

Learning to work with language and diversity: An English student teacher's first person account

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ABSTRACT: This article will explore, through a pen portrait, one student teacher's development during the "Postgraduate Certificate in Education" year 2002-2003, focussing on his reflections upon and responses to a specific Language Teacher Education Programme. The process of developing a set of understandings, which informs his language teacher identity, will be examined in three main areas as well as the effects of personal language diversity on the development of his language pedagogical identity.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, English teaching, identity, language, language teacher education, pedagogy, pen portrait, student teacher.

INTRODUCTION

This article builds on and complements a previous article entitled "Preparing future English teachers: The use of personal voice in developing English student teachers" identities as language teachers (Burley, 2003) This previous article examined the impact of an innovative Language Teacher Education Programme delivered to secondary English student teachers whilst working for their Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at London Metropolitan University. It explored how this Language Teacher Education Programme focuses on developing English student teachers' knowledge and understanding of language, through a cross-subject dialogue with Modern Languages student teachers. It showed how this contributes to the development of a language teacher identity and the relationship between this and previously held notions of English subject identity. It suggested that through participation in the Language Teacher Education Programme, English student teachers are able to begin the construction of personal views and ideas about being a language teacher in preparation for their future roles as English teachers. Essentially this involves the development of a set of understandings about language education, which can be applied to the teaching of language as an intrinsic part of the English curriculum.

In the United Kingdom the teaching of English in secondary schools has generally been dominated by constructions of the subject at degree level – constructions usually dominated by literary text study. In an earlier article (Burley, 2003), I have detailed and highlighted issues that many student teachers of English face when asked to consider the place of language in relation to previously held notions of subject identity. I also evidenced the difficulty many English student teachers face when asked to examine the structure and diversity of English as a language. I suggested that working with Modern Languages student teachers, who are often first language speakers of different languages, enables English student teachers to develop a more analytical view of the English language and to take a broader approach to the area of language.

This broader approach is crucial in the development of English student teachers' readiness to work within the context of urban secondary schools (in this case in

London) where a range of languages and language varieties may be spoken by pupils as part of their linguistic repertoire. It is important that the linguistic diversity of secondary school pupils be recognised by student teachers as valid knowledge and understanding of language which can both contribute to the study and enjoyment of the English language and curriculum and be *further* recognised as knowledge about language as a subject in its own right. The aims and content of the Language Teacher Education Programme delivered at London Metropolitan University are partly determined by this context.

It is not the aim of this article to describe the Language Teacher Education Programme in detail. Previous publications have done this (Burley and Pomphrey, 2002; Burley, 2003) as well as a forthcoming booklet to be published by the National Association for the Teaching of English (Burley and Pomphrey, 2004). However, it is important to draw attention to the overall aims of the programme and its curriculum content in order to understand more fully the pen portrait account which follows.

The aims of the Language Teacher Education Programme are:

- To focus the student teachers' attention on the nature and features of language both within and across a range of languages;
- To support the development of a language teacher identity through cross-subject dialogue;
- To support the development of personal ideas and theories about language and language teaching.

The programme is made up of seven teaching sessions covering three broad areas of content about language as follows:

1. Linguistic diversity
 - Language diversity in an urban setting session.
 - Learning in an unfamiliar language session
2. Language as system
 - Language acquisition session
 - Grammar at word and sentence level session
 - Grammar at text level session
3. Language teaching pedagogy
 - Language teaching approaches in English and Modern Languages session
 - Collaborative planning session.

It is the aim of the pen portrait to narrate the story of a student teacher as told to me in a written language autobiography and three chronological interviews conducted at different stages during the PGCE year; in the first term, before his first teaching placement; at the start of the second term following his first teaching placement; and at the end of the course. The questions asked in the interviews linked the student teacher's reflections on his current experiences of the course with the following three areas:

- Identity,
- the nature of language,
- the pedagogical approaches to language.

The collection and recording of this data was made with the permission of the student teacher and permission to use the data in publication was also given. I am aware that in telling this story I am interpreting and selecting from data, which is rich and complex. However, the use of first person narrative as a source of research data is advocated strongly by Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) in relation to their work on identity and language. “In the human sciences first person accounts in the form of personal narratives provide a much richer source of data” (p. 157). Also, issues of interpreting data of this nature are discussed by Kohler (1993) who concludes: “All we have is talk and text that represent reality partially, selectively and imperfectly” (p. 15).

It is with these issues in mind that I share one student teacher’s account of his experience, knowledge and understanding of language and what this might mean for his work as a future English teacher. Essentially, the process of developing views and understandings about working with language is examined closely. I have selected this particular student teacher because of the different nature of his pre-course university studies. In the last five years, Erik (a pseudonym) has been the only student teacher to enter the PGCE English with Media/Drama course with a degree in English language. However, although his degree subject is different, which indicates a possible greater knowledge and understanding of language, other student teachers on the course expressed a similar level of interest. Also, given the collaborative nature of the Language Teacher Education Programme, where English student teachers are working closely with Modern Languages student teachers, there were many Modern Languages student teachers who demonstrated far greater knowledge and understanding of some language issues, particularly in relation to language structure, than Erik.¹

PEN PORTRAIT OF ERIK – A STUDENT TEACHER

This account begins with an overview of what Erik wrote in his language autobiography at the end of the second week of the PGCE course and after the first language teacher education session on linguistic diversity.

Erik, as expected from the choice of his degree subject, had an interest in and passion about language from the start of the course and this fuelled his early definition of the subject of English which he acknowledges was “very, very much a linguistic one”. This linguistic interest is perfectly illustrated in his language autobiography. Here he describes himself as having lived all his life in North London spending the majority of it in an area with a large African-Caribbean population. He cites his friends and peers as having been the main influence on the language he uses, not his family. His explanation for this is as follows: “Because the majority of my family are either from South London, or Jamaica, and I do not speak with either a South London dialect or Jamaican Patois.” He identifies a certain amount of individual choice in this matter “I opt not to speak in that way” but also describes feeling like an outsider when choosing to use the language of his relatives in Jamaica. “When I have visited relatives in Jamaica, I have adopted the patois, so as not to seem like an outsider, but because I am

¹ The variety of responses from both English and Modern Languages student teachers has been collected over the last five years and this data is discussed in Burley and Pomphrey 2002, 2003 and 2004 forthcoming. In addition, two more pen portrait accounts, one of an English student teacher with a background in Media and Dance, and another of a Modern Languages student teacher, are contained in Burley and Pomphrey, 2004 forthcoming.

out of touch with it, and have a strong London accent, my fraudulent use of the language was easily spotted.”

Erik identifies English as his first language and describes unsuccessful attempts to learn French at secondary school. He was not interested in the subject and on reflection attributes this to being unable to see the relevance of the French language to his life. “I didn’t need it to survive in the world I was living in and more importantly, I didn’t see myself anywhere near France in the future.” However, he does emphasise his acquisition of intra-language varieties and what he has to say about the realisation of this process of acquisition illustrates well his knowledge and understanding of different language forms. It also shows an implicit understanding of the relationship between language and identity.

Over the years, I haven’t acquired any new languages, but I have acquired varieties of language and through education, an awareness and understanding of other varieties of English. The common variety of English that I use is a form of slang, the North London dialect...this is the local dialect of the people.

However, he also mentions being described by his friends as different due to their perception of his use of language and he suggests that education has had a major effect on his language use and thus the way he is perceived.

I am frequently told by them [his friends] and others that know me, that there are differences between us, and that I don’t sound like a typical black male from North London. For a while, this bothered me, because from what I could tell, I sounded the same as them, used the same words as them...But one day, during a lecture at university, I was aware where the difference laid [sic] – education.

He suggests that studying the English language has “taken its toll on the language” that he used and his choice of words here seems to highlight his feeling towards his loss of language and perhaps identity. He identifies his language use as “a kind of hybrid” made up of a number of influences, from “North London” to the accent of Received Pronunciation. He explains his friends’ construction of him as different as being influenced by his confidence and competence in moving between dialects and accents by choice depending on the context. “They believe that my levels of confidence and competence in English enable me to fuse vocabulary and grammar.”

It is at university that Erik encounters students in his class who are able to speak up to five different languages and he realises how much knowledge about and experience of language they have and how this is informing their studies. He describes these students as having “more to give” and at this point regrets the time he wasted at school during his French lessons. In addition, it is working with this multilingual group of students that increases his awareness of his own variety of English. He remembers the experience of one overseas student teacher commenting on his language use and comparing it with her own pre-conceived notions of how English people spoke and saying how different his usage was. It is this process of comparison which enables Erik’s realisation “of my own variety of English, and how different it was from RP, but yet [with] validity among other varieties.”

Erik describes learning more about English varieties at University and how this has enabled him to make sense of his own. With this process he points to a developing sense of pride in his own identity.

I began to feel proud of my language. I was proud to speak the way I did, proud to have a language that reflected my knowledge, my creativity, my generation, my personality, my background, my identity.

He also recognises that his language may change but that this will be a conscious choice – “this pride that spurs me to continually use and update my language”.

Erik’s language autobiography concludes with two major assertions. The first of these states the importance of the relationship between language and identity. “I have learnt that language and identity have a close knit relationship.” He links this with the view that there is no “right or wrong language and there is definitely no right or wrong variety of English.” In fact, he applauds those people who are able to “keep it fuelled with innovation...as ...language reflects the thoughts and feeling of people.” Secondly, he makes links between knowing about different languages and the impact of this on the understanding of the English language and his future pedagogical practice. He states:

Knowledge of other languages can offer vast and vital insights into not only understanding of other languages and cultures, but also appreciation of our own. And it is this language equal opportunity ethos that I as a teacher will promote in my class. I will try to make students aware of languages and their varieties and get them to understand that although some varieties and languages aren’t as commonly used as others, it is their usage as communication between people that proves their validity.

Erik’s successful application of personal reflection on his own linguistic diversity to his future work as an English subject teacher reveals how important it is for student teachers to begin the process of considering at an early stage the impact of their own linguistic knowledge and understanding on their future pedagogical practice.

When reading Erik’s language autobiography, it is clear that issues related to language, identity and pedagogy are being addressed and that the process of writing this reflective account has continued the developmental process of his own knowledge and understanding. However, it has also caused him to make explicit some of his implicit knowledge and encouraged him to begin to make links between his identity as a language user and his future role as an English teacher. What is going to be examined now is Erik’s knowledge and understanding of language in relation to language as a subject, identity and pedagogy during the PGCE course.

LANGUAGE

During his first interview, Erik demonstrated his explicit knowledge and understanding of language through an account of the dissertation he wrote for his degree. This focussed on the use of language by young black males. He continues to reveal a confidence when discussing his use of language and his attitude towards different varieties of English. He explains his irritation with younger members of his family who want to use him as a role model for talking “properly” and says that the notion of

proper English is outdated. He sees the most important thing as being able to communicate your meaning to whoever you're talking to but that "you may have to change it [your speech] for certain situations." He reinforces this view by reference to the secondary school context where he has witnessed some Asian pupils code-switching and states that their use of language was effective because it was enabling them to communicate with their peers. He believes that "proper" language is about communicating effectively to the selected audience. "They do speak properly because people are able to understand them."

Erik explores how these views have been informed by his previous study of the globalisation of English, which gave him an awareness that "It's quite sad that certain languages are actually becoming more and more extinct." He seems to understand the powerful effects of language loss but also how globalisation contributes to possible views that "...English is the only way and Standard English is the only way, the British version of English is the only way." He regrets what he defines as the streamlining of language and welcomes "...the tangent off the avenue".

Erik expresses a real interest in many aspects of the Language Teacher Education Programme and identifies how working with the Modern Languages student teachers in the session, which explored the structure of language, was extremely useful. He describes how most English student teachers have not learnt much grammar in school and how his own limited knowledge came from a study of French and his work at university. Working with student teachers, who knew about language structures and could articulate this knowledge (the Modern Languages student teachers), showed him how such an approach to language study would be invaluable to his future work as a teacher. It also developed the knowledge and understanding of the English student teacher group. "We hardly knew anything and for us it was like learning afresh." However, he also recognises that this learning was successful because it was building on implicit knowledge and making it explicit. "We just kind of knew it was that because we'd used it all our lives." He also says how being aware of the structure of other languages "...helps build up the knowledge of your first language...and enables the English language to be viewed more objectively....Because we have it everyday...we don't really appreciate it for what it is."

In his second interview, Erik was able to articulate more fully the benefits of working with Modern Languages as part of a learning community. He realises that even though his degree was in language, his knowledge about language was of a different nature to the Modern Languages student teachers:

They knew a lot of languages....Some of them knew four to five languages....Those that didn't have English as their first language, they were able to identify... certain bits of grammar...that English people just couldn't.

He explains how, because of his previous study of the English language, he "was a bit more clued in" but realises that "...Modern Languages ...they definitely have a lot more to offer."

At this point it is evident that Erik's knowledge and understanding of language has impacted on his understanding of the subject English and the relationship of language to this. He believes any study of language must be broader than the study of the English

language: “A broader study... and maybe a different time [on the curriculum] to look at different parts of the worlds and discuss the languages there.” A study of language must include a study of a range of languages “not so they learn other languages, but so they’re aware of other languages...how they developed.” Ultimately, such a study would have enormous benefits for the English curriculum; it would lead to an increased understanding of the English language and to valuing the way it works as a language.

During the third interview, Erik is able to synthesise his definition of English as a subject, and it is interesting how language is still the determining factor in his definition. In considering what makes English, English, he states: “Just the use of language...looking at language...how language works... [teaching and learning] through language...reading, writing, speaking...it is just English.” His ideas about what might constitute a language curriculum in school still focus on the study of linguistic diversity and a range of languages from around the world. However, he adds that it would be essential to include the study of any languages spoken by the pupils in the school. In this way, he is identifying how school context must partly inform the curriculum. This belief is explored further in his identification of how an individual teacher’s narrow definition of language might define the curriculum. This he recognises as limiting, particularly if it resulted in language study focussing solely on the English language. “But there must be some variation to it.”

He has also reflected further on working with Modern Languages student teachers and clearly recognises the gains from the Language Teacher Education Programme and the value of a learning community which includes personal knowledge and understanding of a range of languages: “It was just nice to be in an environment where you had other languages being spoken around and people shared whatever their languages.”

Erik’s knowledge of and understanding about language has not only informed his work on the Language Teacher Education Programme and developed his confidence when working with Modern Languages student teachers; it has also informed his views on the teaching of language in secondary schools. However, before pedagogical issues are examined it is necessary to look at the area of identity, as it is an aspect of being a language-user which impacts profoundly on Erik’s pedagogical understandings.

IDENTITY

During the first interview, Erik uses the notion of wanting to be “comfortable” with his use of language. He explains that he is not comfortable with using the Jamaican `patois` part of his heritage, how when he used it in Jamaica he was spotted as a fraud. Even when others around him use this language variation, he chooses not to. This includes when he visits his grandmother, who uses it all the time and lives near him. “When I go and see my gran...she’ll use it all the time, but it’s not something that I really take on...I just don’t feel comfortable with me using it.” He states that this language variation is not part of his identity, and even though he can understand it, he does not see a necessity to speak it. He recognises this as being an unusual position to take and that most people would chose to use it “as an enhancement of their ability”.

This notion of being “comfortable” also enters into his reflections on his use of language whilst at university. Speaking about his North London accent and dialect, he

reflects how the study of language variation and being with students who also speak different languages enables him to accept his own variation. “It’s just the way I choose to speak...and I feel comfortable.” However, he does also state that, even though he recognises his accent and dialect, people he encounters are often surprised that it is not as “strong” as they expect. He asserts that a stereotype exists of what people who live in a particular area of North London speak like and that to outsiders he doesn’t completely conform to it. “Now sometimes people are shocked to hear that I’ve lived in... for the majority of my life...people...are ...pigeonholed into speaking a certain way.”

He explains how when out with friends he will often change the use of his language and include a range of dialects and his discourse will become more “free-flowing”. He applies his ability to change his language use according to context to his first teaching placement, where he witnessed Asian pupils code-switching in the playground depending on their audience. For Erik, it is the notion of context that is important here and not the fact that the pupils were not speaking in Standard English.

During his second interview, Erik explores the issue around language and identity by referring to problems that could possibly have occurred when he “bantered” with pupils. He recognised that on one level this “banter” enables him to develop a relationship with the pupils, but on another level he was “letting down” his professional guard. “I join in their banter, but once I’ve done that I let my professional guard down.” He goes on to identify a situation which occurred during his first teaching placement when pupils with a knowledge of Jamaica “Patois” made a link with him and began to speak using this variation

And they started talking in my dialogue and I laughed and she was saying, “Why, don’t you understand it?” I said, “Yeah, like I understand it.” And she was talking and out of nowhere I found myself exchanging banter with her, so it was good to have it, to have it there as a knowledge of the resource.

This incident shows how radically his perception of his own identity as a language user has been affected by his experience of being on teaching placement. He also reveals how, since his first interview where he reflected on his use of language, he has changed the way he speaks with his grandmother; he is using Jamaican “Patois” more. “I find myself slipping into it now...I don’t use it all the time but when I’m around my gran it gets used.” He explains how this experience makes him feel different, but he recognises how much it gives his grandmother pleasure. “I think it humours her...it’s like...I’m still trying to keep in touch.”

This marks a radical shift in Erik’s position in relation to his language use. He is more able to incorporate the Jamaican “Patois” of his grandmother into his own linguistic repertoire and recognises the value of having the knowledge and understanding of this language variation. “I’ve got access to it and knowledge of it. It’s nice to have that and if I want to use it or demonstrate it, then I can.” This integration of his linguistic identity will also become part of his teacher identity, and he states that he will use it both as a resource and a way of “bridging the gap” with a pupil.

At the third interview, Erik reinforces the ways in which he will be able to use his linguistic diversity within his teaching and the shifts that have occurred in his own

recognition of this diversity. He also makes explicit how the production of a language autobiography at the beginning of the PGCE course focussed his attention again on linguistic matters, and how, now he has completed both his teaching placements, he recognises the value in student teachers engaging in such a reflection. “When you get into a school environment you...see what kind of sense that it makes to actually be aware of how you speak and what kind of advantages that it can give you.”

He goes on to say that, before the Language Teacher Education Programme and seeing its application to the secondary school context, he had never really thought his linguistic diversity would be of benefit to him and now he realises that it is.

It is a really, really good resource...[It] can be the difference between a teacher that is really liked and kids [sic] want to come to and...I’m able to relate to them and talk to them...that certain kind of warmth.

Erik views using his own identity as a language user as integral to his future role as an English teacher. What will be examined next is the development of Erik’s beliefs in relation to language and pedagogy.

PEDAGOGY

In the interview, which took place before Erik had begun his first teaching placement, there are explicit references to his future pedagogy, and he uses his own experiences of learning to develop his ideas. He reflects on his degree at university which contained a focus on linguistic diversity and openly applies this to the secondary school context. “I’ll tell any student that there is no shame in the way that you speak.” However he does recognise this way of speaking as a choice and that “as an English teacher...you do have to teach them formal language.” What he is stating here is a pedagogical approach which values linguistic diversity but which also gives knowledge of and access to variety. “Standard English ...you can do this ...[but] there should be more [time] allocated to other varieties of language.”

This philosophy infuses Erik’s understanding of language status and how there exists the potential for teachers to deal with language variety in a biased way. He uses the examples of his cousins who, in an informal context, play around with language and use language which is beyond his understanding. He welcomes such variety but knows from personal experience that some teachers would regard it as “gibberish”. He sees this as extremely negative, a “...kind of putting them down and kind of placing their identities on a lower level.” He describes how he would reinforce the idea of language variety with his pupils by using contemporary texts such as song lyrics that would show them how non-standard usage has an audience and is publishable. He wants to show his pupils that this use of language is after all a “right way”. Additionally, he would chose a range of authors to study and again ensure that linguistic diversity was a key principle in his selection for pupils to study. He speaks of using young contemporary authors and from this point engaging the pupils with “Dickens...and Shakespeare”.

Erik also describes the effects of the Language Teacher Education Programme on his beginning ideas about pedagogy. Like a number of student teachers, he identifies the “Learning in an Unfamiliar Language” session as being “really effective”. He found it

very valuable to be put into the role of a pupil who didn't understand the language in the classroom and he was able to identify the need for teachers to "adjust the work" to enable pupils with different languages to learn in English. Additionally, Erik was made explicitly aware from working with Modern Languages student teachers during the Language Teacher Education Programme of the importance of grammar to language study and perceives his role as a teacher to "reinforce that in schools".

Towards the end of this interview, Erik is attempting an understanding of what a pedagogical approach might be in a situation where pupils, who are not very familiar with the English language, are having to learn aspects of the English language according to government documentation (DfEE, 2001). He sees his role as teacher as making sense of such a situation by standing outside of it. "You'd have to try and really work hard to try and get the two to match in a sense."

Implicit in Erik's second interview, which took place after he had completed his first teaching placement, is his articulation of how he will use his own identity as a language user to support his work as a teacher. As mentioned in the "Identity" section, he cites his own language being a resource and goes on to say: "I think there's a lot of stuff that teachers know...acquired over the years, that they can use a teachers ... and I think that [his language] is something that I could use." However, he has not used his first teaching placement as an opportunity to develop the beginning teaching strategies he articulated during his first interview. His pedagogical approaches appear at this point to have been limited, but he is aware of this and states how this issue will be addressed in the curriculum scheme of work he is writing for formal assessment. He describes how he will be asking pupils to adapt a scene from *The Merchant of Venice* into a contemporary form of language and, if possible, into different languages as well. This work will be dramatised and he hopes pupils will have more "understanding [of] the meaning of their language" but also the language of Shakespeare's play.

He continues to show how the Language Teacher Education Programme impacted upon his awareness of pupils who may have difficulties accessing the language used in the lesson. He says that before the Language Teacher Education Programme he may have overlooked such pupils but, having experienced what it is like to have difficulty understanding the lesson which was given in Turkish at the university, this would not happen now. He also describes how he would use the language knowledge of pupils in his class to develop the language knowledge of less confident pupils. This, for him, is a direct consequence of the session in the university where he worked with a Modern Languages student teacher to talk about grammar. He states how, in his classroom, he will use pupils in his class with a good grasp of grammar, either in English or a different first language, to support those who are less confident "...so maybe, if I could get them to work with them and show them, maybe that's an even better way."

This pedagogical transfer from the experiences of the Language Teacher Education session and working with Modern Languages student teachers also fuelled Erik's interest in the Modern Languages curriculum. He observed a German lesson whilst on his teaching placement and recognised how many areas of study between English and Modern Languages are the same, but the approaches can be different. In the subject of Modern Languages, he identifies a strong focus on grammar and a lack of time to "work with a lot of books". He also found himself wanting the communication which

was being taught in the German lesson to be applied to a context. For him, there was no evidence of the language being learned unless the pupils could use it in a conversation.

He got them to repeat...then to write....He kept giving them work....Towards the end he did let them have...conversations and they exchanged dialect and they learned that they could, so in that sense they grasped it....

Erik's ideas about the content of a language curriculum in a secondary school have already been explored in the "Language" section, but during this second interview his personal theory of language being "a broader study...a different time to look at different parts of the world and discuss the languages there" is further developed. He believes the study of languages other than English enables a fuller understanding of the English language and that there should be "more linguistics working at school". He sees the study of the English language needing more value and that studying a range of languages might achieve this. "People would actually value English and ...take time to ...learn the grammar."

In the third and final interview, Erik continues to identify the personal benefits of the Language Teacher Education Programme to his development as a teacher. He describes the session where the English student teachers and the Modern Languages student teachers discussed their subject teaching and compared similarities and differences in pedagogical approaches. He reinforces the focus that Modern languages teachers have on grammar and cites teaching strategies that they identify as being useful to him as an English teacher.

...Their starters are much more...grammatical than English starters....They had lots of different techniques; they had a spelling shootout thing ...stuff that I would never have thought of. So it was nice to share ideas like that.

He also identifies that he had teaching strategies to offer to the Modern Languages student teachers related to the use of drama and role play. "I gave a lot more kind of drammatological approaches." However, what is important is the belief that "if you speak to other people from different subjects and get different ideas...it's just like ...extra knowledge and extra ideas."

It is in this interview that Erik explores the idea of how a teacher's individual perception of language might affect the construction of a curriculum "...because how the teachers might perceive language would be their way and expect to do it their way." This informs his understanding that it is important for English student teachers to have the opportunity to reflect on individual language use. It enables the process of being aware to inform personal understandings about pedagogical decisions. Certainly with Erik, this personal reflection was very informative as it enabled him to realise how he might use his own language as a teaching resource, particularly his own knowledge and understanding of diversity. "I never really thought it would be of any benefit to me at all. It is a really, really, really good resource."

Erik also refines his understanding of a language curriculum to include not just the broad brief of " [work] units in languages from different parts of the world" but "the main languages that are spoken in the school". He goes on to suggest a teaching approach where pupils could research a language from a different part of the world and present their findings to the rest of the class. This he believes would spark off interest.

“The more they learn maybe they [will] want to learn other languages...lots of them don’t seem really interested in other languages at all.”

Erik ends this interview with a huge expression of confidence that has been gained throughout his postgraduate year. He has realised that reflecting on and developing his identity as a language-user, and his personal knowledge and understanding of language as a subject, have enabled him to begin to work with language as part of the English curriculum in a way which will both enhance and extend pupils’ knowledge and understanding of diversity. “As long as it [English] meets what it has to meet, you can take it anywhere that you really want to take it. That’s something I’m going to look forward to doing.”

CONCLUSION

This pen portrait of one English student teacher is a good example of how shifts in personal attitude can occur in the areas of personal language use, language as a subject and its relationship with the subject English, and language pedagogy. As illustrated, these shifts in attitude resulted from this student teacher’s engagement with a Language Teacher Education Programme which focuses on linguistic diversity and uses the pedagogical methods of personal reflection and cross subject dialogue between English and Modern Languages student teachers.

What is possible to observe through this detailed study is the development of one student teacher’s personal understandings and beliefs about the possible role of language teaching and learning in an English classroom. This set of personal understandings has been forged through the PGCE course and it is particularly interesting to observe the impact of personal language use and identity on the teacher role and then the impact of teacher role on personal language use and identity. It suggests that for future English teachers to begin to develop an approach to working with language as part of the English curriculum, consideration must be given to an individual’s fundamental personal relationship with language and the implications this might have for future pedagogy. As Erik observed, “When you get into a school environment you...see what kind of sense that it makes to actually be aware of how you speak and what kind of advantages that it can give you.”

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