaching. In pre-national curriculum days teachers who supported pedagogies that failed to inspire or excite pupils would have been considered less than inspiring themselves. The more utilitarian ethos of the late nineties seemed to dictate that in some areas at least, enjoyment must give way to necessity.

16. Standard English is only one dialect of English.

The overwhelming support [85%] for this statement was heartening to an old sociolinguist. More importantly, it signalled that trainee English teachers did not subscribe unreservedly to the version of English presented in the National Curriculum. However, according to their earlier responses, only a small minority had actually taught ‘dialects’ during their school practice. Again, this suggested an ideological affiliation not yet translated into practice.

17. The requirement to teach Standard English is part of an authoritarian model of English promoted by Government in response to a supposed decline in standards.

The explicitly ideological tenor of this statement brought the most mixed response from the trainees, with answers more or less equally divided. The fact that a third were ‘unsure’ could suggest a lack of understanding of the question and/or unawareness of this area of debate.

18. Learning about grammar can help to foster better relations between ethnic groups through recognizing that all language are rule governed and systematic.

The connection [as yet untested by research] between the explicit discussion of language variation in the classroom and the promotion of equality appeared in the Kingman Report [1988: Chapter 4, paragraph 3]. More trainees were ‘unsure’ about this than about any other statement in this section [52%]. This could suggest either that the idea in itself was new to them, or that they did not understand the terms ‘rule-governed and systematic’ in relation to language. Thirty-two percent agreed.

19. Explicit teaching of grammar does not improve pupil performance.

Arguments about the relationship between grammar teaching and improving pupils' written work have featured prominently in debates about grammar teaching over the past forty years. The government sponsored *Grammar Papers* revisited and repudiated research which had supported the views of those opposed to grammar teaching on the grounds that it was based on 'traditional' grammar lessons [1998: 45-8]. While 41% of the trainees in this survey were 'unsure' about the statement, only 19% agreed. Forty percent disagreed, reinforcing the connection made by many in the first survey between grammar teaching and the improvement of written skills, and implicitly supporting the functional-prescriptive rationale implicit in the national curriculum.

20. Being able to talk about grammar can aid discussion of social issues.

Again, a substantial proportion [47%] of trainees were 'unsure' about this proposition. The remainder were equally divided between those who disagreed and those who agreed. This was somewhat surprising in view of the fact that nearly 60% had agreed with statement 13, that 'People need a knowledge of grammar in order to understand how language can be used to manipulate them.'

21. Every encounter with every text ought to be inviting pupils to comment on the writer's use of language, including grammar.

A clear majority [57%] acceded to this statement. This, again, suggested that for these trainees there was no perceived conflict between 'literature' and 'grammar'.

22. Literature is part of the study of language.

I had expected this statement to be received much less positively than it was. Only 4% [5 trainees] disagreed with it and 82% agreed. I had intended the statement to imply that 'English' was about language rather than literature, a proposition which I felt would be controversial for many literature-trained English teachers; in fact the statement could have been read as a plea for maintaining the position of literature in a language-oriented curriculum.

23. Dialect features are not errors.

A substantial majority [84%] supported this statement, only 3% [four trainees] demurring. This reflected almost exactly the response to statement 16, ‘Standard English is only one dialect of English’, and again hinted at a rather more liberal attitude to non-standard variation than that promoted in the national curriculum.

24. It is important that children should be able to speak standard English.

Again, a clear majority [71%] approved, though the response was not as emphatic as it had been for the previous statement. The juxtaposition of statements 23 and 24, and the responses to them, could raise questions about trainees’ awareness of the potential contradiction between an implied support for ‘dialects’ and advocacy of standard spoken English.

25. I would only teach grammatical terms if I had to.

That 70% disagreed with this statement underlined the support for explicit grammar teaching revealed in Questionnaire One. Only 12% [15 trainees] agreed.

26. Every intending teacher of English should undertake a course in linguistics.

Despite the support for explicit grammar teaching, responses to this statement were split. Approximately half [54%] agreed, 22% disagreed, and 23% were unsure.

5.4 Trainee observations on grammar learning during their PGCE courses

There were significantly fewer replies to the question ‘*What do you consider the most important thing you have learnt about grammar on this course?*’ than to question C, a drop in response rates from 100% to 77%. However, the fact that 88 trainees contributed to a diverse, and often thoughtful set of responses to this question indicated that the shortfall was not due to lack of coverage of the topic in their PGCE programmes. Such was the range of responses that translation into percentage figures would not have been helpful; therefore findings are presented in numerical form [Table 21], and categorised according to five broad areas: trainees’ attitudes to grammar, their own knowledge,

Type of response			Total ⁸⁹
attitudes to grammar	grammar as positive thing	8	17
	grammar as negative/danger in over-emphasis	5	
	contentious topic	4	
own knowledge	increase in knowledge/confidence	11	30
	haven't learnt much/anything new	9	
	can master it in time	2	
	awareness of weaknesses/gaps	6	
	availability of resources	2	
reasons for teaching grammar	necessary/important	3	23
	aids writing/expression	3	
	correcting errors	1	
	empowerment	1	
	critical literacy	1	
	manipulative potential of language	2	
	grammar in literature	2	
	exams	1	
	cross-curricular functions	1	
	further academic progress	3	
	adult life	2	
	language a priority	1	
	grammar as tool	2	
pedagogical issues	teaching methods discussed on course	7	48
	importance of relevance/context	14	
	must be integrated	10	
	pupil motivation	2	
	make it fun	7	
	does not have to be explicit/technical	2	
	importance of Standard English	3	
	dialects	1	

Table 21: The most important thing learnt about grammar on the PGCE course

teaching methods, reasons for teaching grammar and additional issues.

Answers to this question generally duplicated the positive tenor of responses to question B5: *How did you feel about teaching grammar?*. Eight stated explicitly that it was a 'positive thing'. This could reflect an erstwhile negative perception of grammar, and/or the efforts of PGCE departments to adjust that perception. Radha, who had reacted very

⁸⁹ From 88 respondents [A small number included more than one issue]

negatively towards grammar teaching both at school and at university now viewed it in a different light:

That it is not necessarily a bad or negative thing and that it can, in fact, be a positive, empowering experience – I certainly feel more confident.

A colleague on the same course expressed a similar sense of reassurance, echoed by another, from a different course:

That there is no need to feel shame just because you did not receive any formal grammar teaching.

That it can be fun and that I should not be scared about teaching it. I found that I could just ask a question about grammar and it would be sorted out.

Two trainees mentioned the prescriptive/descriptive debate, while two others made a more general point about the contentious nature of the debate around grammar teaching:

I've learnt that different interest groups see grammar and its importance in different ways.

That it is an area of much conjecture and debate

Unsurprisingly, given the responsibility of PGCE departments to adhere to the national curriculum, there was no suggestion at this point that trainees had been encouraged to think negatively about grammar teaching. The less positive responses tended to be expressed in cautionary rather than hostile terms, for example:

Grammar is important for getting good results. But the most important thing to remember is the problems created by a high emphasis on grammar.

The fact that the majority of those responding appeared to have taken positive messages about grammar from their courses does not mean, of course, that all the trainees [or for that matter all their tutors] were happy with the idea of grammar teaching. Thirty-five trainees did not answer the question, and nine said that they had learnt little or nothing about grammar. The majority were in favour of grammar teaching, as in the first

questionnaire, but now their approval was more frequently hedged by concerns about teaching methods.

Trainee knowledge

Thirty trainees focused on their own knowledge in answering this question. While six said that the course had made them aware of gaps in their existing knowledge, 11 felt that their knowledge and/or confidence had increased. Two were confident that they could master it in time, while a further two were reassured by the availability of resources. One concluded that she needed 'to take A level English Language to gain confidence'. Nine trainees found that they had learnt little. Although for some this was because they had previously studied grammar, others felt that they had needed more help:

The PGCE course per se has offered very little timetabled instruction/refreshing on grammar. I believe that the majority of lecturers find it hard to comprehend that many of us require basic knowledge; I for one have simply caught up at home.

The correct terminology. My confidence has grown a little. However, this was a lesson from my friend, not the university.

It was clear that trainees responded differently to this department's attempts to address the varying needs of trainees within the limited time available. Others from the same department accepted that it was their responsibility to 'fill gaps' in their knowledge:

All the different areas I need to learn about.

That I know very little about it and need to increase my knowledge in order to be an effective teacher.

Reasons for teaching grammar

Twenty-three trainees answered this question by giving reasons for teaching grammar. Of the 13 reasons presented, none emerged at this point as significantly more popular than the others, and would therefore be considered alongside responses to Question 5, which asked specifically for reasons for or against grammar teaching.

Pedagogy

The highest proportion of responses to this question [48, from 55% of the respondents] related to pedagogical issues. Seven trainees made the general point that discussion of teaching methods was the most important thing they had drawn from their course, while others focused specifically on the importance of context, relevance and ‘integrating’ grammar teaching. This was clearly a concern across the five university departments:

The need to show pupils the relevance of grammar teaching
That grammar should be taught as and when appropriate, not for its own sake.
To teach it within a context, not separately.
Not teaching grammar separately – has to be integrated
How to contextualize the mechanics of language
That it should be integrated into lessons and its relevance explained.
Important to integrate it into all areas of English

For seven trainees making grammar ‘fun’ was the most significant issue, although enjoyment was evidently conditional rather than inherent:

It can be fun
Make it fun

The equation of grammar with boredom was clearly something that PGCE departments had attempted to turn around, and ‘integration’ appeared a key factor in this:

That it does not have to be seen as boring and I have been taught and shown methods and resources to make it appear fun
That teaching it as a separate lesson can lead to pupil boredom.

Some trainees linked the need to ‘integrate’ grammar, with the idea that it should not be over-emphasized:

That it should be an implicit part of English teaching, but not the leading focus.
That grammar should be taught as and when appropriate, not for its own sake...Pupils need to be able to communicate successfully in writing and in speech, but ‘grammar’ should not be over-emphasized.’

This ‘softly softly’ approach was also connected with the use of grammatical terminology.

One trainee identified both ‘integration’ and judicious use of terminology as the key issues from his course:

- a. That it does not have to be too detailed/technical
- b. That it can be taught in context/arising naturally.

Others, however, appeared to have confused the issues of ‘explicitness’ and ‘integration’, apparently interpreting ‘explicit teaching’ as separate lessons:

That teaching it explicitly fails. To work, grammar must be taught in context.

The teaching of grammar can be absorbed into the everyday teaching in the classroom – it doesn’t have to be explicit.

That children do not need to be in command of the metalanguage of grammar. Grammar should be taught in context.

I thought at first that this misunderstanding had occurred in only three of the five groups. However, an examination of responses to subsequent questions showed that this was not the case. The same confusion appeared in responses to question 5: *How do you feel now about the explicit teaching of grammar?*, and it became clear that it was not limited to particular PCGE groups. Even though I had included a bracketed explanation of ‘explicit’ as ‘using grammatical terms’, a proportion of trainees from all five groups interpreted it as ‘separate lessons’. This continuing confusion between metalanguage and teaching method was very apparent in the responses of two trainees who, in common with all those quoted above, disagreed with ‘explicit’ grammar teaching:

Because explicit teaching of grammar can be boring. However, using grammatical terms as part of a metalanguage whilst explicit can be done implicitly according to how you teach it.

Grammar can be taught using grammatical terminology without the teaching being explicit.

The second of these trainees went on to say that ‘an explicit knowledge of grammar’ was ‘very relevant’ to 20 of the 24 aspects of English teaching listed in question E. However, she did reveal her awareness of the dual meaning of ‘explicit’ and clarified the apparent

contradiction alongside her answer to question E: ‘If you are referring to knowledge and application of grammatical terminology’.

5.5 The question of ‘explicitness’

The fact that several trainees had confused ‘explicit grammar teaching’ with ‘separate grammar lessons’ had an important bearing on answers to question D5, which asked whether grammar should be taught explicitly. Of the 118 who answered this question, 32 disagreed. However, there was clear evidence that 18 of those who ‘disagreed’ [56%] had confused the two issues. Checking on their answers to Question E: *How relevant is an explicit knowledge of grammar to the following areas of the English curriculum?*, I found that only two of the 18 had ticked fewer than six of the + or ++ boxes to indicate that they saw grammar as having little relevance. The others indicated that an explicit understanding was relevant to between 12 and 24 of the 24 areas listed. The trainee who had acknowledged her apparent contradiction, marked 20 of the 24 areas as ‘very relevant’. When these contradictions were taken into account, and the numbers of those agreeing with the explicit teaching of grammar [that is, using terminology], adjusted to include the 27 who clearly saw it as relevant to the English classroom, even though they had registered ‘disagreement’ in answer to question D5, and also the four who had declared themselves ‘unsure’, but, again saw grammar as relevant in most areas, the support for explicit grammar teaching became virtually unanimous, and significantly higher than shown in the first questionnaire. Table 22 compares answers from the two surveys, alongside the adjusted figures for Questionnaire Two.

	Quest. 1 [of 124 responses]	Quest. 2 [of 118 responses]	Adjusted figures for Quest. 2
agree	102 [82%]	82 [69%]	113 [96%]
disagree	21 [17%]	32 [27%]	5 [4%]
unsure	1	4 [3%]	

Table 22: Trainee positions on explicit grammar teaching

However, the fact that several trainees from across the sample were still unclear about the meaning of ‘explicit grammar teaching’, suggests that this issue might need extra attention

during method sessions. Researchers for ‘The Grammar Papers’ had found that teachers were ‘uncertain about....the relationship between implicit and explicit grammatical knowledge’ and about ‘how grammar should be explicitly taught’ [1998: 7]. This document also makes the ‘key point’ that ‘planning should ensure that grammatical terms are... taught explicitly and systematically’. In addition it distinguishes clearly between explicit teaching of grammatical terms and separate or ‘discreet’ teaching [as opposed to ‘integration’] [8].

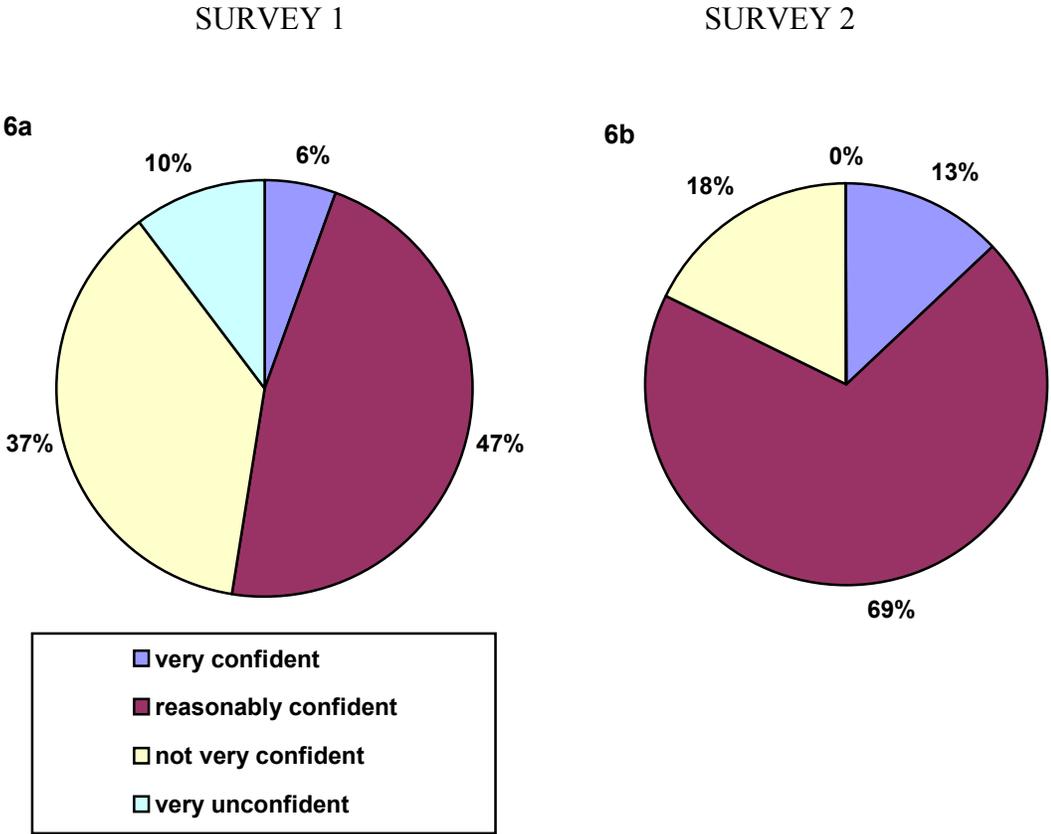
Nevertheless, only 4 of those who had confused ‘explicit’ with ‘separate lessons’ answered ‘no’ to question D2: *Do you feel equipped to teach the Language Study elements of the National Curriculum at key stages 3 and 4?* Of the 120 responses to this question, 99 [82%] were in the affirmative; 16 trainees [13%] said they were not equipped, and three were unsure. Not surprisingly, there was a correlation between responses to this question and trainees’ assessment of their confidence in question D3.

5.6 Trainee teachers’ confidence about grammar and grammar teaching

The series of charts below gives a comparison of confidence scores from the two questionnaire surveys. Chart 6b indicates that trainees’ confidence in their own understanding of grammar had increased significantly, with 82% declaring themselves ‘confident’ or ‘very confident’, as opposed to 53% in the earlier questionnaire. None considered themselves ‘very unconfident’ in the second stage survey, compared to 10% in the first. In the earlier questionnaire, trainee confidence scores in relation to methods for grammar teaching had been the lowest of the three categories. At the end of the PGCE course these had improved considerably, 65% feeling ‘confident’ or ‘very confident’, as opposed to 39% in Survey One. Charts 8a and 8b, on the other hand, display very similar results. This may have been an issue of interpretation. I had noted⁹⁰ in analysing Questionnaire One, that the high confidence scores may have arisen through trainees’ reading of the question as ‘How confident do I feel that grammar should be taught?’, an interpretation which would coincide with the general support for grammar teaching

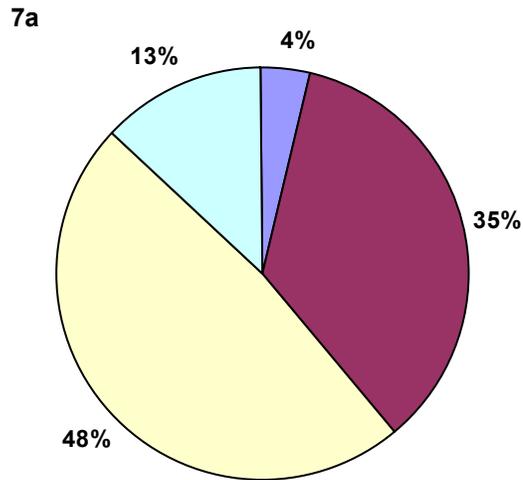
⁹⁰ Above, page 102.

evidenced in that first survey. My wording of the question for the second survey was more precise: *How confident would you feel about explaining the reasons for teaching grammar?* While it would be unsafe in this instance to compare results from the two surveys, there could well be a link in the second set of figures between the confidence scores for trainees' own knowledge and their confidence in articulating reasons.

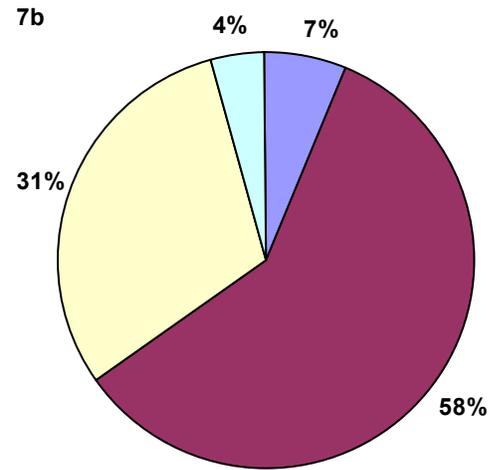


Charts 6a & 6b: trainee teachers' confidence in their own understanding of grammar

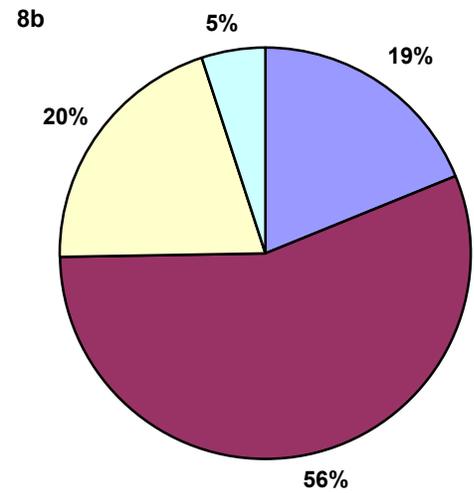
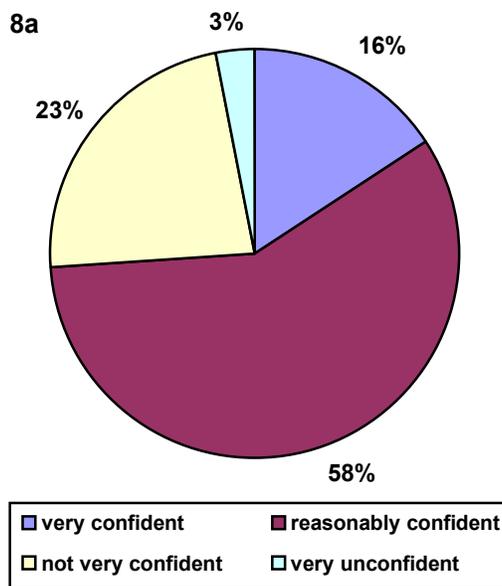
SURVEY 1



SURVEY 2



Charts 7a & 7b: Trainee teachers' confidence about methods for teaching grammar



Charts 8a and 8b: Trainee Teachers' confidence in articulating reasons for teaching grammar

Did teaching experience make a difference to confidence scores?

Of the nineteen who felt ‘unequipped’, eight had taught grammar during their school practice, suggesting that practical experience might not be a major determinant in trainees’ assessment of their preparedness. However, for five of the eight, ‘grammar teaching’ had been confined largely to punctuation. My broad wording of question D2: *Do you feel equipped to teach the Standard English and Language Study components of the National Curriculum at key stages 3 and 4?* meant that it was not altogether safe to correlate it with the specific issue of grammar teaching, though I did feel justified in assuming that by the end of their course trainees would appreciate the weighting given to grammar in these sections of the national curriculum. This was clearly not the case for one of the eight mentioned above, who admitted that he didn’t know ‘much more than nouns and verbs’, and disagreed with explicit grammar teaching because:

I don’t really think that it matters too much – I’ve got this far without knowing anything after all!

On the other hand, answers to question D3d, which asked trainees to explain any changes in their confidence ratings since the first survey, showed that for many teaching was significant. Of the 52 who felt that their confidence had improved through the course, 22 [42%] identified teaching experience as a key factor.

Table 23 compares the confidence scores of those who had taught grammar during their school practice with those who hadn’t. The most marked difference appears in relation to trainees’ confidence in teaching methods, showing a clear correlation between confidence and practical experience. However, according to these figures, even among those who had

	% of trainees assessing themselves as ‘confident’ or ‘very confident’	
	with experience of teaching grammar	without experience of teaching grammar
own knowledge	85%	76%
teaching methods	71%	47%
reasons	77%	66%

Table 23: Trainee confidence in relation to school experience of grammar teaching

taught grammar during their teaching practice, confidence scores were lowest in relation to teaching methods. This may be at least partially explained by the variation in experience reported by trainees, and the fact that for most of those who had taught grammar, experience had been limited to ‘punctuation’ and ‘word classes’ [p. 203].

Other factors affecting trainee confidence

Question D3d asked trainees to explain any changes in their confidence ratings since the beginning of their PGCE courses. Of the 94 who answered the question, 52 [55%] felt that their confidence had increased. Thirty-one [33%] reported no change, eight couldn’t remember, and three felt less confident [Table 24].

trainees’ explanations for increased confidence [of 52]	number	%
teaching practice	22	42
PGCE method sessions	4	7
increased knowledge gained on course	11	21
confidence about reasons for teaching grammar	5	10
others	10	19

Table 24: Trainees’ explanations for increased confidence

Of those whose confidence was unchanged, 22 answered with a straight ‘no’, and two ‘not really’. Of the remaining seven responses, six related to grammatical knowledge:

Felt about the same in terms of how confident I would feel to teach grammar. There are still areas of grammar I would wish to research if I knew I was expected to teach them explicitly.

I can teach grammar at a very basic level, but I don’t know much more than nouns and verbs.

The PGCE course per se has offered very little timetabled instruction/refreshing on grammar. I believe that the majority of lecturers find it hard to comprehend that many of us require basic knowledge. I for one have simply caught up at home.

One trainee’s knowledge had not increased ‘because I had already studied linguistics at

university'. While others felt that doing the PGCE course had increased their knowledge, two answers reflected the potential risks in 'a little knowledge':

Because I know more now I realise one could easily get it wrong [poor syntax, sorry!]

If anything. I am less confident now I realise how little I know and how insecure my knowledge is.

Only five trainees mentioned 'reasons for teaching grammar' in this section of the questionnaire, and only one referred to discussion of debates around grammar teaching on their PGCE course:

I feel more confident about teaching methods and the reasons for teaching grammar because beforehand I knew very little about teaching methods of any kind. The course articulated arguments for and against grammar teaching.

This is not to suggest that other PGCE courses did not address the polemical issues, merely that for the overwhelming number of trainees, pragmatic concerns seemed to be paramount. Answers to question D1: *What do you feel is the most important thing you have learnt about grammar on your PGCE course?* had shown that the debates had been a significant feature for some trainees. The ideological issues will be explored further in the final sections of my analysis of Questionnaire Two, where I will re-examine trainees' constructions of grammar as they came to the end of their PGCE courses.

5.7 Trainees' reasons for teaching grammar explicitly.

Apart from question D3, on trainee confidence, question D5, which asked trainees their reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with explicit grammar teaching, was the only question used in both questionnaire surveys. It was useful, therefore, to compare responses. This time 108 trainees answered the question, offering in total 88 reasons for and 35 reasons against. The type and occurrence of specific reasons for teaching grammar explicitly are compared in Table 25.

Reasons for teaching grammar explicitly	nos. of respondents giving reason	
	Quest 1 [of 100 respondents] ⁹¹	Quest 2 [of 67 respondents] ⁹²
pupils' [mainly written]skills	48 [48%]	24 [36%]
knowledge about language/lang. structure	23 [23%]	6 [9%]
demands of the system [exams, work]	18 [18%]	6 [9%]
acquisition/use of metalanguage	6 [6%]	17 [25%]
tool for analysing language/texts	7 [7%]	17 [25%]
foreign language study	9 [9%]	2 [3%]
empowerment/confidence	0	10 [15%]
grammar as 'important'	10 [10%]	2 [3%]
fascinating/fun	2 [2%]	0
other reasons	26 [26%]	4 [6%]
caveats	16 [16%]	9 [13%]

Table 25 : Trainees' reasons for explicit grammar teaching in Surveys 1 and 2.

Responses to this question differed in a number of ways from those given in the first questionnaire. Firstly, those in favour of explicit grammar teaching in the first survey offered proportionately more reasons than in the follow-up [1.5 reasons per respondent compared to 1.3]. This numerical difference is particularly apparent in the 'other reasons' section of the table. This could indicate a tendency to homogenisation in trainees' discourse on grammar, a narrowing of the meanings attributable to 'grammar'. However, it was evident that a significant number of trainees in the first survey had misunderstood or glossed over the word 'explicit', answering instead a broader and more basic question: 'Why teach English grammar?' The interpretation of 'explicitness' was still causing problems in Questionnaire Two⁹³, but most trainees at this stage were answering the more specific question, hence their focus was narrower and their 'reasons' likely to be fewer in number.

In both sets of responses the connection between grammar and written language was very evident. Although written performance was overwhelmingly the most popular reason for

⁹¹ Of a total of 149 'reasons' cited by trainees agreeing with explicit grammar teaching.

⁹² Of a total of 88 'reasons' cited.

⁹³ See above, p. 225.

grammar teaching in Questionnaire One, proportionately fewer trainees in the second questionnaire referred specifically to improving pupils' writing. In addition, the proportion of those invoking the demands of the system [especially examinations] was halved. This did not, of course, mean that trainees were less concerned with the grammar of pupils' writing. Most of the categories listed in Table 25 could be said to be related to written skills. A major difference in Questionnaire Two was the increase in answers referring to grammatical terminology. Twenty-five percent of those giving reasons for teaching grammar explicitly cited the acquisition of a metalanguage, or 'language for talking about language' [compared with 6% in questionnaire 1]. A further 25% saw grammatical terms as tools for analysing language [compared with 7%] in the first questionnaire. Only three trainees used the term 'metalanguage', but it appeared that for significantly more trainees the functions of grammar teaching extended beyond the production of grammatically 'correct' written English and into the arena of reading, discussion and analysis. Not only did more trainees justify explicit grammar teaching in terms of textual analysis skills, but a number of these responses showed an awareness of the critical function of grammar which was almost completely lacking from the first survey, but which correlated with the general approval for the statement in Section C of the second, that 'People need a knowledge of grammar to understand how language can be used to manipulate them':

I think it is important to give children the tools needed to analyse language.... the ability to appreciate how language can be used to influence and manipulate understanding.

It is important to be equipped with certain technical terminology as these aid the understanding and deconstruction of texts and language.

It should be made explicit what the devices of manipulation are.

The notion of 'correctness' seemed less emphatically inscribed on the Questionnaire Two responses. Set alongside the greater frequency of references to textual analysis, and 'language to talk about language', this could indicate a shift in trainees' discourse from prescriptivist to descriptivist constructions of grammar. A descriptivist orientation was indeed discernible in a number of responses to this question. On the other hand, for several

trainees the purpose of the metalanguage was to pinpoint more precisely the ‘errors’ in pupils’ writing:

Grammar is a science as there is a logical pattern. Using the terminology enables the pupil to explain and rationalize the rules of their own [or another] language even when faced with exceptions.

It’s easy to tell the time using a clock. If you know where the cogs go – and know how the clock works – you’ll be able to tell the right time.

My analysis of prescriptivist constructions of grammar in Questionnaire One had been based on a set of discourse features characteristic of prescriptivist discourses [Figure 2, p.123]. The references, overt and implicit, to pupils’ written skills in trainees’ rationales for grammar teaching in Questionnaire 2 suggested that a prescriptivist model of grammar continued to underpin trainees’ thinking. However, in the second set of ‘reasons’, significantly fewer trainees used the openly prescriptivist phraseology ‘correct’, ‘right’ or ‘proper English’. This time trainees tended to refer to ‘errors’ or ‘mistakes’. While this could not be interpreted as an ideological shift, since it was still based on the notion of grammar as right or wrong, it did suggest a realignment in trainees’ discourse, from grammar-as-moral imperative towards grammar-as-pedagogy. It was also apparent that trainees’ perceptions of the functions of grammar had broadened along with their insistence on ‘integration’ and that grammar might not only have a purpose in reading as well as writing, but that it could offer an additional tool for those favouring a critical approach to English.

A more detailed examination of trainees constructions of grammar across Questionnaire 2 is offered in Section 5.11.

5.8 Reasons against teaching grammar explicitly

I discussed above [page 233] trainees’ misunderstandings of ‘explicit’. Twenty-eight disagreed with ‘explicit grammar teaching’, and 26 offered reasons. However, half of this group had clearly read ‘explicit’ as ‘separate lessons’, and answered by affirming their

commitment to ‘integrating grammar’. Of the remaining 13, seven were concerned with pupil response to the perceived difficulty of grammatical terminology, for example:

Children can be put off by the use of complex terminology.

It can confuse understanding

I think it is demotivating and it is important to make grammar lessons exciting.

It is very difficult to fit explicit grammar teaching into lessons without making teaching dull.

Others addressed more specific pedagogical issues:

Grammar is only useful at its most basic level....It is not needed more until ‘A’ level. I feel children can be hampered by terms and it has no effect on their creative or literary knowledge or skills.

For two trainees, pedagogical concerns were coupled with ideological objections:

It hampers creativity, it does nothing in isolation in helping ‘understand’ literature and language. Grammar is a social construct and taken out of its social role then it is arcane and misguided.

From the same PGCE group came a similar objection:

The constant evolution of the English language make many of the rules of grammar redundant. What we perceive as Standard English today will not be the case in twenty years’ time.

These last two were very much minority views. Of the remaining answers, one showed a Wordsworthian distaste for ‘dissecting a sentence to discover its parts’, while two gave less romantic reasons, the first personal inadequacy, the second cheerful ignorance:

I am not confident.

I don’t really think it matters too much – I’ve got this far without knowing anything after all!

Caveats

As in the first survey, a number of trainees tempered their endorsement of explicit grammar teaching, by presenting caveats. Fewer trainees this time hedged their approval:

Nine [13%] as opposed to 16 [16%]. As in the first survey, all the reservations were related to teaching method, and most were concerned with ‘integrating grammar’.

5.9 How relevant is grammar?

A second Likert scale was used to record answers to question E: *How relevant is an explicit knowledge of grammar to the following areas of the national curriculum?* The 24 statements were intended to cover elements in the [1995] National Curriculum which called [directly or implicitly] for an explicit knowledge of grammar.

Two things were immediately apparent, once the responses were aggregated and translated into percentages [Table 26]: their very positive tenor and their consistency across the five PGCE groups. In all cases, positive responses outnumbered negatives, evidence of a high level of awareness of the relevance of grammar across the English curriculum.

Validity

Once again, I monitored the responses for ‘tick box overload’, which might lead trainees either to tick all the boxes in one column, or to scatter ticks at random. In fact only six trainees had ticked all the boxes: three ‘agreeing’ with the statements and three ‘agreeing strongly’. One trainee ticked all the ‘unsure’ boxes after statement 4, and the perfunctory nature of his responses throughout the questionnaire did reflect a lack of engagement. On the other hand, the fact that all the trainees who had ticked each of the [+] or [++] boxes had also registered their support for explicit grammar teaching in the previous question argued for consistency rather than carelessness. In one response the consistency was particularly clear, the uninterrupted column of [++] ticks following an answer to question 5a which revealed an appreciation of the relevance of grammar teaching across the English curriculum:

It equips students with the power to discuss the effects and implications of grammar use within texts, and enhances their ability to manipulate, interpret and enjoy language and literature.

	curriculum area	trainee response [as % of 121 replies]		
		agree	disagree	Unsure
1	discussion of literature texts	79	14	7
2	discussion of non-fiction texts	85	10	5
3	teaching written standard English	90	2	8
4	teaching spoken standard English	68	10	21
5	evaluating messages and values comm. by the media	80	7	13
6	teaching historical change in English	7	8	20
7	preparation for creative writing tasks	63	17	20
8	correcting errors in writing	84	8	8
9	correcting errors in speech	66	19	15
10	teaching differences between spoken and written English	86	3	11
11	analysing texts for bias, implication and ambiguity	75	8	17
12	understanding variation in non-standard dialects	76	8	15
13	writing in specific genres	64	18	17
14	teaching how English varies according to context	73	3	23
15	extending pupils' skills in constructing complex sentences	87	4	9
16	teaching punctuation	85	8	7
17	teaching spelling	65	18	16
18	analysis of language structures in different texts and genres	78	8	14
19	discussing patterns of cohesion in non-fiction texts	63	10	27
20	examining how choice of language affects meaning	78	8	13
21	studying spoken language	65	11	23
22	discussing attitudes to language use	71	13	16
23	the use of English in new technologies, e.g. internet, e-mail	50	25	26
24	knowledge about language	88	4	9

Table 26: Responses to question E: The relevance of an explicit knowledge of grammar

It was more difficult to check for any random scattering of ticks. However, I felt that there were sufficient returns to ensure that the results would not be invalidated by a few aberrant responses. In addition, I was able to incorporate a consistency check in the list of statements. My earlier research had suggested that trainee teachers were more disposed to link grammar teaching with written than spoken language. My analysis of responses to this question appeared to reflect a similar pattern. Because there were three statements about grammar teaching and speech [placed at separate points in the list], this provided an effective [if not foolproof] check on consistency. I also compared the proportions of positive, negative and ‘unsure’ responses across the five participating groups, and found a very high level of consistency, shown in Table 27.

The issue of consistency across individual questionnaires can also present problems at the analysis stage, and there were frequent discrepancies between responses to questions D5 [*How do you feel now about the explicit teaching of grammar?*] and question E, when trainees had recorded first negative, then positive responses. It is possible that they saw question E as a test of their knowledge of the national curriculum, while the previous question had required a more personal response. The more plausible reason, apparent in many responses to D5, [See above, page 235] was that they were unclear about the meaning of ‘explicit’.

Group [numbers of respondents in brackets]	positive responses ⁹⁴	negative responses	‘unsure’ responses
1 [48]	75%	10%	15%
2 [14 of 15]	73%	9%	18%
3 [24 of 25]	75%	10%	15%
4 [24]	74%	11%	15%
5 [11]	76%	10%	14%

Table 27: Percentage distribution of responses to question E across PGCE group

⁹⁴ As proportion of numbers in each group.

Inconsistency need not be problematic, however, and can give additional insights, especially where patterns of inconsistency occur. It is also very interesting [if unusual in a questionnaire survey] when a respondent admits to inconsistency. One trainee, whose responses elsewhere in the questionnaire had shown relatively lukewarm support for grammar teaching, ticked 21 out of 24 [++] boxes in question E. Her written comment showed that she was still learning about the functions of grammar; it was also a reminder that the research process itself, whether conducted through questionnaire or face to face interview, can be part of that learning process: the subject is never a fixed set of understandings to be identified and analysed; questions can change people:

I've probably completely contradicted myself by ticking all these boxes as until now I hadn't really thought about how much easier studying the above areas could be made if class and teacher had an explicit knowledge.

How relevant is grammar? Summary of findings

To present the findings in more accessible form in Table 26, I had aggregated the positive [+ and ++] and negative [- and --] responses to simplify the results and to identify the overall patterns. Generally, the responses tended to cluster in the + and – boxes rather than at the extreme ends of the scale. The ‘unsure’ category yielded some interesting results, though commentary on these could only be speculative since the precise nature of the uncertainty was unclear: a straightforward interpretation would be that trainees were unsure whether an explicit knowledge of grammar was relevant to that particular curriculum area. However, it could also mean that they were unsure about the phrasing used in the statement.

Because of the generally positive response to this question, I decided not to take each statement in turn, as I had with question C, but to focus on any comparative and contrastive patterns identifiable across the questionnaires. Three broad areas emerged:

- text-based work
- speech and writing

- language study

Text-based work

Most trainees acknowledged the relevance of explicit grammar teaching to the discussion of both literature and non-fiction texts [statements 1 and 2], though the proportion of positive responses was slightly higher for non-fiction [85% as opposed to 79%]. The divergence was more marked among those ticking the ‘very relevant’ box: 19% seeing grammar as ‘very relevant’ to literature and 29% as ‘very relevant’ to non-fiction. Trainees also showed general support for statement 18 [*analysis of language structures in different texts and genres*], but the proportion of ‘unsure’ responses was higher in this case. Since the proportion of ‘unsure’ responses to statement 13 [*writing in specific genres*] was even higher, at 17%, this might indicate an uncertainty about the notion of genre. Two further text-related statements drew a substantial proportion of ‘unsure’ responses: statement 19 referring to *patterns of cohesion in non-fiction texts* and statement 23 to *the use of English in new technologies, e.g. internet, e-mail*. These statements yielded the highest proportions of ‘unsure’ responses [27% and 26% respectively], which may again point to a lack of conceptual understanding rather than an uncertainty about relevance.

There was a strong endorsement of the relevance of grammar to those areas concerned with critical analysis and evaluation: 80% for statement 5: *evaluating messages and values communicated by the media* and 75% for statement 11: *analysing texts for bias, implication and ambiguity*, 31% identifying the latter as ‘very relevant’. This coincided with the [slightly less emphatic] support for the statement in question C: *People need a knowledge of grammar in order to understand how language can be used to manipulate them*. However, it contrasted quite markedly with findings from the earlier survey, when only a small minority of trainees had made the connection between grammar and textual analysis and even fewer had mentioned critical analysis or evaluation. This could be a function of the two different question types, open and closed: the first inviting an individual response, the second presenting ready-made answers for selection. More constructively, it could mean that trainees had become

more knowledgeable about the content of the national curriculum and/or more aware of the role of grammar in textual analysis.

Speech and Writing

Despite the requirement in the national curriculum [1995: 2,3, 18, 24] that Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils should learn to both write and speak ‘standard English’, responses to statements about the relevance of grammar to speech and writing suggested that for many trainees grammar was predominantly about writing. While very few were prepared to say that grammar was irrelevant to speech, there was a sense that they were less willing to intervene in the teaching of spoken English. Of all the statements in this question, *teaching written standard English* [statement 3] gained the most positive response, 90% acknowledging its link with grammar, only 2% [two trainees] doubting its relevance, and 8% [10 trainees] declaring themselves ‘unsure’. A majority [68%] also saw grammar as relevant to *teaching spoken standard English*, but while 10% demurred, 21% were ‘unsure’. Similar contrasts emerged in responses to statements 8 and 9 [*correcting errors in writing; correcting errors in speech*]. Again there was around 20% difference in the positive scores [84 to 66%] , but this time 19% [23 trainees] saw little or no relevance in relation to correcting errors in speech.

This contrasted with the response to the next issue, *teaching differences between spoken and written English*. Eighty-six saw the relevance of grammar here, and only 3% [three trainees] doubted its relevance. Eleven percent were ‘unsure’. Reference to spoken language occurred once more, in number 21: *studying spoken language*, and here the response pattern was very similar to that for *teaching spoken standard English*, with 65% seeing the link with grammar, 11% seeing it as having little or no relevance, and 23% declaring themselves ‘unsure’. Of all the areas referring to speech and writing, *correcting errors in speech* attracted the most negative responses, and the highest proportion of ‘irrelevant’ ticks than any other element in this question. *Writing in specific genres* generated a similar pattern of responses, though there may have been an issue of conceptual understanding here.

There was a strong acknowledgement of the relevance of grammar to what might be termed ‘basic written skills’. Thus 85% responded positively to *teaching punctuation* [16] and 87% to *extending pupils’ skills in constructing complex sentences* [15]. In the case of punctuation, almost half saw grammar as ‘very relevant’. The link with spelling [17] was less decisive, but even here, 65% felt that grammatical knowledge was relevant. The same proportion saw it as relevant to *preparation for creative writing tasks* [7], but a higher proportion were ‘unsure’ [20%] and 17% doubted its relevance. Apparently the notion of incompatibility between grammar and creativity which had emerged in Questionnaire One persisted for a number of trainees.

In the first questionnaire survey trainees had made it very clear that for them grammar was about writing rather than speaking English. The split was not as emphatic in the second questionnaire, but it was still apparent. The reluctance to link grammar teaching with speech seemed most pronounced when it implied direct intervention, and ‘correcting errors’. This coincided with the general support in question C for the statement ‘*dialect features are not errors*’. [above, p.219]. There was clear support for the role of grammar in teaching ‘basic’ written skills, again reinforcing the connection made in Questionnaire One.

Studying language

There was strong support for the role of explicit grammatical knowledge in the study of language. Although very few trainees had used the term ‘knowledge about language’ in their first questionnaires, a decisive 88% this time affirmed the role of grammar in this area, 35% perceiving it as ‘very relevant’. Only three responded negatively. Around three-quarters [76% and 73% respectively] found it relevant to *understanding variation in non-standard dialects* and *teaching how language varies according to context*, although 23% were ‘unsure’ about the latter. There was even stronger support [78%] for the role of grammar in *examining how language choice affects meaning*, and here the proportion of ‘unsure’ responses was lower at 13%. Again, the slight variation in response could be an issue of understanding, since item 14, though expressing a basic premise of sociolinguistics, might have been unfamiliar to literature-trained respondents. The [71%]

association of grammatical knowledge with the discussion of *attitudes to language use* [22 ticks], contrasted with the more dubious response to the statement in question C that *Being able to talk about grammar can aid discussion of social issues*. The apparent discrepancy here could be explained by the more specific focus of the later item. Almost half had declared themselves ‘unsure’ about the more general statement, suggesting a lack of understanding rather than an outright denial.

5.10 The aims of English teaching

One of my intentions in devising my final question had been to set trainees’ views on grammar alongside their broader constructions of subject English. Again I had used a Lickert scale to record their perceptions, this time of the relative significance of various aspects of English teaching. The results were only partially successful. The scale offered a more detailed picture of individual trainees’ perceptions of English than could be generated by the open-ended question *What do you think are the aims of English teaching?* used in Questionnaire One, and Table 28 [overleaf] shows respondents’ recognition of the diversity and range of their subject. It also suggests a broad consensus on what constitutes English, since most ticks appeared in the + or ++ boxes. What the scale could not do, however, was to give voice to trainees’ own formulations, which meant that I could not use a discourse analysis approach, as I had in Questionnaire One, to compare their constructions of English and grammar. I hoped to be able to return to this issue in analysing my interview data. In the meantime, question F did provide some general pointers to trainees’ perceptions of their subject as their PGCE courses drew to a close.

The majority of the 119 trainees answering this question deemed all the ‘aims’ listed ‘important’ or ‘very important’ to English teaching. Twenty-one [18%] ticked either every ++ or every + box. While this might raise again the issues of validity discussed above [page 210], it was very much in keeping with the overall impression that English was both wide-ranging and multifunctional.

		++	+	-	--
1	To foster appreciation and enjoyment of literature.	88 [74%]	29	2	----
2	To improve standards of spoken English.	36 [30%]	61 [51%]	16	5
3	To enable students to critically analyse media texts.	65 [55%]	51	3	----
4	To encourage creativity.	86 [72%]	27	6	----
5	To raise awareness of diversity in language.	73 [61%]	41	5	----
6	To equip pupils with the skills they will need for work.	73 [61%]	37	7	2
7	To promote language skills across the curriculum.	67 [56%]	47	4	---
8	To teach knowledge about language.	55 [46%]	58 [49%]	6	---
9	To help develop critical thinkers.	99 [83%]	14	5	1
10	To encourage discussion of social and political issues.	64 [54%]	44	10	1
11	To extend reading skills.	94 [79%]	21	3	1

Table 28 : The aims of English teaching: their relative significance for trainees.

5.11 Trainees' discursive construction of grammar in end-of-course questionnaires

During the course of my analysis of Questionnaire One, my main focus of interest, and correspondingly my analytical method, had changed, and I had attempted to construct a discourse model based on trainees' responses. Despite the problems in applying discourse analysis to questionnaire responses⁹⁵, I felt it had generated some important insights into trainees' constructions of English and grammar. The second questionnaire leant itself less easily to this kind of analysis, largely because I had used more tick boxes and fewer open questions. Had I decided earlier on a discourse analysis approach, I would have allowed more room for trainees' words. At the same time, not only had I wanted to gauge their responses to a range of issues and positions, for which the Likert scale seemed the most suitable tool, but I was also conscious that the first questionnaire was a lengthy one, and I

⁹⁵ Discussed above, p. 159.

did not want to presume too much on their good will at the end of a demanding year's training. Nevertheless, I did feel that there was sufficient qualitative data in the second questionnaire survey to provide some insight into the extent to which trainees' discourse on grammar had changed since the beginning of their PGCE courses. I did regret that I had used a tick box approach for the final question, on the aims of English teaching, because this meant that I could not compare trainees' own discursive constructions of 'English' and 'grammar' as I had done in Questionnaire One. However, I hoped that my interview data would enable me to pursue this. In the meantime, my second questionnaire survey did furnish some interesting data on the ways in which trainees' discourse on grammar had changed.

Prescriptive and descriptive constructions of 'grammar'

As with Questionnaire One, my analysis of responses as 'descriptivist' or 'prescriptivist' was an attempt to track meaning potential in trainees' answers rather than to categorise their thinking in any deterministic sense.

In the first survey, I had identified discourse elements reflecting an overtly prescriptivist discourse on grammar in 39% [49] of the questionnaires. A much smaller proportion, 13% [17] had contained discursive markers indicative of a descriptivist approach. Table 29 overleaf appears to indicate little change overall in trainees' constructions of grammar at the end of their PGCE year. However, the broad totals obscure some significant shifts in discourse patterns. For example, in the second questionnaire, although most of the trainees associated grammar with writing, only ten explicitly referred to correct usage. Five mentioned 'rules', while a higher proportion than formally referred to the correction of 'errors' [18 or 15% compared with only 4 previously]. This more pragmatic orientation was reflected in 5 references to the role of grammar teaching in exam preparation in the second questionnaire.

Sixteen trainees in the second survey linked grammar teaching explicitly with pupils' writing. However, this was presented not so much as an issue of 'correctness', as one of

	Ques 1	Ques 2		Ques 1	Ques 2
Prescriptivist discourse markers [grammar as correct usage]	49 [39%]	40 [32%]	Descriptivist discourse markers [studying/analysing language forms]	17 [13%]	24 [19%]

Table 29: Prescriptivist and descriptivist discourse markers in Surveys 1 and 2

method, specifically the need to ‘integrate’ grammar teaching with pupils’ work. Again, this coincides with the pedagogical orientation of trainees’ responses to questionnaire 2.⁹⁶ A comparison of some responses from the two surveys gives some indication of how trainees’ discourses had shifted [Figure 11 overleaf]. In all cases cited here, trainees’ responses had reflected prescriptivist ideas in the first questionnaire. The fact that all but two had agreed in answering question C, that ‘*The main purpose of grammar teaching is to ensure that pupils write in correct standard English*’ suggested that their basic understanding of grammar as ‘correct English’ had not changed. Indeed, one of them had agreed ‘very strongly’ with this statement. But it appeared that the discursive framework had shifted from grammar-as-commodity, a set of rules to be obeyed, towards grammar as an issue of teaching method. Thus, while a prescriptivist ideology might still underpin trainees’ thinking about grammar, changes in the ways that they discussed it suggested that the meanings of ‘grammar’ might have broadened in the course of their training. It was particularly noticeable that very few trainees used the explicitly prescriptivist markers such as ‘correct’ or ‘proper’ or even ‘good English’ in the end-of-course questionnaire. While it was not possible at this stage to determine the precise reasons for this apparent shift, these overtly prescriptivist terms are not considered, as one of the trainees suggested, ‘politically correct’. Thus not only would they not be expected to feature in PGCE lecturers’ discourse, but they are also avoided in the English Orders. Two of the minority of trainees who did use explicitly prescriptivist language justified explicit grammar teaching not in terms of adherence to rules, but in terms of pupil ‘empowerment’.

⁹⁶ This could also be a function of the questions that were asked. Sections B, C and E in Questionnaire Two were directed towards classroom practice and issues arising from it.

	First questionnaire survey	Second questionnaire survey
1	<p><u>Reasons:</u> I don't agree with the new lax ways and views on grammar. I believe in correcting speech that is grammatically incorrect, however politically incorrect this may be. I feel it is important to be able to speak/write in formal English – you are judged on this. I don't think grammatical terms are important.</p> <p><u>Definition:</u> Understanding the importance of expressing yourself correctly. Formal speech and writing.</p>	<p><u>Feelings about teaching grammar:</u> I feel it is important and necessary in raising standards.</p> <p><u>Pupil response:</u> Not overly enthusiastic but they expected it as part of their learning. Responded better as an integrated activity and also when the value was explained and became apparent.</p> <p><u>Learnt on PGCE course:</u> That it should be integrated into lessons and its relevance explained.</p> <p><u>Reasons for teaching grammar explicitly:</u> It helps understanding. Helps teacher explain in an easy way problems with incorrect use of English.</p>
2	<p><u>Reasons for teaching:</u> I think it is necessary to teach children how grammar works for them to use it correctly in speech and writing.</p> <p><u>Definition:</u> A set of rules which help us to form language correctly.</p>	<p><u>Learnt on PGCE course:</u> That it should be an implicit part of English teaching but not the leading focus.</p> <p><u>Reasons for teaching:</u> In some contexts it is worthwhile. It often helps to aid understanding.</p>
3	<p><u>Reasons for teaching:</u> It is my belief that a good knowledge of grammar will help children in their future careers. A good grasp of the English language, of which grammar is an integral part, is essential in almost all fields.</p>	<p><u>School practice:</u> Pupils often hear the word grammar and instantly turn off. However, even though the pupils in my class [SEN] found the work difficult, I believe they did eventually grasp the concepts and seemed grateful for it.</p> <p>The English department was very keen to integrate grammar into the lessons already being taught, but some teachers preferred just to correct mistakes in writing.</p> <p><u>Learnt on the course:</u> It is an essential ingredient in the formation of accurate speech and writing.</p> <p><u>Agreeing with explicit grammar teaching:</u> It allows pupils to identify aspects of grammar for themselves. If the pupils are not bombarded with the technical terms it shouldn't be a problem.</p>

Figure 11: Individual trainees' construction of grammar and grammar teaching in Surveys One and Two [Those using prescriptivist discourse in Survey 1]

Descriptivist discourse

Unfortunately it proved more difficult to track any discursive shifts among the 24 trainees using descriptivist discourse markers in Questionnaire Two. Seven didn't participate in the first survey, and two didn't furnish enough data the first time around to make a comparison. Of the remaining 15, I was unable to cross-match four because trainees' personal details were missing or unclear. Thus evidence of changes in these trainees' constructions of grammar would be both limited and inconclusive. Nevertheless, where pairs of questionnaires were identifiable, some tentative observations were possible.

Trainees with a descriptivist orientation showed a similar concern for pedagogy at the end of their course as had the 'prescriptivists'. However, fewer among the 'descriptivist' group agreed with the opening statement in question C: that *The main purpose of grammar teaching is to ensure that pupils write in corrects standard English*. Nine disagreed, four of them 'strongly', while seven were 'unsure'. Six trainees in the second survey had referred to ideological debates around grammar teaching, all three mentioning them in response to question D1: 'What do you think was the most important thing you learnt about grammar on your PGCE course?' Respondent 2 in Figure 12 referred to the 'prescriptive/descriptive' debate:

That grammar shouldn't be prescriptive. That my existing definition of grammar was limited and grammar may include linguistics, etc..

In fact she had been among the 'descriptivist' group in Questionnaire One. Although she had been dubious about explicit grammar teaching at that point, her suggestion that 'grammar should be taught as one of many ways of analysing language' had shown an awareness of descriptivist linguistics probably gained from her degree in English language and linguistics [even though she claimed to have remembered little from the language modules]. One other trainee had mentioned prescriptivism and descriptivism in Questionnaire One, and she was one of three whose orientation towards grammar appeared unchanged. Five [including examples 1 and 2] appeared to have shifted from a structuralist/technical towards a more broadly descriptivist position. My third example

	First Survey	Second Survey
1 [TEFL trained]	<p><u>Reasons for teaching grammar explicitly:</u> Kids should learn the terms, the metalanguage for grammar, because it enables them to understand the language they speak, and to learn other languages better.</p> <p><u>Definition:</u> The structure within which we employ language in order to make sense of the world.</p>	<p><u>Pupil response:</u> Positively. In general, they liked to know that they were doing things correctly – ie in Standard English – and learning words for things was fun, and gave them a language to talk about grammar.</p> <p><u>PGCE course:</u> I've learnt that different interest groups see grammar and its importance in different ways.</p> <p><u>Reasons:</u> It's important to give kids a metalanguage – a language to discuss/understand grammar. To do that kids need to know eventually explicit terms.</p>
2 Degree in Eng. Lit & Lang	<p><u>Reasons for teaching grammar:</u> To be able to use language it is helpful but not compulsory to know how it works.</p> <p><u>Definition:</u> the mechanics of language, other than its semantic meaning.. Grammar should be taught as one of many ways of analysing language.</p> <p><u>Comment at end questionnaire:</u> Good idea to find out what folks think about Grammar, especially as politicians hold it in such high esteem, when really it's not the be all and end all of English teaching.</p>	<p><u>School practice:</u> Enjoyed it, but need to increase my own knowledge and to be more confident.</p> <p><u>PGCE course:</u> That grammar shouldn't be prescriptive. That my existing definition of grammar was limited and grammar may include linguistics etc.</p> <p><u>Confidence:</u> Yes – I see a greater need for teaching grammar in its widest sense and am more confident of my own knowledge.</p> <p><u>Reasons:</u> Not on its own, though. Grammar teaching should be a combination of explicit and integrated teaching.</p>
3 [Lang/ Lit degree + TESOL]	<p><u>On grammar teaching:</u> I think it should be taught in a language context, and in a descriptive fashion rather than prescriptive. I think students should learn how their language works and what effects it can have. For more interesting elements of language study, you need to understand some grammar.</p> <p><u>Definition:</u> Grammar is a way of describing how a language is spoken and written.</p>	<p><u>School practice:</u> I think it's valuable, but how to do it is more problematic.</p> <p><u>PGCE:</u> I haven't learnt anything new or important.</p> <p><u>Reasons:</u> Gives you a language to describe features of language. Makes your meaning clearer.</p>

Figure 12 : Individual trainees' constructions of grammar in Surveys One and Two [trainees employing descriptivist discourse in Survey One]

whose construction of grammar in the first questionnaire had been clearly descriptivist, did not show any noticeable discursive shift in the second.

Summary: Discursive shifts in trainees' construction of grammar across two questionnaire surveys.

My examination of the second stage questionnaires in terms of prescriptivist and descriptivist constructions had offered no evidence of any fundamental radicalisation in trainees' orientation towards grammar. Reference to 'pupil errors' had largely replaced more overtly prescriptivist references to 'correct written English', but underlying this persisted the notion that 'grammar' was both fixed and unitary. As in the first survey, very few trainees mentioned 'standard English' in conjunction with grammar. Nevertheless, the general equation of grammar with written language [pupils' writing in Survey One and writing and reading in Survey Two], reflected an implicit connection. What was apparent, however, was an expansion of the meanings available to trainees in discussing grammar. One consequence of this greater heterogeneity was that it became more difficult to categorise trainees' discourse as 'prescriptive' or 'descriptive', partly because the prescriptive features were less overt, but also because traces of both positions could appear in individual questionnaires.

Table 30 lists the principle elements in trainees' discourse on grammar in Questionnaire Two. Their categorisation into three broad categories: grammar-as-tool, grammar-as-knowledge, and grammar-as-pedagogy, while highlighting important patterns of meaning, suggests a greater degree of coherence in trainees' discourse, individually and collectively, than was actually the case. It also obscures the potential for overlap. For example, 'the metalanguage' could be both a body of knowledge and a tool 'to talk about language'; the role of grammar in addressing pupil errors was arguably an issue not only of knowledge, but of function and pedagogy. More importantly, this categorisation of discursive features, while it gave an indication of the diversity of meanings of 'grammar' invoked in Questionnaire Two, did not show the degree of heterogeneity in individual trainees' construction of 'grammar'. My interview data would provide me with blocks of continuous discourse for analysis. In the meantime Figure 13 [p. 253] shows something

Trainees' construction of grammar	% [of 119] trainees ⁹⁷ [numbers in brackets]
grammar as important/necessary	15% [18]
grammar as knowledge	28% [34]
basics	9% [11]
system/structure	4% [5]
correct language	8% [10]
errors	15% [18]
rules	4% [5]
grammar as tool	
empowerment/access	11% [13]
analytical/critical tool	7% [6]
exams	4% [5]
writing	13% [16]
metalanguage/language 'to talk about language'	28% [33]
dialect study	4% [5]
foreign language learning	2% [3]
grammar as pedagogy	
integrated teaching/grammar in context	34% [41]
grammar as fun	11% [13]
grammar in texts/literature	8% [10]
grammar and ability	10% [12]

Table 30: Trainees' construction of grammar in Survey Two.

of the interdiscursivity which characterised the questionnaire responses. The individual formulations reproduced here could not, of course, be taken as representative of the whole sample. In order to track the occurrence of multiple meanings, I had to select from among the more detailed questionnaire returns, and mainly from the group who had taught grammar during their school practice. Though this selectivity would preclude anything more than tentative generalisation, I did feel that this set of responses illustrated two significant tendencies in trainees' discourse in Questionnaire Two:

- the occurrence of multiple, sometimes conflicting meanings in individual trainees' discourse;
- shifts in meanings according to their frames of reference.

⁹⁷ In 4 of the 23 questionnaires in Survey 2, trainees had left unanswered the 'open' question, thus providing insufficient discourse data to be included in this section of my analysis.

The first example in Figure 13 demonstrates the potential for multiple and even conflicting constructions to co-exist in trainees' discourse on grammar. It contains elements from both prescriptivist ['doing things correctly'] and descriptivist ['a metalanguage – a language to discuss and understand grammar'] positions. It also shows how grammar can be constructed differently according to its frames of reference. Thus in referring to pupils' work, this trainee draws on notions of 'correctness' and 'metalanguage'; in referring to pedagogy, 'integration' is the issue, while it is in relation to the PGCE course that he refers to 'different interest groups'. Similarly, in the second example grammar is linked with both 'errors' and 'integration' in terms of classroom practice, whereas the more overtly 'ideological' issue of 'manipulation' appears in relation to PGCE learning. Trainee 3's references to pupils' understanding of 'social implications of attitudes to grammar' was unusual in connecting this 'critical' formulation with school pedagogy, although there is no evidence that she had actually put it into practice. This trainee was clearly uncomfortable about the commodified version of grammar as 'basic skills' teaching. Another example of the relationship between discourse and context related to the issue of 'knowledge', a recurrent feature of trainees' discourse. [Table 30, above]. Most overt references across the sample were to trainees' own knowledge or lack of knowledge. For the most part, pupil knowledge was referred to only obliquely, in terms of 'errors', or having a 'metalanguage'. Thus 'knowing grammar' featured more strongly in trainees' construction of 'the teacher' than of 'the pupil'.

Apart from the greater complexity in trainees' discourse on grammar, what most clearly distinguished the two sets of questionnaires was the emphasis on 'integrated' grammar teaching in Questionnaire Two, and a concomitant shift from grammar-as-commodity to grammar-as-pedagogy. Not only was 'integration' a recurrent theme, but, unlike references to grammatical knowledge or ideological issues, its occurrences were not confined to particular answers. Thus it appeared in relation to both classroom practice and PGCE learning. It was here that a significant degree of homogenisation or naturalisation could be identified. It is the nature of questionnaires to separate and fragment, therefore it was

	How did pupils respond?	How did you feel about teaching grammar?	The school's view?	Most important thing learnt on PGCE course?	Explain any changes in confidence ratings?	Reasons for/against explicit grammar teaching?
1.	Positively. In general they liked to know that they were doing things correctly – ie in Standard English – and learning the words for things was fun, and gave them a language to talk about grammar.	It's important.	Well – integrated into the schemes of work. It was viewed as important.	I've learnt that different interest groups see grammar and its importance in different ways.	-----	It's important to give kids a metalanguage – a language to discuss/understand grammar. To do that kids need to know [eventually] explicit terms.
2	Pupils enjoyed worksheets and games. Year 10 felt they were beyond grammar even when we only focused in on common errors.	Good. It came naturally out of teaching texts and pupils' common errors.	There was little evidence of departmental policy, or integration of grammar into schemes of work. Most teachers had quite individual approaches.	Make it fun, relate it directly to texts, speech, common errors, and show pupils how the media, authors, poets, etc. can manipulate language to influence the reader.	-----	Disagreeing with explicit grammar teaching: Sometimes it can confuse and complicate the learning process.
3	Wide variety of responses. Pupils enjoyed work on dialect and word classes [including nonsense words] which formed part of unit of work. Did not enjoy basic skills lessons.	I enjoyed teaching grammar where it was integrated into other work. However, the year 8 special needs basic skills class was uninspiring.	Grammar was considered important, but generally speaking was not integrated into schemes of work. Most classes in Yr 7 and 8 were taught basic skills in separate lessons.	The course has improved my understanding of social contexts.	I feel more confident about teaching methods and the reasons for teaching grammar because beforehand I knew very little about teaching methods of any kind. The course articulated arguments for and against grammar teaching.	Explicit knowledge of terms helps pupils understand social implications of attitudes to grammar.

Figure 13 : Multiple meanings of 'grammar' across individual Stage 2 questionnaires

impossible to gauge the degree of coherence in trainees' thoughts about grammar, or their awareness of potential difficulties – conceptual or pedagogical - in reconciling the notions of grammar - as- knowledge [which still felt 'hard' for many of them] and grammar-as-integrated pedagogy. Individual interviews would provide more connected discourse samples for analysis. In the meantime, the reformulations emerging from trainees' second stage questionnaires, though complex, fragmented and potentially contradictory, suggested a process of discursive transformation, by which 'grammar' could be accommodated into 'English'.

5.12 From product to pedagogy: inscribing grammar into English.

My analysis of trainees' discourse in Questionnaire One had shown clear divergences between their constructions of 'grammar' and 'English'. Because my second questionnaire had focused on changes in trainees' experience and perceptions of grammar teaching, I was unable to repeat this particular comparative exercise. However, my second survey returns had provided enough data to show not only an expansion of meanings in trainees' discourse on grammar, but also evidence of a transformative process whereby their construction of 'grammar' could be seen to be converging towards subject English. Figure 14 is an attempt to represent this process.

The main discursive vehicle for the changes outlined here is the insistence on 'integration'. In analysing trainee discourses on grammar and English in Questionnaire One I had suggested that 'communication' had the potential to function as a discourse technology, facilitating the incorporation of 'grammar' into a subject English whose goal of personal growth was at odds with the prescriptivist construction of grammar offered by most trainees. The potential for reconciliation had been much less apparent in relation to pedagogy and the teacher-pupil relationship: here the participative ethos of personal growth English had stood in opposition to trainees' construction of grammar teaching as transmissive and authoritarian. The discourse of 'integration' in the end-of-course questionnaires could be interpreted as an attempt at resolving this conflict by putting grammar at the service of English teaching, by insisting on 'relevance' to the work-in-hand

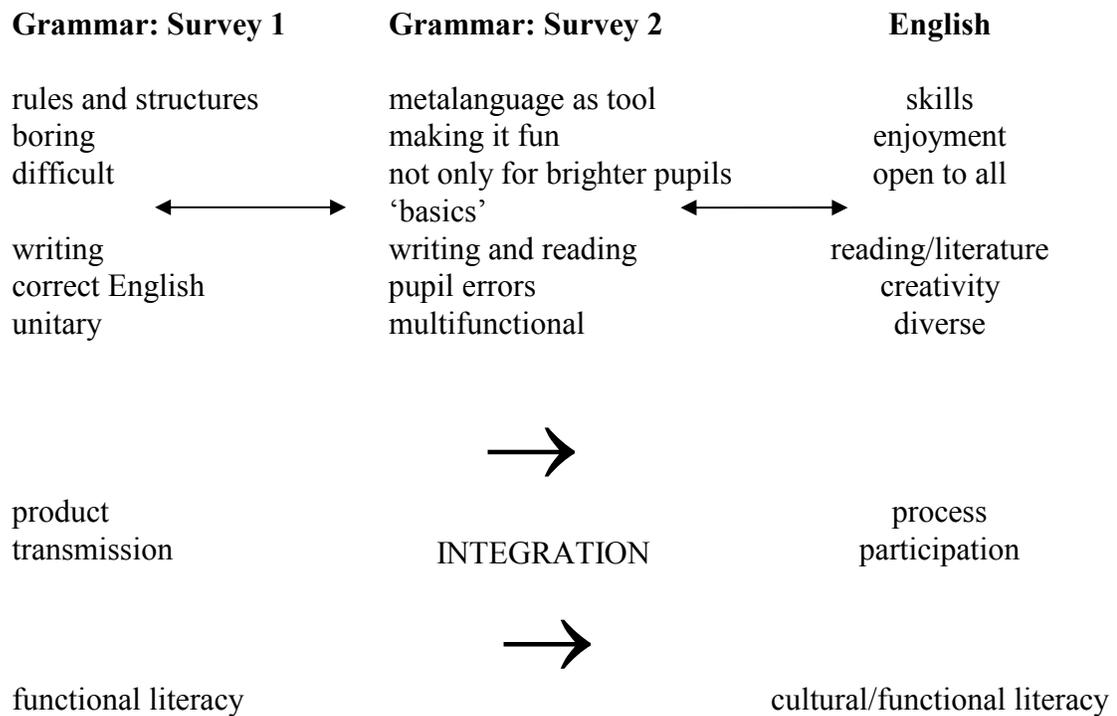


Figure 14: Inscribing grammar into English

and by teaching it ‘as and when necessary’. By this means grammar might retain its ‘importance’ but be absorbed as painlessly as possible into subject English. The process of ‘integration’, however, is far from straightforward: ‘grammar’ remains prescriptive, whether constructed in terms of ‘correct English’ or ‘pupil errors’; though trainees might avoid using the term ‘standard English’, they know that this is the model they are teaching to. How to reconcile ‘getting it right’ with ‘enjoying English’? To assist the process of ‘integration’, additional facilitative or transformative discourses emerged in Questionnaire Two. Grammar as a body of knowledge to be learnt was still an issue for teachers, but for pupils in the classroom the ‘metalanguage’ became a tool to be used across a wider range of functions: not just in writing, but in discussing and analysing texts. For most trainees at the beginning of this study, English had been inseparable from ‘Literature’. Now grammar could be part of the apparatus of literary study. Thus the meanings and functions of

grammar were broadening out, to permit their incorporation across the English curriculum, and to draw them closer to the multifaceted, pupil-needs oriented English constructed in Questionnaire One.

Two further elements in this transformative discourse related to enjoyment and accessibility, both staple ingredients of personal growth English. For a substantial proportion of trainees in my first survey, grammar had been equated with boredom and difficulty. In Questionnaire Two, while non-integrated grammar teaching could still spell disaffection, it had become possible to ‘make it fun’. There was a clear preference for ‘games’ over textbook exercises⁹⁸, and for most trainees grammar and creativity were no longer contradictions in terms. The problem of ‘difficulty’ would appear to have been largely resolved by ‘making it relevant’, and most trainees denied that grammar was ‘only for the more able’. Indeed, some responses suggested that it was ‘more necessary’ for less able pupils. Here another transformative discourse emerged, of grammar as ‘the basics’. This had a dual-purpose effect of cutting grammar down to size, while at the same time underlining its importance.

Re-positioning the teacher and learner of grammar

As the ‘integration’ of grammar into English becomes possible through the various discursive shifts described above, so it appears easier for trainees to construct themselves as teachers of grammar. This is, of course, only one element in their continuing self-construction as teachers of English, and few are completely at ease with it. Grammatical knowledge is still an issue. That this is teacher-knowledge rather than pupil-knowledge might suggest a reorientation and to some extent a separation of the teacher and pupil roles, implying a movement away from the participatory, ‘discovering together’ experience of English in the first survey and a half-step back towards the model traditionally associated with the teaching of content-based subjects.

These trainees were still in the early stages of negotiating for themselves a teacher-identity. Nevertheless, in relation to grammar teaching, they presented, on the whole, a

⁹⁸ Although in question B3 73% had reported using exercises in teaching grammar on school practice.

more coherent and more creative version than emerged from their brief descriptions of their host schools. Though half had recorded positive attitudes in school departments, trainees had commented on limitations in classroom method; others had found negative responses. There was rarely a suggestion that qualified teachers enjoyed teaching grammar. In comparison to the very mixed response coming from schools, the trainee teachers offered a noticeably more homogeneous version of the teacher of grammar.

While trainees' perceptions of themselves as teachers of grammar had shifted quite markedly, their construction of the pupil as learner of grammar was less obviously different. Like the trainees, they were more likely to feel 'positive' about grammar, especially in years seven and eight, and especially where they were actively engaged in exploring language rather than 'doing exercises'. In Questionnaire One the pupil had often been positioned as an adult-to-be who would need a command of grammar for 'life and work'. Now, however, the focus was on the child in the present rather than the future adult. There was no evidence that 'skills' were any less important, but the overt concern was for the pupil in the classroom, not the adult at work. The fact that most of the pupils were from the lower age groups might have been a factor here. At the same time, this re-positioning of the pupil as active and involved in grammar learning, is wholly compatible with the process of making grammar teaching part of English.

Is accommodation possible?

I discussed above some of the problems inherent in constructing models of discourse from questionnaire responses [page 159]. The questionnaire is an inadequate tool for generating connected thinking in any context; neither are the speed and complexity of the teacher training experience conducive to coherent theorizing. So it would be inappropriate and unfair to make too much of the fragmentary nature of trainees' discourse in either of the surveys. However, where patterns recur not only in the discourse itself, but in the discursive gaps or absences, those disjunctions need to be explored. In the gaps between trainees' responses to questions about grammar and grammar teaching lurked some unanswered questions which could disrupt their perceptions of themselves as teachers and the subject they had chosen to teach.

The almost universal espousal of ‘integrated’ grammar teaching in my second survey, a focus on ‘how’ rather than ‘what’, was the primary means by which ‘grammar’ was to become part of ‘English’. An important element in this transformation was the application of the ‘metalanguage’ as a tool, serving the needs of English. But grammar was also a body of knowledge: the metalanguage would have to be taught and learnt. This was overtly recognised only in relation to teacher-knowledge. The question of pupil-knowledge, how the metalanguage was to be acquired before it could be applied, was addressed by only one respondent, and she was obviously aware that she might be challenging current orthodoxy:

Although I do not feel that my own understanding of grammar has changed, I do feel that I am less sure about how to teach it. I am concerned about progression when grammar is taught only ‘in context’, but I feel that teaching grammar as a discrete area is disapproved of?

This points again to the difficulties around integrating grammar-as-knowledge into personal growth pedagogy. Only one trainee seemed fully aware of the wider implications for subject English. He knew that grammar was incompatible with the English he wanted to teach:

Grammar is a social construct, and taken out of its social role then it is arcane and misguided. I’d rather teach creativity and thought. Teaching grammar shows a certain ethos towards a certain type of learning. I would rather not be bottlenecked into teaching grammar.

That it is much more difficult to ‘share’ than to teach grammatical knowledge might at least partly explain the continuing anxiety about teaching methods reflected in the questionnaires. My interview phase allowed me to further explore some of the gaps and disjunctions and to test out my findings from the questionnaire surveys.

Chapter 6: Changing Subjects? Findings from Trainee Interviews

It's the most controversial subject we have in the curriculum at the moment. The one thing people really get on their soapboxes about is what is in the English syllabus. [Alison R.]

6.1 The interviews

I carried out two sets of semi-structured face-to-face interviews with 13 trainee English teachers who had volunteered to participate further at the end of the first questionnaire survey: the first during December 1998 and January 1999 and the second in June 1999. All save one of the interviews were recorded in the university, and were approximately an hour in length.

I used a schedule of questions for the interviews [Appendices 4 and 5], but endeavoured to maintain an informal, conversational atmosphere. This meant that on one or two occasions I didn't manage to address all the questions, but I felt this was worth sacrificing for a naturalistic approach which would allow 'a freer exploration of respondents' meanings and beliefs' [Sapsford and Jupp, 1996: 119]. The conversational nature of the interviews meant that there was a potential for researcher interference. For this reason I asked each of the interviewees, at the end of their final interviews, whether they thought I had influenced their responses. The only influence reported, by three interviewees, was that their involvement in the study had caused them to reflect more fully on the issues. I also asked trainees' permission to use their first names. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, apart from Catherine's second interview, when the tape recorder failed to operate.

6.2 The interviewees

The group of 13 interviewees was self-selected and therefore not representative either of their own PGCE cohort or of the wider survey sample. Their age profile was somewhat higher than that of the whole sample, with over a third in their late twenties [as opposed to 25% across Survey One], though the gender profile was almost identical.⁹⁹ The group included one of only seven respondents who self-designated 'non-White' in Questionnaire One.

Neither did their orientations towards grammar teaching mirror those of the survey sample. There were, for example, proportionately more trainees with a descriptivist approach. In Surveys One and Two I had identified prescriptive discourse markers in 39% [49] and 32% [40] of the questionnaires, while 14% [18] and 19% [24] tended towards a descriptive model. After analysing all the questionnaire and interview data from this group, I assigned half [6 of 13] to the descriptivist category. I was pleased, but not unduly surprised to meet six trainee English teachers with a descriptive orientation towards grammar. I did not feel that this called into question the validity of my earlier analysis. Rather such trainees were more likely to have a positive reaction to grammar¹⁰⁰ and hence be more interested in participating in the research.

That said, in relation to research methods, my analysis and categorisation of the interviewees did reveal a potential for error in my previous allocation of discourse categories across the two questionnaire surveys. Initially, on the basis of my first questionnaire analysis, I had put three of the interview group in the ‘structuralist’ category. After interview, it emerged that one belonged in the ‘descriptive’ category and two in the ‘prescriptive’. The ‘structuralist’ category had been difficult to pinpoint¹⁰¹, and without additional data it could have implied either prescriptive or descriptive tendencies. My misinterpretation was most evident in the case of Alison R., whom I had categorised initially as ‘prescriptivist’ and who turned out to have a clear descriptivist agenda, with some leanings towards a critical literacy perspective. While I did not feel that this invalidated my survey analysis, it did demonstrate how the fuller interview data could act as a check on my questionnaire findings.

Though I was able to assign the interviewees to two clearly defined ideological categories, this is not to imply a strict homogeneity within each category. They came from diverse educational backgrounds which coloured to greater or lesser extents their constructions of both English and grammar. Six had taken English Literature degrees and three

⁹⁹ See below, pp. 70-71.

¹⁰⁰ Above, p. 138.

¹⁰¹ In fact, Graddol suggests that a ‘structuralist’ view of language is closely allied to prescriptivism [1994: 11-12]

Language/Literature. Two had combined English degrees [one with Politics, the other Philosophy] while two had degrees in other subject areas: Humanities and Art History/European Literature. Seven had taken linguistics modules as part of their degree, compulsorily in four cases. Three had completed an intensive TEFL course after graduation.

6.3 Constructions of English and grammar teaching among the interview group

In presenting my interview findings I would ‘read across’ the data I had gathered for individual trainees [as I had in Chapter 4], rather than dealing separately with the two recordings. This would enable me to track any changes in their constructions of English and grammar teaching over the eight months of my data collection. All of the interview sample had taught some aspect of grammar during at least one of their teaching placements, and they were able to expand on questionnaire responses, providing the more substantial blocks of discourse necessary to explore changing constructions of pedagogy. For the purpose of analysis I divided them into two groups according to their tendencies towards prescriptive or descriptive notions of grammar.

The trainee as prescriptive grammarian

As stated above, neither of the two groups identified for the purpose of my analysis was homogenous in terms of educational background, knowledge of grammar or specific orientation towards subject English. In the ‘prescriptive’ group four had English Literature degrees, one combined Language and Literature, one a degree in Art History and European Literature and one in Humanities. Only two had had an English language component in their degree courses, though one had a postgraduate qualification in teaching English as a second language and one had taught English in Poland before starting PGCE. What the ‘prescriptivists’ did share was an initial orientation towards grammar teaching that foregrounded notions of correctness, particularly in pupils’ writing. What I found in analysing their interviews confirmed my observation from the questionnaire data of a definite movement towards integrating grammar into English pedagogy.

Sandra was a ‘traditional’ English PGCE student in that her literature degree had involved no linguistics. An examination of her questionnaires and interviews highlighted a number of the shifts and conflicts observable in the broader surveys among the those trainees who tended towards a prescriptivist view of grammar. ‘Her purposes of English’ in Questionnaire One had prioritised ‘enjoyment of literature’ and ‘creativity’. In her first interview she related her previous experience of grammar in terms of ‘confidence’ and implicit ‘feel’ for what was correct:

I don’t remember thinking about it, I always thought ‘It sounds right’. I just seemed to have a feel for when something should end in a full-stop. But when I was an undergraduate, in my second year, I had some sentences underlined. They were not complete sentences. When I read them out loud I realised what I had done, but it was then that the confidence... all of a sudden I was having to really look at the way I was writing.

Sandra had defined grammar in her first questionnaire in terms of correct written communication: ‘being able to write properly so that your work makes sense and can be understood by others’. She was less comfortable about applying this to speech, and in her first interview an area of potential conflict emerged when, in discussing her observation of GCSE oral assessments, she made a connection between dialect and identity:

I think it’s important. If you’re teaching in an area where the dialect is different from standard English.. because it’s part of who they are....The National Curriculum says, ‘Use of standard English’, so they’ve got to be able to do it, but it’s not right to say, ‘You can’t say it like that’, because what they were doing was really good and it was worth an A’ and I was thinking, ‘But it’s not proper standard English’.

At this stage she was dubious about explicit grammar teaching. She referred the issue back to herself and her fellow trainees: ‘We can’t remember being taught grammar, but we’ve got this far.’ In relation to grammar in schools, she felt there would be a problem with less able children. Her discourse at this stage, almost half way through her training, associated grammar with error correction and maintaining standards in written work. The emphasis, though, was on assisting the individual rather than transmitting knowledge:

So.. it might be done with individuals as you’re marking their work, and maybe if they do have a problem, give them extra work or a worksheet, just to get

them up to standard. But if there are a lot of people doing it right then it might be wasted on the whole class.

After her main school experience, Sandra seemed clearer and more positive. Her main school practice had involved some year 9 SATs work and an 'A' level class looking at persuasive writing in advertising. The prospect had been 'quite daunting' but it had helped to change her views on language teaching:

When I was at school I thought language would be really boring because of all the grammar and it's a bit more scientific, but it was really good.

There were still 'gaps' in her knowledge, but she felt 'fine with the basics' and confident that she could learn what was necessary:

Yes, to teach explicitly, I need to have explicit knowledge of grammar. It shouldn't be difficult... it's just learning the names of things. For instance, the session we had a couple of weeks ago, talking about clauses, I understood that.. It's just a case of sitting and learning it.

Sandra had obviously been reassured by what she identified [in Questionnaire Two] as the view of her PGCE tutors, that 'it can be integrated, that it does not need to feature strongly in the curriculum'. For her pupils, however, the issue of confidence remained, and she felt wary about introducing too many 'technical' explanations lower down the school:

I wouldn't want to complicate things too much for people who aren't as confident because it just confuses them...

At the same time she felt that the year 9 pupils had enjoyed doing grammar exercises:

The less able responded better to the textbooks because they had more control, they could do the exercises, and were quite happy.

At the end of her final interview, Sandra affirmed her personal belief in 'creativity' as the central purpose for English teaching. But now there seemed to be a small space for grammar, and the key to entry was a pedagogical one, expressed in terms of access:

Grammar and creativity? It depends how it's done.. It can encourage creativity because it gives children access to new ways of structuring.. If they've done adverbs and adjectives they can be more creative in their writing.

Karen admitted, even at the end of her course, that she was 'still unclear about what grammar is'. At the beginning she was equally uncertain about the usefulness of explicit grammar teaching:

It depends whether you need to know – give names to things, if you need to know that a describing word is called an adjective, if that's crucial to the learning process....

She echoed Sandra's concerns about the impact on pupils' own expression of the imposition of standard English and doubted its impact on literacy levels:

Yes, grammar should be included for a written standard of English, but you've got to take into consideration dialect.... I think there's got to be room for digressing from a strict pattern, you know: 'This is how you have to write standard English'.... They've been concerned about literacy levels for quite a while, haven't they? Perhaps they think that this study [of grammar] is going to boost them... I don't know. I think it takes away part of the creative process. if you've got to think, 'Right, this is how I've got to write this down, in a standard way'.

Conflict was still apparent in her second interview, and, like Sandra, she related it to her own experience:

When I meet people who I think speak properly, I feel as though I don't and I'm aware that some people see you differently because of the way you speak, so I don't want to make people feel inferior because of the way they speak.

Nevertheless, Karen described how she had tried to get pupils to say 'would have' instead of 'would of' when they were giving talks. But for her, grammar was mainly about written accuracy, though it was to be addressed as 'common errors and misconceptions' rather than 'proper English'. Now, faced with the evident boredom of some of her pupils, Karen's was a pragmatic, functionalist response:

Some pupils didn't think that looking at common errors was a valuable activity. It was interesting to see that it was usually those who made the mistakes. I don't think they realised the importance of it, especially the year 10s, and yet they were preparing for exams. I think it was, as I said, a low ability group, so they needed to work on that.... it's a basic thing, isn't it?

Towards the end of her course, though Karen was still uncertain what actually constituted 'grammar', the functional discourse of the national curriculum seemed to be offering her a means of reconciling conflicts: between standard English and pupils' dialects and between creativity and accuracy:

It depends on the circumstances. Now, having taught it, I think pupils have to realise how to write in standard English and the difference between formal and informal writing and formal and informal speaking... It doesn't matter how good they are creatively they won't get the best marks if they can't write it properly.

The regulatory function of grammar was more explicit in **Ruth's** account of her first experience of grammar teaching, with year 9s. She had used a variety of methods in the two sessions on verbs she had been asked to do, including a game, some cloze exercises, a poem and a 'spot the verb' competition. Both she and the class had enjoyed it, but her observations suggested that grammar could serve another, quite different purpose:

They responded quite well. The class had a reputation for being quite unruly, so I was preoccupied about the discipline and I just decided that if I gave them enough to do they wouldn't have time to cause trouble and that was the case. I was accused of being a slave driver [laughs], but I think that because I structured it they got on with it.... Somebody was saying [on the course] that 'Children want to be made to work hard'....controversial issue, but you have to perhaps at times work on that assumption. Perhaps if I did one grammar class after another there'd be a riot, but if you intersperse it with other stuff, they perhaps accept it more.

Here, along side the disciplinary 'rod' [Cameron, 1997] is the notion of grammar as alien to 'English' as constituted by both teachers and pupils. It must therefore be smuggled into the classroom, either in party bags disguised as 'fun' or chopped into small pieces so that it could be slipped unnoticed into the curriculum cake.

Lee found the teachers in her first practice school completely antagonistic to grammar, even in small pieces:

None of the English teachers were into doing grammar lessons or even touching on it. They were really anti-grammar... you mentioned grammar and their faces screwed up. Yes, quite surprising really... wouldn't touch it with a barge pole.

Despite having a modern languages background, Lee admitted to knowing little about English grammar. When asked about explicit grammar teaching in our first interview, there was the same confusion of terms that had been apparent in a number of questionnaires:

Not necessarily, no. I think it's important that kids should know what a noun is and an adjective. But I think it would just confuse kids if you started talking explicitly about grammar.

At this stage grammar posed a threat to teacher confidence:

In English it's very much, 'There's no right or wrong answer', whereas in grammar there is a right and wrong and that's quite scary... to teach as well, because you can get it wrong... then you have all these kids going round with the wrong answer for the rest of their lives.

Lee's model of English was very much oriented towards literature and creativity. The fact that in her interview for PGCE she had been asked to justify her application in terms of how much English literature she had done suggests that her PGCE tutors shared the same orientation, according less value to a linguistic background, despite the prominence of language study in the national curriculum.

Radha and **Sue** were the only trainees in the 'prescriptive' group whose degrees had had a linguistics component. Both had struggled with language study at this level. For both, grammar and English sat in opposition. Sue's account, when first interviewed, of her reasons for teaching English, was pure personal growth:

I remember I used to come home with a real buzz. If you can give that to somebody else then that's brilliant. It gives you such a sense of confidence about yourself and so many kids are really down on themselves... and it's a lifelong pleasure. Also, there's so much in there, you think, this is me, and you can bring it onto a personal level, it can touch you in so many ways.

At this stage, she viewed grammar teaching both as a parent and a teacher. In both hats she was dubious about the literacy strategy being implemented in her daughter's primary school:

As a teacher I wouldn't like it to be that prescriptive... my daughter's teacher says there's no room for creativity... half the class have lost it.. there's no room for differentiation.

For **Radha**, at the start of the study, grammar and English seemed incompatible. For her, English was about literature:

I love books, I love reading. But now, when this other technical stuff creeps in I'm thinking, 'This is not English; I don't want to be doing this.'

This was not just a statement of affiliation for English-as-literature; it also reflected some painful memories of school grammar. As a bilingual pupil she had been assigned to 'extra support' classes. Clearly bilingualism was not perceived here as an advantage in language learning. She found the grammar classes 'very alienating' and these feelings stayed with her:

Sometimes when I think back to it I can still get those same feelings again and it makes you feel insecure inside...

The linguistics modules Radha took as part of her Humanities degree only confirmed her antipathy to grammar. Unfortunately, we were unable to arrange a final interview, but it was evident in her second questionnaire that she felt much more confident at the end of her course. In her main school practice she had used Lett's exercises with years 7 and 8. Teachers in the school had looked on such work as 'something that had to be done, but used as a gap-filler'. For Radha, however, grammar teaching was something of a revelation:

I tried to limit grammar lessons to half a lesson only. But on a few occasions pupils became so involved that I would extend the amount of time they had to complete the work.

Radha had learnt on her course that grammar teaching ‘is not necessarily a bad or negative thing, and that it can in fact be a positive, empowering experience – I certainly feel more confident.’ Her endorsement of explicit grammar teaching would comfortably fit into the national curriculum model:

Pupils are required to have an understanding of language to achieve higher grades in examinations and I believe this will help to achieve that.

Catherine had no doubt from the start about the importance of grammar teaching. She was the only member of the interview sample who combined a positive orientation to language study with a prescriptive view of grammar. She was also the only interviewee who had been educated privately. At school grammar was not taught explicitly, but pupils were expected to speak and write ‘correctly’:

It was more a case of if you handed in something with bad grammar, it would be.. ‘There’s something wrong with that. Go away and see if you can sort it out....We were expected to speak in a certain way, so correct grammar was part of our environment.

It was on a postgraduate TEFL course that she realised that this implicit understanding of English would be inadequate if she wanted to teach grammar to foreign students. The course was ‘a bit of a shock for everybody’, but she had no doubt of its value in PGCE method sessions:

The majority... there are four or five people on the course who have done TEFL, so their grammar is okay, but several times in method groups I’ve said, ‘What about...?’ People have said, ‘What are you talking about?’ It’s actually scared them quite a lot.

What TEFL had not fundamentally changed was Catherine’s prescriptive orientation to grammar. In her first questionnaire she declared ‘English teachers must take responsibility for people writing “No pushchair’s allowed” and “Dog’s must be kept on leads”, etc.’ Her approach to spoken language was only slightly less severe:

I'm interested in the fact that they don't teach tenses in English. Why not? Because there are certain circumstances where you should use the present perfect or you should use 'will' instead of 'going to' and people don't know and it makes a massive difference to the meaning. It's something that you tend to use naturally, but especially in regional dialects, like in Lincolnshire, they tend to over-use the present simple: 'He goes', et cetera.

Like many of the trainees in my survey, Catherine's approach to grammar teaching changed as a result of her classroom experience. She related in interview how she had taught the passive voice to a year 9 group:

I'd rather not have done, and to be honest I think I was given it because the teacher knew I could do it and she was there to learn as well. If it had been a TEFL lesson it would have been as dull as ditch-water. It wasn't interactive, it was just literally 'Right.... Go...'. And I went through it very slowly. I showed her the plan beforehand and I'd made some massive assumptions. I thought, 'I've taught 13 year-olds before - these Spanish children knew this'...I banged on about participles... all sorts of things, and she said, 'I don't think they'll know this, this and this,' and I thought, 'Well, it's about time they did!' And I did it, and it was the most demanding lesson I've taught because it was me, me, me all the time.. And I think they got it. They seemed to, by the time they got to the end, when they were doing an exercise.

Catherine rejected this approach, along with more 'interactive' TEFL methods and already halfway through PGCE her discourse reflected what appeared now to be the dominant pedagogical discourse: integration rather than transmission; drip-drip rather than deluge.

I don't want to go back to... I like the idea of teaching it as it occurs. So if you mark books and you see 'could of' instead of 'could have', and then at the end of the lesson perhaps, just have a quick... And you just keep reminding them about it... because otherwise you'll get loads of skiving. If they know that Wednesday period four is grammar they'll skive, and I would too, to be honest. So it's much better to do little.. like spelling tests... Don't make a massive issue of it... almost like grammar by osmosis. Don't actually tell them, just let it seep in.

Her discourse now also included the notions of 'context', and 'function'. But here it is possible to see how the notion of 'appropriateness' can operate as 'prescriptivism in disguise':

I always make the point that I don't want everybody to sound like me – at all. But you can keep your own accent and even your own dialect for its correct

purpose. But it's like knowing which knife and fork to use... It doesn't matter if you do it every day, but when you get put into a situation where you need those tools, then you should know how to do it. You should know how to conduct yourself in any situation. You should be able to go to lunch with the Queen or the dustman and be able to behave appropriately linguistically.

Unfortunately I lost Catherine's second interview thanks to a tape malfunction. But even halfway through her PGCE year she was aware of her transformation from TEFL teacher, with a package of language knowledge to deliver, to national curriculum English teacher, selecting strategically from her grammar bag to assist her pupils to become versatile communicators. She retained, however, a touch of nostalgia for the orderliness of TEFL:

When I got here I was very much a TEFL teacher. Now I have moulded more into a secondary teacher with a TEFL background. Once you become a TEFL teacher it's hard to suppress it. It's really nice to walk into a room with desks in rows....

The trainee as descriptive grammarian

The trainees I categorised as 'descriptive' in their orientation to grammar were more homogenous in terms of background than their prescriptivist colleagues in that they had all done some language study before entering PGCE. Five had taken a range of linguistic modules as part of their degree courses, while one, Jon, had gained a TESOL qualification. That said, they were far from identical, either in terms of their prior learning or their discourses on grammar teaching.

Jon shared a similar background to Catherine in terms of his prior learning of grammar. After graduating in Literature, he too came to PGCE with TESOL experience, but he brought to secondary English a descriptive construction of grammar. His definition of grammar in Questionnaire One showed an awareness of some of the socio-cultural meanings it carried: 'rules, guidance for usage, register, appropriateness, dialect, creativity.... So many models.'

Unlike Catherine, Jon did not feel comfortable about his own grammatical competence at school:

My lack of grammatical knowledge became increasingly painful as time went on. My ignorance felt like a bad secret. I enjoyed English, though I feared that my poor grammar led to skewed written work and incompetent expression – all potentially embarrassing.

The turning point came when he re-sat his GCSE English at a further education college, where grammar was taught explicitly. A postgraduate CELTA course re-ignited his interest and he began PGCE comfortable in his grammatical knowledge. He remained cautious about the usefulness of explicit grammar teaching, but his reasons for teaching English revealed not only a language-based version of English, but, unusually at this stage of my study, an emphasis on analytical skills:

to help learners become more self-conscious about language use [in a positive, constructively critical sense];
to make analysis of language and literature [whether that analysis be academically rigorous or simply playful] an enjoyable experience;
to make language seem comprehensible and user-friendly rather than arcane and stuffy.

However, Jon did not construe this as a challenge to existing models of English teaching. Talking about his school practice, he located grammar teaching within a pupil-centred, interactive pedagogy:

When the teaching was clearly related to their own work, the pupils responded well. Also, strategies that took the work ‘away’ from the textbook and allowed the pupils to take a more active approach were more successful than those that didn’t.

Nor did he perceive any conflict between grammar and literature or between grammar and creativity. Confident in his own knowledge, he was able to put grammar in its place – serving English rather than defining it.

Nick was unusual in that he went to school in Germany, where he was taught English grammar through the medium of German and following a Latinate model. At university he

had studied English and Politics, afterwards taking a Masters in English Literature. The linguistic modules he opted to take at degree level included sociolinguistics, structuralism, and the history and philosophy of language. Thus he carried into PGCE a thorough knowledge of English structure and the linguist's definition of grammar which he presented in Questionnaire One:

'Grammar' is the attempt to make sense of how any given language operates. Descriptive grammar concedes that any such attempt will always remain a hypothesis of the true workings of the language, while prescriptive grammar claims that these are absolute and mutually compatible rules.

But there were some elements in Nick's construction of grammar that pre-dated descriptive linguistics, and even gave him something in common with Marshall's 'Old Grammarians' [2000b]. He was atypical in supporting the teaching of 'the canon', a perspective which seemed to have less in common with Leavis than Hirsch's 'cultural literacy' [Maybin, 1996: 261]:

I believe you can't understand the way our culture works today without knowing those texts because so much of it is built on them: either with it as a foundation or as a counter-reaction to it.

Nick also shared with the Old Grammarians an academic orientation to English, revealed both in his interest in the study of grammar [Marshall, *ibid*: 75-76] and his theorizing on the relationship between explicit grammar learning and thinking skills which he outlined in his first interview:

..knowing how to analyse your own language enables you to analyse the way you think....There are always people who are fortunate enough not to need any help – Mozart was never taught harmony – but I do have the feeling that.. it's my generation, or perhaps a bit younger, who were never taught grammar explicitly in school....I feel that they are at a disadvantage to our peers in other countries. People in France and Germany find it easier to talk, to analyse their thoughts... Grammar, like any other logical system [e.g. maths or philosophy] trains the mind to think systematically... it can only be achieved by introducing pupils to the basic vocabulary and workings of grammar.

One thing that Nick did not share with the Old Grammarians was his strong orientation towards a language-based model of English. Unlike most of the trainees in my study, he

did not describe himself as a ‘lover of literature’, but as a ‘grammar lover’. For him, learning grammar was ‘an intellectual sport’, and he empathised with students who, like him, were uncomfortable with what he called the ‘waffly side of English’:

A lot of kids [at his own school] who were not that good on the expression front and on the ‘arty’ side, they enjoyed those [grammar] lessons because they were more structured.. A lot of the time when you’re asking kids to be creative - which I liked as well - a lot of people felt very inhibited... to wear your imagination on your sleeve... I think this grammatical side of it enabled people to say ‘This is a set of rules; I’m applying them, and doing something outside of myself.

Nick was aware that his construction of English-as-language set him apart from most English teachers:

A lot of the English teachers I’ve come across think of English teaching as reading. I don’t. I think it’s about language and about knowing or learning about language or using language as a tool to think about and to discover the world. Now obviously literature is a big chunk of that but it’s not the whole story.... I don’t think of literature as an end in itself..... You can see it in a lot of schools which don’t do ‘A’ level English Language, they just do Literature because they see that as a kind of summit, of what it’s leading up to and a lot of universities don’t do a language course, or they do it separately and I think it’s a shame - they belong together.

Nick’s reflections on grammar teaching after his main school experience seemed to project a ‘Third Way’ model of English¹⁰², a combination of personal empowerment and social good. On standard English:

I think that students should be able to write standard English as long as they are aware that it is... You know it’s got to be empowering in the sense that they can use it just like you use another language, not by a process of eliminating your own, but adding to it....The three languages that I know best all have the standard form. It’s a fact of necessity. If you’ve got a country working with one central government, with a media broadcasting to the whole nation you need to have a standard variety of the language and we need to be able to speak and understand it. And it’s not a question of class or value, I think. They’re just different forms of language appropriate for different contexts....

¹⁰² See above, p. 178.

Not only does this accord with the English Orders [1995 and 2000], it also looks forward to the introduction of citizenship described his reasons for wanting to teach English in terms that might have come from a New Labour manifesto:

I want to teach English in order to encourage pupils to become reflective, independent and mature people, making their own ethical decisions and to become responsible and positive members of our society.

Rebecca was a born-again sociolinguist, for whom English was about COMMUNICATION [her capitals]. For her, grammar had always been ‘scary’. Though she had no recollection of any formal grammar teaching at school, she associated it with the technical, least enjoyable aspects of English:

I always really enjoyed English and that side of it [grammar] is the kind of analytical, prescriptive side, isn't it? Whereas what I enjoyed was the creative writing, playing with language, not analyzing sentence structures. I wasn't very good at spelling, so that was all connected with the negative side of it [the technical side]. Yes, which disrupts your flow.

At university, on her combined Language/Literature course, she had consciously avoided taking modules which required the study of grammar. But sociolinguistics she described as a ‘revelation’ and she carried its liberal, non-judgmental perspective into her teaching:

It's really influenced the way I look at dialects and the way that language changes. When you're marking a kid's writing you have a lot more empathy and understanding. You don't think, ‘This kid can't write proper standard English, he's obviously unintelligent.’

Standard English was necessary:

How could you teach anything else? But be very open-minded and aware of where the kids are coming from and the fact that there is a difference between the way they speak to each other and the way they speak in formal situations.

The ‘varieties’ approach of sociolinguistics was evident and applicable across English:

making kids aware of how you change the tone and the structure of language according to different contexts, in different genres, in media, in dialogue, even in technology.

In her main school practice Rebecca had taught grammar across the age range, using it to discuss non-fiction texts and poetry as well as ‘common errors and misconceptions’. She supported the use of linguistic terms as a metalanguage was wary about being ‘too technical’, because grammar needed to be ‘fun’, at least for younger pupils:

That’s what language, especially grammar, is about – making patterns, breaking rules.

But grammar was also a tool for critical analysis:

In any job, way of life, we’re always being ‘critical’, without realizing we are. The higher the levels of analytical skills you have, the deeper your experience will be... And if you can understand better the historical influences on a text, all the different things that are affecting it...Yes, and finding the different levels of meaning in every text

She went on to discuss the role of grammar in the ‘active reading’ of non-fiction texts:

Look at all these different types of texts... completely different meanings if you changed the word order or made it into the past tense...

Me - Then you’ve got the reader actively interacting with the text, which is what people do when they’re reading.

Yes, but a lot of people do it quite passively, rather than challenging it, questioning it, pulling it apart, deconstructing it [mock serious voice]. They just go, ‘Yes’, especially with media texts. It scares me the way kids will read something and go, ‘right, fact.’ Well no, actually. So that’s what I’m talking about. It’s getting them to question things.

Here Rebecca appears to be moving away from a liberal, sociolinguistic perspective, with its emphasis on variety and equality, towards critical literacy. Paul and Alison R. also showed how this might be possible.

Paul had enjoyed grammar at school, which, like Nick, he associated with structure and control.

Most people see it as the maths and algebra of English... sometimes more enjoyable than doing creative writing, almost like little puzzles that you had to solve out.

When he talked about standard English, Paul drew on the sociolinguistics he had studied at university:

I think it's important for pupils to be aware of the differences. Standard English is the most prestigious dialect, the dialect of formality and officialdom, and although you can't make a value system – you don't want to make the dialect seem as if it's not valuable, not valid, you do want to make them aware that there are going to be circumstances and situations where it's not appropriate.

Like Nick, Paul ascribed to English teaching a social and democratic purpose. Here it is possible to see what used to be the moral agenda of literature teaching replaced by issues of language and citizenship.

The way I think about English is that it is more to do with choice, an option and a personal response than dictating morality.. evaluating, placing one thing next to another, making your own decisions in a rational way. I think it's morally important for people to make their own decisions in a rational way, and in an emotional and creative way as well...taking into account other people's viewpoints

But there was also a socially critical function for English:

In a democratic society people should be able to distinguish between right and wrong, correct and incorrect information or undue narrative influence.

It was unclear, however, to what extent Paul would carry these ideas into the classroom, since he did not do any explicit grammar teaching on school placement. What he said about pedagogy reflected a fairly conventional personal growth model, with grammar part of a teacher's 'toolbox': 'You have a reason for looking at it with a particular poem or text.' Like Rebecca, he urged caution when using terminology with less able pupils, and there was still a sense of separation between literature and grammar:

Grammar may be detrimental when looking too closely at literature... When reading larger texts, it's more your personal response and the general relevance.

Alison R. shared Paul's and Rebecca's understanding of the social-critical function of English. What made her different was that her concern was theoretically located. For her, a central purpose of English teaching was the acquisition of cultural capital:

It's Pierre Bourdieu.. cultural capital. I feel strongly that particularly in English there are certain texts.. If people cover certain texts they're more likely to get into certain universities, and therefore access certain power. When we had the grammar day, everybody was laughing at those quotes from Prince Charles et cetera about standards slipping, and it dawned on me afterwards that everybody who'd made those comments, they'd all been in positions of power. They make judgments that affect all of us, and there is a certain amount of learning to play the game so that you too can access power. There are certain cultural keys you need to access power in society.

In Questionnaire One she had given as her first reason for teaching English: 'To alleviate social disparity and make "higher culture" available to all.' She explained in interview how grammar was related to reading as well as writing:

I don't see how you can appreciate literature unless you have some awareness of those very small components on the page and what's going on there.

Alison described her approach to teaching as 'very political' and she ascribed this to her working class background. This made her protective of pupils' home languages, but equally passionate about giving them access to standard English:

If you dismiss somebody's language, you are dismissing a whole package of other things...A lot of how I feel about teaching was influenced by studies I read in sociology. But it's also influenced by where I come from and I don't think I would be diminishing the value of working class language... and they are so aware, they know where to use it.. kids are so realistic – they know what's valued in society anyway.. The majority need every tool they can get.

The set of 'tools' included grammatical terminology:

You can do it without them, but I just feel that you are empowering students if you give them the terms... because without the language it's so difficult to argue... I can't help but feel that in withholding it from them there's a bit of 'I've got it – you haven't.

Alison felt that the issue was one of teacher knowledge rather than pupils' ability to cope with terminology and that some of the reactions from her fellow trainees were more to do with their ignorance than their affiliation to liberal pedagogy:

I think that the vast majority of pupils in school are quite able to cope with it and it's whether or not we are confident enough to face talking about technical terms... We all sit there: 'I'm a leftie, I'm not going to talk about grammar. I'm not going to admit that I don't know what to do with that clause.'

Summary: Towards a critical literacy?

When asked what they considered the two main purposes of English, all those interviewed at the end of my study mentioned 'critical thinking'. In Survey Two, there had been a strong endorsement of the relevance of grammar to 'evaluating messages and values communicated by the media' and 'analysing texts for bias, implication and ambiguity'. 'Critical' is a multi-purpose word in English studies [Lankshear, 1997]. For example, most of my interview group were 'critical', if not downright suspicious, of the government's motivation for re-introducing grammar. In literature study 'critical' can mean anything from attentive reading to cultural analysis; in the language classroom, the analysis of manipulative discourses as well as encouraging pupils to reflect on the own writing. My interview analysis confirmed findings from the two surveys: that there was little real evidence of radicalisation among these PGCE trainees over the eight months of my study. Those with a descriptivist approach seemed better able to accommodate grammar into their version of English teaching as inclusive and empowering, while for those with a prescriptive view it remained more separate and marginal to what 'English' was about. My analysis of Questionnaire One had suggested that a sociolinguistic orientation to language could serve as a discursive bridge between the descriptive and critical models, and this was borne out in my interview analysis. But the move towards critical literacy was never fully articulated; it could only be read as transformative potential. Those trainees who offered these discursive possibilities appeared to have carried them into PGCE as part of their ideological backpack rather than acquiring them during the course. In fact it was the prescriptivists who moved further, presumably because they had further to go in reconciling grammar with English. But in 'integrating' grammar into English they were

likely to leave unchallenged the functionalist construction of grammar foregrounded in the national curriculum, where the main purposes of grammatical knowledge are error-free writing and improved standards.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1 Reflections on Methods and Methodologies

Investigating the ideological meanings inscribed in human discourse is not the kind of research that will offer definitive conclusions. This holds whatever the chosen analytical method or the interpretative bias of the researcher. Conclusions may be further compromised when a study incorporates not only different analytical methods, but different methodologies. This thesis does not present as an elegant conjuncture of research instrument, analytical method and research methodology. It began as an investigation into trainee teachers' views on grammar teaching and broadened to include an examination of changing constructions of 'English' itself. In an attempt to locate more precisely a complex interplay of meanings around grammar and English it alternates not only between quantitative and qualitative methods, but between positivist and postmodernist methodologies. The awkwardness shows itself linguistically, when my own discourse switches from 'models' to 'discourses', from 'ideas' to 'constructions' from 'attitudes' to 'ideologies'.

There were also issues of data. On one level, I had too much material; on other, too little. My questionnaire surveys had generated a great deal of data which was to prove valuable not only in its own right, but also as a kind of quantitative ballast for the more interpretative stages of my discourse analysis. Because this necessitated a detailed analysis of two sets of questionnaire responses it meant that there was inadequate space remaining for a thoroughgoing discourse analysis of the interview data. I felt justified in changing my approach, arising as it did from my engagement with the data at the end of Questionnaire One, and Chapter 4 offers a detailed argument for its applicability to the aims of the study. However, had I chosen this approach from the start, I would have adjusted my research instruments in order to generate longer stretches of continuous speech for analysis. There is, I believe, further scope for the application of Critical Discourse Analysis techniques to the study of teacher and trainee discourse in specific settings such as the classroom, PGCE seminar or departmental meeting. The use of language corpora would assist in the

management of extensive ‘blocks’ of discourse, offering a link between ethnographic research and CDA.

Despite its limitations, I would argue that the interpretative framework of this thesis is sufficiently robust to justify some tentative conclusions:

7.2 Summary of Findings

1. Findings from survey and interview data confirm the continuing influence of prescriptivism in trainee English teachers’ construction of grammar. However, the more emphatic markers of prescriptivism were less apparent in trainees’ discourse at the end of the study.
2. Those whose degrees had involved English language study were statistically more likely to ascribe to a descriptivist construction of grammar, though this was by no means a necessary connection.
3. A substantial majority of trainees supported the explicit teaching of grammar, despite negative recollections of grammar learning at school and degree levels. The lower level of support in Survey Two appeared to be caused by an interpretation of ‘explicit’ as ‘whole class instruction’ rather than use of terminology.
4. While trainee confidence in relation to grammar teaching increased over the course of the study, concerns persisted in relation to teacher knowledge and [especially] teaching methods.
5. Although at the end of the study, grammar was still associated principally with writing and ‘basic skills’, there was evidence of discursive shift in trainees’ construction of grammar: from grammar-as-commodity towards grammar-as-pedagogy. This re-alignment, accompanied by an apparent expansion in trainees’ perceptions of grammar

teaching to include text-based work and critical analysis, was broadly compatible with the teaching methods advocated by ‘new grammarians’. However, this progressive pedagogy continued for the most part to be framed within a prescriptivist model of language.

6. There was insufficient data to show specific changes in trainees’ construction of English teaching at the end of the study. However, Survey One confirmed the findings of previous studies, that English remained a hybrid, multipurpose subject. Trainees’ construction of both [English as] subject and pupil broadly coincided with the discourse of the National Curriculum, but their construction of both teacher and pedagogy owed more to the personal growth model of English.
7. There was no evidence of a more radical ideological orientation towards critical literacy as the basis for English teaching. Instead, a process of accommodation was apparent, whereby the multiple functions of grammar could be ‘integrated’ into English via personal growth pedagogy. This process appeared to be assisted by the presence of mediating discourse such as ‘communication’ and ‘appropriateness’. However, potential for further radicalisation was discernible among those trainees whose discourse on grammar was framed within a descriptivist ideology of language teaching.

7.3 Is ‘integration’ possible – or desirable?

What emerged from both survey and interview analyses was widespread and emphatic support both for teaching grammar explicitly and for ‘integrating’ it into English lessons. This complies with the inductive approach advocated by the ‘new grammarians’, in contrast to the whole class instruction method of ‘traditional’ grammar teaching. However, there are problems in ‘integration’ which very few trainees acknowledged. Aside from the practical problems in bringing grammar into the English classroom without actually teaching it, the notion of ‘integration’ presupposes an English virtually unchanged from the personal growth model evident in Questionnaire One responses and probably experienced by the majority of the trainees themselves. This is concerning in two quite different respects: on a pragmatic level it threatens to ignore the fundamental changes –

both substantial and ideological in subject English brought about by the National Curriculum; secondly it inhibits any ideological shift in the other direction, towards a radical/critical English not modelled exclusively on individual personal growth, but based on an understanding of social structures and the role of language in creating and supporting them. The greater frequency, in Survey Two, of references to teaching about the ‘manipulation’ of language might seem to corroborate Marshall et al’s [2001] finding that trainees tended to become more radical in their orientation to English during the course of their PGCE year. However, there was no suggestion that these particular references were driven by social critique or commitment to social change. The pupil was still very much an individual, pursuing her route to self-fulfilment and success. Empowerment remained a liberal enterprise rather than a radical one. Grammar might give her an additional set of ‘critical’ tools; it would not give her critical literacy.

7.4 Why critical literacy?

The word ‘critical’ is not a new one for English professionals. No longer restricted to ‘Lit. Crit.’, it has been an intrinsic element in official and unofficial discourses of ‘English’ for some time. More recently, ‘critical literacy’ has entered into contemporary debate about the aims of English. The NATE ‘position paper’, *The Future of English* [1999] drew on work by Kress [1995] and Tweddle et al [1997] in proposing an English curriculum centred on the study and production of texts of all kinds [spoken and written, print, visual and electronic] in order to ‘facilitate the construction of a curriculum for critical literacy’ [NATE:2]. The discourse in this paper is interesting in itself. Its wording implies a decisive break from personal growth. The English curriculum of the future is to be about ‘texts’ ‘discourses’ and ‘literacy practices’. It even envisages the ‘successful student of English’ as having ‘an ever-increasing capacity to enjoy intertextuality and ‘interlingualism’ [ibid: 8]. This is still an English for pleasure and creativity, but the pupil-teacher relationship is no longer as close. She is no longer metaphorically sitting alongside her pupils, sharing their enjoyment of literature and their self-discovery. Now she is standing to one side, observing them as they negotiate their Vygotskian climbing-frames [ibid:9]. The description of the pupil of English is itself an example of interdiscursivity in action. This pupil is constructed within a discourse which mediates between the liberal

notion of the autonomous individual endowed with freedom of choice and the radical imperative to take action in the cause of social and global justice:

Such a person would have.... an 'accrued capability' to play a creative, innovative, influential part in a widening range of social, cultural, global events, independently or collaboratively, flexibly or within recognised constraints, choosing when to conform, counter or subvert [ibid: 8-9].

There remains a reluctance to fully engage with the theory of critical literacy, even while invoking it as an aim of English. One of the critical theorists whose work is recommended in the paper has described the pedagogy of critical literacy rather more energetically as

a theorized practice of teaching that opposes the dominant ideologies, institutions and material conditions of societies which maintain socio-economic inequality.... aims to develop student's critical awareness of those oppressive social forces, including school structures and knowledges. So, enlightened, students will be empowered and will demonstrate their emancipation by practising an active citizenship to help right society's wrongs [Morgan, 1997: 6].

NATE's less radical discourse reflects a perceived need to preserve the pupil-centred pedagogy which has served the practice of English so well for so long. But it also sidesteps the political implications of critical literacy which now extend beyond our society into the global arena [Fairclough, 2001]. The world is closer and more threatening than it has ever been, and as future citizens of the world, youngsters will need to have the critical resources to not just to withstand the blandishments of global capitalism, but to deconstruct and oppose the pseudo-democratic discourses that threaten the futures of so many people. If it is true that postmodernism has had its day, if theory is having to venture again into the philosophical quagmire of reality, truth and evil [Eagleton, 2003], then we might find that playing with texts and discourses may not be enough. And when theory turns from text to action, we will need people whose education in 'citizenship' has given them more than 'an understanding of their roles and responsibilities as citizens in a modern democracy' [DfEE, 1999: 4].

7.5 And grammar?

It may be difficult to see grammar teaching as more than a dot on the grand ideological design of critical literacy. Even in the functionalist National Curriculum [1995 and 1999] it accounts for only a small proportion of the content to be taught. However, its symbolic significance is much bigger. In Chapter One I showed how grammar teaching has played a central role in the history of subject English. Arguments about its relevance to English have changed according to whichever version of English was dominant. But when the conflict over the English curriculum was at its most intense, the fiercest ideological battle was over grammar. There were outcries against the prescription of a narrow range of literary texts, but the re-introduction of grammar threatened [and was intended by some] to undermine the ideological foundations of personal growth English. It was more of a threat than the re-definition of 'literature' within the national curriculum because few teachers had the knowledge of modern linguistics necessary to engage in intellectual debate about issues such as different models of grammar, the role of grammar in children's language development, or the history of Standard English.

Opposition to grammar teaching persists in schools, as many of the trainees in this study discovered. As with most innovations, the 'new generation' were better equipped to assimilate the new prescriptions into their practice. Yet 'integration' of grammar, no matter how sensitively managed [or 'softly softly' as one trainee put it], must change 'English', in terms of both its content and its pedagogy. Grammatical knowledge must now be part of the mix of literature, skills and creativity. And the requirement to teach 'standard English' implies a shift from interactive to transmissive teaching methods. Reconciliation may not be possible, not merely because 'grammar' and 'English' are still counter-indicated for most teachers and teacher-trainers, but because of the commodification of education itself. In an environment where skills must not only be taught, but tested and re-tested, the 'specialness' of English may already be part of its history.

Reconciliation might not, in any case, be desirable, if it leaves unchallenged dominant ideologies of English teaching. It would be unfair to expect from apprentice teachers any

radical re-formulation of their subject. In the crowded, brief and regulated PGCE course, the energies of tutors and trainees alike are concentrated on developing the practical resources to function confidently in the classroom. When and if alternatives are discussed, it is unlikely that grammar teaching will feature as a potential vehicle for radicalisation, given its historical associations with prescriptivism and the conflict surrounding its reintroduction into the curriculum. But Nick Peim [2000a] argues that grammar could offer a way into a new conceptualization of English teaching:

There is no reason why grammar teaching should not be a focus for a reconstruction of classroom English. Reviving the issues raised by the LINC Project, grammar teaching could provide the ideal context for a debate about the scope of the subject, the range of its references and its explicit knowledge. There is no reason why models of grammar shouldn't be presented to pupils, nor why they should not be invited to engage in activities that highlight the fact that there are different types of grammar and that these express different conceptions about language.[24]

The location for such a discussion is the postmodern classroom, where critical literacy is taught via the exploration of meanings and epistemologies:

Classrooms in this model become communities of learning where knowledge is constructed and negotiated, where there is an emphasis on the mutual development of theory, where participation is not dependent on prior accumulated cultural experience and restricted to the right kind of cultural orientation.[ibid: 24].

Peim's is, in essence, the same text-based model of English proposed by NATE. But it is more emphatic both in its advocacy of critical literacy and in its assertion of the need for theory in the reconstitution of English. Without theory, he argues, English will continue to develop in an ad hoc fashion, in the spaces left by an [untheorised] conservative curriculum where alternative practices 'are likely to be picked up and used in a piecemeal fashion, absorbed into more traditional approaches: work addressing sexist language, for example, cohorts with an unreconstructed model of grammar teaching' [ibid: 20].

The requirement to teach grammar ought to stimulate the cultivation of linguistic knowledge in the profession, so that grammar does not remain defined by official discourses like the English Orders or 'The Literacy Strategy'. Teachers would then be able

to explore, develop and theorise their own knowledge about language as part of a process of re-professionalisation.

7.6 Implications for teacher education

My examination of the discursive influences on trainee English teachers' constructions of English and grammar left out a major source of influence: the discourses employed by PGCE tutors. Clearly the 'voices' of PGCE tutors were inscribed in important ways on the constructions of English and grammar identified in my questionnaires and interviews. They were heard most distinctly in trainees' responses to the question 'What do you feel is the most important thing you have learnt about grammar on this course?' in the end-of-course questionnaire. Responses were diverse, but the largest sets of responses referred to increased confidence and the need to integrate and contextualize grammar teaching, rather than using discrete, whole class instruction methods. There were very few references to debates around grammar or 'standard English', and no specific references to theories of language. Of course this does not mean that such discussions did not occur during the course, but it is reasonable to assume that they did not represent a major part of the PGCE programme.

Concerns persisted among trainees about grammatical knowledge and [especially] about teaching methods, areas where departments are continuing to increase their expertise. But if intending teachers are to participate productively in the re-constitution and re-professionalisation of English, they will need to be able to access the kinds of theoretical models that most of them will have not have encountered on their degree courses. For those that have, my findings suggest that they will not necessarily carry such learning into their teacher education. Moreover, as Peim observes, the emphasis on school-based training 'exerts a powerful inertia, and tends to resist alien forms of textual and linguistic knowledge' [2000a: 23]. Peim identifies some 'significant sources of theory for beginning English teachers':

- post-structuralist theories of language, meaning and subjectivity
- media studies and cultural studies
- sociolinguistics and critical language awareness [2000b: 170]

My own discursive shift from ‘training’ to ‘education’ in the title of this section is a principled one. It reflects an opposition, shared by many education professionals, to the official construction of teacher education as skills, which has resulted in a concentration on ‘method’ at the expense of theory. This is despite the current orthodoxy of ‘reflective practice’ which course tutors have seen as a more constructive alternative to the transmission of theoretical knowledge that used to form a major part of PGCE courses. However, Furlong et al [2000] suggest that ‘reflection’ is a pragmatic rather than a theoretical tool, ‘a collective sharing of experience... reflection on practice’. While acknowledging the importance of this process, the authors of this study find it an inadequate substitute for theoretical understanding:

....if reflection remains only this, rooted in particular practical experiences, then its implications for professionalism are significantly different from when trainees are systematically provided with opportunities to engage with other forms of professional knowledge [138].

The structured inclusion of theoretical perspectives on language would not only place additional pressure on over-stretched university programmes, but might incur the wrath of inspectors who are charged with ensuring that PGCE courses comply with an untheorised, method-based ITT curriculum. But without theory, grammatical knowledge cannot be freed from its straitjacket of commodification; its meanings will be defined within a single, dominant model of language and its usage dictated by prescriptivism. If it continues to be seen principally as a ‘set of skills’ for writing, framing it within a discourse of ‘empowerment’ will not prevent it from being used to promote a utilitarian agenda for English. Nor is it enough to co-opt additional functions from critical linguistics, such as ‘analysing manipulative strategies in media discourse’. Without an understanding of the theoretical perspectives underpinning such analyses, teachers may not be able to reach beyond the declared policy of the QCA to focus not on ‘Whether’ but the ‘How’ of grammar teaching¹⁰³. With theory they may be able to re-focus on the ‘Whither’ – not only of grammar teaching, but of English itself.

¹⁰³ QCA 1999

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Appendix 1: First questionnaire

TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR: PERCEPTIONS OF PGCE STUDENTS

As a part-time PhD student [the other part is an English teacher] I am researching attitudes and approaches to the teaching of English grammar. I am especially interested in the views of intending teachers, and would be grateful if you could complete the questionnaire. Could you also indicate at the end whether you would be willing to participate in follow-up work?

Please use the other side of the page if you need more space for answers. Thanks for your time.

A. Your background

1. How old are you?..... 2. Are you male or female ?
3. How would you describe your ethnic origin?.....
4. Where did you go to school [city, county or LEA, please].....
5. What kinds of school did you attend?

a. Sectors

primary

- state
- independent
- voluntary aided
- other Please specify.....

secondary

- state
- independent
- voluntary aided
- other Please specify.....

b. Type of **secondary** school or college

- comprehensive
- grammar
- secondary modern
- sixth form college
- further education college
- other Please specify.....

c. Was the school single sex ¹ or coeducational? ¹

6. What subjects did you study at 'A' level [or equivalent] ? If you took English, please say whether it was Language or Literature or a combined Language/Literature syllabus.

.....

B. Your learning of English grammar

1. Were you taught English grammar at school? Yes No

If you were taught English grammar at school, please continue with this section. If not, please go to section C.

2. At what stages were you taught English grammar?
 primary secondary [11-16] 'A' level

3. What aspects of grammar were you taught? [Please tick the appropriate boxes]

What were you taught?	primary	secondary	'A' level
Nouns			
Verbs			
Adjectives			
Adverbs			
Pronouns			
Conjunctions			
Prepositions			
verb tenses			
verb agreement			
modal verbs			
passive verb forms			
structure of sentences			
types of sentences [simple, compound, complex]			
Phrases			
Clauses			
standard and non-standard English grammar			
Dialect			
word formation			
attitudes to language use			
text/discourse analysis			
differences between spoken and written forms			
changes in language over time			
formal and informal usage of Standard English			

Please list any other aspects of grammar you were taught	primary	secondary	'A' level

4. How was grammar taught **at secondary level [11-16]** Please circle **Yes** or **No**

- a. in separate 'grammar lessons' **Yes/No**
- b. integrated across the English curriculum **Yes/No**
- c. integrated, but with some grammar lessons **Yes/No**
- d. as a structured part of the English curriculum **Yes/No**
- e. as and when the teacher considered it necessary **Yes/No**
- f. using grammatical terms or labels **Yes/No**
- g. using 'non-technical' explanations **Yes/No**
- h. taught to the whole class **Yes/No**
- i. taught to individual pupils **Yes/No**
- j. using grammatical exercises **Yes/No**
- k. using drills **Yes/No**
- l. using games **Yes/No**
- m. correcting errors in writing **Yes/No**
- n. correcting errors in speech **Yes/No**
- o. exclusively the grammar of Standard English **Yes/No**
- p. including other dialects and varieties **Yes/No**
- q. rote learning of parts of speech **Yes/No**
- r. parsing sentences **Yes/No**
- s. any other method you can remember?

.....

5. Can you remember how you felt about grammar? Please explain.....

.....

5. How did you feel about English generally?.....

.....

7. Do you have any additional memories of English grammar at school?.....

.....
.....
.....

C. Higher Education

1. What post-school qualifications do you have?

- degree in English Literature
 - degree in English Language
 - degree in Language and Literature
 - other English degree Please specify.....
 - combined English degree with?.....
 - degree in subject other than English Please specify.....
 - Masters degree Please indicate specialism.....
 - PhD Please indicate specialism.....
 - TESOL qualification Please specify.....
 - Other post-school qualifications.....
-
.....

2. Did the study of English grammar feature in any of these courses? **Yes/No**

If you answered No to this question, please go on to Section D.

3. If Yes, what were the course or modules which included grammar?.....

.....
.....
.....

4. What did you study? Please tick the elements covered in your H.E.course [s]:

- | | |
|--|--|
| modern English grammar <input type="checkbox"/> | linguistic theory <input type="checkbox"/> |
| word classes <input type="checkbox"/> | systemic-functional grammar <input type="checkbox"/> |
| morphology <input type="checkbox"/> | transformational grammar <input type="checkbox"/> |
| phrase structure <input type="checkbox"/> | sociolinguistics <input type="checkbox"/> |
| clause and sentence structure <input type="checkbox"/> | dialect study <input type="checkbox"/> |
| discourse analysis <input type="checkbox"/> | children's language acquisition <input type="checkbox"/> |
| stylistics <input type="checkbox"/> | history of English <input type="checkbox"/> |
| media texts <input type="checkbox"/> | pragmatics <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Critical Language Analysis <input type="checkbox"/> | speech and writing <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other topics studied? Please list.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

5. How did you feel about these elements of your course [s] ? Please explain.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

D. Teaching English grammar

1. One of the requirements of the National curriculum is that children should be explicitly taught English grammar, using grammatical terms. Do you agree with this?

Yes/No

2. If you answered **Yes** to the previous question, please explain why you think English grammar should be taught explicitly.....
.....
.....
.....

3. If you answered **No**, please explain why.....
.....
.....
.....

4. How **confident** do you feel about teaching English grammar? Please circle the number which best describes your feelings about your own knowledge, teaching methods and the reasons for teaching grammar:

Key

- 1 = very confident
- 2 = reasonably confident
- 3 = not very confident
- 4 = very unconfident

- a. **your own knowledge** 1 2 3 4
- b. **which teaching methods to use** 1 2 3 4

c. reasons for teaching grammar 1 2 3 4

5. 'Grammar' has been defined in different ways. How would you define it?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

E. Teaching English

1. What would you say are the main purposes of **teaching English**? [In order of priority if possible]

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

2. Why do you want to teach English?.....

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

F. Do you have any comments on the questionnaire? [For instance any additional questions that you think I should have included?] or any further observations that you wish to make?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Finally, would you be willing to take part in follow-up work on this project? **Yes/No**

If Yes, please give your name.....

And your tutor's name.....

Thanks again for your time

Pam Upton

Appendix 2

TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR: END-OF-COURSE QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for agreeing to complete this second questionnaire. The first sample gave me some excellent data, and it will be interesting to see how you feel about grammar teaching as you move towards the end of your PGCE course.

A. Personal details

1. How old were you when you began the PGCE course?.....
2. Are you male or female ?
3. Where did you complete your secondary education? [city, county or LEA, please].....
4. Did you do the first questionnaire last term? Yes No

B. Teaching Experience

1. Did you teach grammar during your main teaching practice? Yes No

If you answered 'No' to this question, please go on to Section C

2. What aspects of grammar did you teach, and to which year groups?

aspects of grammar	year groups

3. What teaching methods did you use? [Please circle **Yes** or **No**]

- a. separate lesson **Yes/No**
- b. integrated into current work **Yes/ No**
- c. as and when you thought it necessary **Yes/ No**
- d. using grammatical terms **Yes / No**
- e. using 'non-technical explanations **Yes / No**
- f. taught to the whole class **Yes / No**
- g. taught to individual pupils **Yes / No**
- h. using grammatical exercises **Yes /No**
- i. using drills **Yes /No**
- j. using games **Yes /No**
- k. correcting errors in writing **Yes/ No**
- l. correcting errors in speech **Yes / No**
- m. exclusively the grammar of standard English **Yes/ No**
- n. including other dialects and varieties **Yes/ No**
- o. discussion of non-fiction texts **Yes/ No**
- p. discussion of literature texts **Yes/No**
- q. preparing for written tasks **Yes / No**
- r. any other methods or applications?.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. Generally, how did pupils respond?.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. How did you feel about teaching grammar?.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. What impression did you get of the English department's view on teaching grammar?

.....

.....

.....

C. Statements about grammar

Please read the following list of statements about grammar and grammar teaching, and say whether you agree or disagree with them:

Please tick as appropriate: ++ = strongly agree; + = agree; ? = unsure; - = disagree; -- = strongly disagree	++	+	?	-	--
1. The main purpose of grammar teaching is to ensure that pupils write in correct Standard English.					
2. Explicit grammar teaching can help pupils to structure their ideas.					
3 Grammar can be as enjoyable as literature.					
4. Terminology should not be taught out of context.					
5. Only the more able students can be expected to discuss patterns of syntax.					
6. Grammar teaching may be useful in promoting discipline in the classroom.					
7. An understanding of grammar needs to be built systematically into the school's curriculum.					
8. Grammatical terminology is a crucial tool in the analysis of literature texts					
9. Knowing about the structure of English is important for its own sake.					
10. Talking about grammar gets in the way of appreciating literature.					
11. A knowledge of English grammar is important for foreign language learning.					
12. Grammar teaching hampers creativity.					
13. People need a knowledge of grammar in order to understand how language can be used to manipulate them.					
14. An explicit knowledge of grammar is essential to understanding how language varies according to context and use.					
15. Most pupils find grammar boring.					
16. Standard English is only one dialect of English.					
17. The requirement to teach grammar is part of an authoritarian model of English promoted by Government in response to a supposed decline in standards.					
18. Learning about grammar can help foster better relations between ethnic groups through recognising that all languages and dialects are rule-governed and systematic.					
19. Explicit teaching of grammar does <i>not</i> improve pupil performance.					
20. Being able to talk about grammar can aid discussion of social issues.					
21. Every encounter with every text ought to be inviting pupils to comment on the writer's use of language, including grammar.					
22. Literature is part of the study of language.					
23. Dialect features are not errors.					
24. It is important that children should be able to speak standard English.					
25. I would only teach grammatical terms if I had to.					
26. Every intending teacher of English should undertake a course in linguistics.					

D. Your PGCE course

1. What do you consider the most important thing you have learnt about grammar on this course?

.....
.....
.....
.....

2. Do you feel equipped to teach the Standard English and Language Study elements of the National Curriculum at key stages 3 and 4? **Yes** θ **No** θ

3. How confident do you now feel about teaching grammar? Please circle the number which best describes your feelings.

Key

- 1 = very confident
- 2 = reasonably confident
- 3 = not very confident
- 4 = very unconfident

a. How confident do you feel about your own **understanding** of grammar? **1 2 3 4**

b. How confident do you feel about which **teaching methods** to use? **1 2 3 4**

c. How confident would you feel about explaining **the reasons** for teaching grammar?
1 2 3 4

d. Have any of these scores changed since you began the PGCE course? If so, could you explain?

.....
.....
.....
.....

5. How do you feel now about the **explicit** teaching of grammar [using grammatical terms]

I agree θ

I disagree θ

5a. If you **agree**, what are your reasons?

.....

.....
.....

5b. If you **disagree** please say why.....

E. How relevant is grammar?

How relevant is an *explicit knowledge* of grammar to the following areas of the English curriculum?

Please rate the relevance of grammar in the following areas of the curriculum. Key: ++ = extremely relevant; + = relevant ? = unsure ; - = minor relevance; -- = irrelevant	++	+	?	-	--
1. Discussion of literature texts.					
2. Discussion of non-fiction texts.					
3. Teaching written Standard English.					
4. Teaching spoken Standard English.					
5. Evaluating messages and values communicated by the media.					
6. Teaching historical change in English.					
7. Preparation for creative writing tasks.					
8. Correcting errors in writing.					
9. Correcting errors in speech.					
10. Teaching differences between written and spoken English.					
11. Analysing texts for bias, implication and ambiguity.					
12. Understanding variation in non-standard dialects.					
13. Writing in specific genres.					
14. Teaching how English varies according to context.					
15. Extending pupils' skills in constructing complex sentences.					
16. Teaching punctuation.					
17. Teaching spelling					
18. Analysis of language structures in different texts and genres					
19. Discussing patterns of cohesion in non-fiction texts.					
20. Examining how choice of language affects meaning.					
21. Studying spoken language.					
22. Discussing attitudes to language use.					
23. The use of English in new technologies, e.g. internet, e-mail					
24. Knowledge about language					

F. The aims of English teaching

Finally, how important in your view are the following aims of **English teaching**?

Please add to the list if I have missed any!

Please rate these aims as follows: ++ = very important + = important; - = of minor importance; - - = irrelevant	++	+	-	- -
1. To foster appreciation and enjoyment of literature.				
2. To improve standards of spoken English.				
3. To enable pupils to critically analyse media texts.				
4. To encourage creativity.				
5. To raise awareness of diversity in language.				
6. To equip pupils with the skills they will need for work.				
7. To promote language skills across the curriculum.				
8. To teach knowledge about language.				
9. To help develop critical thinkers.				
10. To encourage discussion of social and political issues.				
11. To extend reading skills.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. If you have any comments on the questionnaire, please give them below, and if you want to know anything more about the research into grammar teaching, please call me on 01509 881329. [I shall be getting in touch shortly with every one who volunteered for a follow-up interview.]

Thanks again, and best wishes,

Pam Upton

Appendix 3: Interview schedule 1

1. Learning grammar

Clarify details on schooling, university.

Learning grammar:

at school.

Was it taught explicitly?

Could you say more about how you felt about grammar and about English generally?

Were there any methods/approaches used which you remember as effective or interesting?

Were there any methods used which you would not use in school today?

If grammar was not taught, do you regret it?

at university [if relevant]

Why did you choose your degree course? [where did you study?]

What aspects of your university course[s] did you enjoy most?

Any language/ linguistics elements?

Your response to these?

2. Teaching Grammar

Did you come across any grammar teaching in school experience?

How important do you consider grammar teaching in school?

Why do you think *explicit* grammar teaching has been re-introduced into the curriculum? Your response?

Your confidence - Would you answer this question any differently now?

Is there anything you feel you need to do in relation to your own learning of grammar?

3. Beliefs about grammar and English

How did you feel about the 'definition' question?

Any changes in or additions to your list of reasons for teaching English?

Has grammar got a part to play in any of these?

Finally, can I talk to you again after teaching practice next year?

Appendix 4: Interview schedule 2

2nd stage: explain. First questionnaires: students' background in and feelings about teaching English grammar. Now, nearing end of P.G.C.E course, have feelings changed - about grammar? about English teaching? about place of grammar in English teaching?

1. Teaching practice: How did it go?

Grammar: what did you teach? Did you choose to do it?

Methods?

How did pupils respond?

Your own feelings?

School view on grammar? Resources?

2. Statements about grammar: Clarify & discuss. Any you feel strongly about?

3. The PGCE course: What did you learn about grammar?

Confidence now? Why: the course/ own learning/ practice?

Reasons for teaching grammar explicitly?

Has being involved in the study influenced your views at all?

Anything more that could be done on course?

4. Relevance of grammar: Discuss. Any other areas where grammar might be relevant?

5. Aims of English teaching Discuss. Choose one or two aims as *most crucial*?

Does grammar have a part to play in these aims? How important?

6. How influential has your own educational background been in your approach to English teaching?

7. Is it okay to use first names in the write-up?

Appendix 5

THE INTERVIEWEES

Alison R.

Alison began her PGCE course at 24, after taking a literature degree which included a first year modern English language module. She found this hard, but was completely supportive of grammar teaching, seeing it as an issue of entitlement and cultural capital. She also wanted to see Latin returned to the curriculum, and actually chose to study it during her gap year. For her, knowledge of grammatical terms empowered students by giving them control over their own writing, as well as the ability to analyse texts. She criticized those who saw Standard English as elitist, arguing that they were usually people with power, and that children themselves were perfectly aware of the cultural significance of S.E. Having come from a working class background herself, she was passionate about the link between education and democracy, and her approach to English was ‘very political’. In hindsight, although she loved English, she would have preferred to study social sciences.

Alison S.

Twenty-eight year-old Alison, a literature graduate, had very little grammar in her own educational background until she took a TEFL course. This made her realize how little she knew about English grammar and, although still wary about over-emphasizing explicit grammar teaching, about ‘pulling things apart too much’, and making pupils too self-conscious about their writing, she felt at the end of her PGCE course that it was important for pupils to access this area of knowledge. She regretted not having done more at school, and felt that PCGE programmes should include more linguistics. She was surprised when some of the year 8 pupils she taught on her main school practice positively enjoyed grammar classes, especially some of the boys, who seemed to appreciate the ‘right and wrong’ aspect of the grammatical exercises.

Catherine

Catherine, 27, was very much in favour of explicit grammar teaching, and was pleased when teachers at her practice schools were happy to let her take their grammar lessons. At the private school she herself attended, pupils were ‘rarely exposed’ to non-standard English, and although there were no set grammar lessons, they were expected to use ‘good’ grammar in speech and writing. She described the month’s TEFL course completed after her [Literature] degree as ‘very difficult’, but she clearly valued the technical knowledge she acquired. It was very evident at the beginning of the study that she saw grammar teaching in terms of ‘rules’ and ‘correct English’. She was critical of government policy, however, describing it as ‘back to basics’, with grammar having a disciplinary function. After her school practice she seemed more pragmatic about grammar teaching, aware of the need to tread carefully with grammar in school, even suggesting that pupils might ‘skive off’ if they were timetabled for a grammar lesson. She remained ambivalent about non-standard English, still feeling that it was ‘incorrect’, but able to apply concepts such as ‘appropriateness’ and ‘context’ in discussing classroom situations.

Jon

Jon, aged 25, had come to English teaching via an unconventional route, completing two years of a physics degree before deciding that he preferred English. He had disliked English at school; even though he spent a lot of time writing, he found his teachers 'uninspired' and unsympathetic to what interested him. He spoke very favourably of the English teaching at the F.E. college where he studied for 'A' levels and re-took his English GCSE. Here he was taught grammar explicitly and enjoyed it, although he acquired most of his current knowledge of grammar from his qualification in and experience of teaching English as a foreign language to adults in Greece. He supported grammar teaching because of his own feelings of inadequacy with grammar at school. However, he felt that it should be integrated into English topics. On the issue of explicitness he was tentatively in favour, affirming the metacognitive benefits, and the possible influence on written skills, though he did wonder whether it was necessary for all pupils. His main school practice convinced him of the need for an inductive and active approach to grammar teaching, drawing on teacher knowledge as appropriate in the classroom. However, pupils 'needed to know' standard English. He still felt that grammar was 'intimidating' for many, including PGCE trainees, but did not see a conflict between grammar and literature or grammar and creativity, suggesting that grammar could help in appreciating literature.

Karen

29 year-old Karen had taken an unorthodox route to PGCE, having left school after a year of 'A' levels and taken a BTec course in Social Care at FE college. At university, she also opted for a non-traditional English degree: 'Literature, Life and Thought', which included a wide-ranging study of world literature in English. She was open about her own lack of grammatical knowledge, though felt it had increased during the course, and particularly as a result of her school placements. Though she still felt unclear about defining grammar, at the end of the course she was considerably more certain about its importance. She did feel that it needed to be taught in more enjoyable ways, for both teachers and pupils, but was more pragmatic about the need to balance creativity and accuracy. Like many of her peers, her response to dialect seemed contradictory: affirming the centrality of standard English, while recognizing the importance of dialect. Her final interview showed her moving towards resolution via notions of context and appropriateness.

Lee

Lee, 23, unlike most of the trainees, did not take a degree in English, but in Art History and European Literature. In her PGCE interview she had been questioned about her knowledge of English literature. She had done little English grammar at school and revealed that it was the grammatical element which had prevented her achieving a good grade in 'A' level German. She had 'loved' English literature at both GCSE and 'A' levels, and relished the analytical challenge of practical criticism. In her first school placement, teachers were hostile to grammar teaching, and she was very aware not only of the gaps in her knowledge, but of the difficulties in teaching the 'right and wrong' of grammar' when in English there was no right or wrong answer. Her main school experience was very different. Here all KS3 pupils did weekly written exercises on spelling, punctuation and grammar as part of the school's drive to improve literacy

standards. Teachers [and Lee herself] found the exercises repetitive, but felt that they had been a factor in improved

GCSE results. Lee thought there needed to be more variety in grammar teaching, and that it needed to be related to pupils' writing. She was wary about using grammatical terminology with less able pupils. When asked to prioritise her aims as an English teacher, she selected 'creativity' and 'critical thinking'.

Nick

Nick, aged 25, was one of a small minority in this study who wholeheartedly endorsed the teaching of grammar. He had an interesting educational background, going to school in Germany [where he was taught in German] before studying English and Politics at an English university. Here he consciously opted to study the language modules on offer as part of his degree course. Nick identified with those students who find the expressive and creative aspects of English problematic and prefer the more objective approach to learning typified by grammar. He felt that the way he was taught [German] grammar at school, modeled on Latin, was inappropriate today. However, he believed that English pupils were disadvantaged in comparison to their European counterparts because the latter were better able to analyze their language and, therefore, their thoughts. The connection between grammar and cognition was an important one for Nick and for him this ability to actively reflect on language was part of the process of becoming a mature and responsible member of society. Teaching grammar on school experience had made him 'more convinced than ever' that pupils not only benefited from grammar teaching, but that they could enjoy it as well.

Paul

Paul had done more grammar learning than most PGCE trainees. He had enjoyed grammar at school, though he did not recall having specific grammar lessons. At university he had taken numerous linguistics modules as part of his English and Philosophy degree. His approach to English teaching was a mixture of enthusiasm and pragmatism: enthusiasm for literature and awareness of the practical importance of language skills. As an English teacher his priorities were critical thinking and appreciation and enjoyment of literature rather than preparing people for work. In his first interview he was dubious about the 'back to basics' agenda of government policy, but at the end of his course he was more focused on pedagogy than politics. He felt that pupils needed to write and speak standard English, but was wary about using grammatical terminology, especially with less able pupils. Grammar was about 'dissection' – useful for examining smaller pieces of text, but 'whole text' study was about personal response. His construction of English was multidimensional, but he saw no conflict between, for example, creativity and grammar. What mattered was how grammar was taught: grammatical knowledge was a 'toolbox' ; context and 'appropriateness' were key issues in the classroom.

Radha

A 21 year-old Indian student, the only interviewee of non-European origin, and one of two bilingual trainees in the interview sample. Radha had bad memories of grammar teaching at school, and these were bound up with being singled out for 'special support' in her middle school. She took a degree in Humanities, part of which was a compulsory linguistics module which, again, she disliked. She supported the teaching of grammar in

schools, but felt that it should be taught individually, as necessary, rather than to the whole class. When

interviewed she was 'very sceptical' as to how necessary grammar teaching was, and could not understand why students at 'A' level or degree level, would opt to do language instead of literature. To her, English was 'about literature.' However, after having taught grammar during her main school experience, Radha felt much more positive, and suggested in her end-of-course questionnaire, that it could be 'an empowering experience.' Unfortunately we were not able to arrange a second interview.

Rebecca

Rebecca, 24, completed her secondary education in Scotland, a system she described as 'freer' than in England and one which did not separate language and literature in English studies. Though not taught grammar explicitly at school, she remembered feeling worried about making errors in her writing, and the sense of grammar as 'scary' stayed with her into combined language and literature degree, where she consciously avoided studying it. However, she described her introduction to sociolinguistics as 'revolutionary' and its influence on her approach to English teaching was apparent in her references to dialect, context and genre. She thought explicit grammar teaching an important metacognitive and critical tool and felt it should begin as early as possible, with as much fun as possible. Her school practice had involved little explicit grammar teaching, but she had applied her knowledge in diverse areas including common errors, poetry and media. Like most of her PGCE colleagues, her views at the end of the course were essentially pragmatic: creativity was central, but language skills, including grammar were fundamental tools for creativity, confidence and empowerment.

Ruth

At 44, Ruth was a mature entrant to teaching. After working in the catering business from the age of 16, she gained a place at Derby university via a one-year Access course, where she took a degree in literature and subsequently a Masters in Victorian Studies. She supported the explicit teaching of grammar partly because she was aware of her own lack of grammatical knowledge. She associated grammar with 'correct writing', an issue with personal significance, since she herself had ambitions to write professionally. She discovered that grammar exercises could have a disciplinary function, when she used them with a 'difficult' class in an early school placement. By the end of the PGCE course she felt more confident about grammar teaching, but recognized that she still had gaps in her knowledge. Unfortunately a tape malfunction meant that I lost her second interview.

Sandra

Sandra began her PGCE course at 21 with very little experience of grammar. After graduating in Literature, she had taught English briefly in Poland, but was very aware of the gaps in her knowledge. She was confident in her own use of language, but felt unsure about explaining errors. Her main school practice had included discrete lessons on grammar with a year 9 and an 'A' level Language group, and she was pleased at the response, though she would have preferred a more integrated approach, especially with the year 9s. For her, creativity had always been the most enjoyable part of English, and she was reassured to find that the PGCE view was similar to her own: that grammar, though useful, need not be a huge issue for English teachers, and that it could be taught in interesting ways.

Sue

Sue, 34, had worked as a nurse before starting her literature degree at Nottingham. There she struggled with the compulsory Modern English Language module in her first year, and regretted not having had English grammar lessons at school. Nevertheless, thanks to ‘a fantastic tutor’ at Nottingham, she found that she quite enjoyed it and found that she was able to draw on her interest in writing to do a project on children’s writing. She found it amusing that when in her first school practice she helped to test worksheets on grammar, the teachers found the activities boring, but the pupils enjoyed them and appeared to work harder than usual. She recognized the gaps in her own knowledge, and attributed what she called her ‘phobia’ to the fact that grammar was about ‘right and wrong’, and felt that the government’s agenda in reintroducing grammar teaching was to do with raising standards by making written English more technically correct. For her, English was primarily about creativity, something that she felt was being eroded by initiatives such as the Literacy Hour and she remained unconvinced about the usefulness of explicit grammar teaching.

Appendix 6: Purposes of English teaching

	% for whom this was a purpose of English ¹⁰⁴ [no. of respondents in brackets]	% who placed this first in their list of purposes	% with two or more 'purposes' within this category	Those who took literature degrees [no lang] [of 51 responses]	Those who studied lang. As part of their lit. degrees [of 17 responses]	Those with Lang or comb. Lang/Lit degrees [of 24 responses]	Those who took degrees other than English [of 14 responses]
LITERATURE	60 [64]	17 [18]	18 [19] ¹⁰⁵	65 [33]	76 [13]	46 [11]	50 [7]
Appreciate/enjoy literature/reading	36 [38]	12 [13]		39 [20]	41 [7]	29 [7]	28 [4]
Learn about the world/social issues thru literature	10 [11]						
Cultural/literary heritage	11 [12]			10 [5]	18 [3]	8 [2]	2 [2]
Relevance of literature	3 [3]						
Range of cultural experience thru lit	7 [7]						
LANGUAGE	31 [33]	11 [12]	3 [3] ¹⁰⁶	37 [19]	47 [8]	25 [6]	28 [4]
Knowledge about language	14 [15]			12 [6]	18 [3]	25 [6]	
Understanding variation in language	4 [4]						
Analysis of language/texts	3 [3]			1 [1]	1 [1]	8 [2]	0
Enthusiasm for/love of language	4 [4]						
Language and power	2 [2]						
Learning other languages	3 [3]						
LANGUAGE & LITERATURE	21 [22]			25 [13]	29 [5]	8 [2]	14 [2]
SKILLS	79 [84]	45 [48]	45 [48] ¹⁰⁷	74 [38]	94 [16]	79 [19]	78 [11]
Communication	52 [55]	30 [32]		53 [27]	47 [8]	54 [13]	50 [7]
Expression	25 [27]						
Literacy skills	24 [26]						
Correct English	6 [6]						
Skills for life/work	17 [18]						
Academic progress	1 [1]						
Speaking & listening	10 [11]						
Writing for different purposes	10 [11]						
Cross-curricular skills	12 [13]						
Critical/analytical skills	6 [6]						
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	47 [50]	14 [15]	19 [20] ¹⁰⁸	49 [25]	53 [9]	42 [10]	43 [6]
Creativity/imagination	15 [17]			14 [7]	29 [5]	8 [2]	21 [3]
Thinking/developing ideas/cognitive	6 [6]						
Social development/confidence/empowerment	23 [25]			21 [11]	18 [3]	33 [8]	21 [3]
Moral development	3 [3]						
Self-awareness/understanding of self	12 [13]			10 [5]	23 [4]	12 [3]	7 [1]
Developing views/opinions	1 [1]						
Understanding/respecting others	7 [8]						
Developing identity	2 [2]						
Critical thinking	5 [5]						
Understanding the world	11 [12]						
Broaden horizons	4 [4]						
SOCIAL/POLITICAL	16 [17]	2 [2]	0	12 [6]	29 [5]	21 [5]	7 [1]
Equal ops/access for all	6 [7]			12 [6]			
Discussing issues	6 [6]						
Social change	2 [2]						
Participating in society	2 [2]						

¹⁰⁴ Of the 109 trainees answering this question.

¹⁰⁵ 85 references in all.

¹⁰⁶ 36 references in all

¹⁰⁷ 149 references in all

¹⁰⁸ 94 references in all

PLEASURE	14 [15]	6 [6]	0	16 [8]	6 [1]	17 [4]	14 [2]
STANDARDS	2 [2]	0	0				
LEARNING ABOUT MEDIA	5 [5]	0	0	2 [2]	18 [3]	0	0
OTHER REASONS	23 [25]	5 [5]	2 [2]				

Appendix 7: Trainees' own reasons for wanting to teach English

	% for whom this was a reason [of 104 responses]	% who placed this reason first	Those with lit. degrees [no lang] [of 49 responses]	Those with Lit. degrees + lang modules [of 16 responses]	Those with Lang/Lit or Lang. Degrees [of 25 responses]	Those with degrees other than English [of 14 responses]
LITERATURE	29 [30] ¹⁰⁹	16 [17]	43 [21]	25 [4]	24 [6]	14 [2]
Appreciation of/importance of literature	10 [11]					
Pupils' enjoyment/love of literature	7 [9]					
Relevance of literature	4 [4]					
To encourage reading	7 [9]					
To raise awareness of 'other cultures'	1 [1]					
LANGUAGE	17 [18]	7 [8]	22 [11]	19 [3]	8 [2]	14 [2]
Importance of lang., lang. awareness	5 [5]					
Own love of language	7 [7]					
Analysis of language	2 [2]					
Use of language in different contexts	4 [4]					
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE	11 [12]		18 [9]	12 [2]	4 [1]	7 [1]
PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	27 [28] ¹¹⁰		22 [11]	25 [4]	28 [7]	42 [6]
Self-expression	7 [8]		8 [4]	12 [2]	8 [2]	0
Creativity	6 [6]		4 [2]	6 [1]	8 [2]	7 [1]
Cognitive development	3 [3]					
Social development/confidence	6 [6]					
Moral development	3 [3]					
Understanding self	7 [7]					
Critical thinking	2 [2]					
Broaden horizons	3 [3]					
PUPILS' SKILLS	18 [19]	11 [12]				
Skills for work/life	5 [5]					
Communicative skills	13 [14]					
Academic skills	2 [2]					
Access to knowledge/information	2 [2]					
TRAINEES' PERSONAL REASONS	58 [61] ¹¹¹					
Affection for subject [transmit to others]	44 [46]	74 [34]	64 [22]	56 [9]	36 [9]	43 [6]
Develop career	5 [5]					
Like young people	10 [10]					
Develop different approaches to English	1 [1]					
Extend own learning/reading	10 [11]					
Own love of literature	10 [10]					
Had good teachers themselves	3 [3]					
ENGLISH AS A SUBJECT	16 [17]					
Key/core subject	7 [8]					
Diverse	7 [8]					
Open-ended	2 [2]					
SOCIAL/POLITICAL	9 [9]					
Discussion of views/opinions	2 [2]					
Vehicle for social change	1 [1]					
Equal ops, access; give pupils a voice	6 [6]					

¹⁰⁹ 35 occurrences in total

¹¹⁰ 38 occurrences in total

¹¹¹ 84 occurrences in total

