

# Turning experience into expertise: How can we continue developing as English language teachers?

WARWICK

APPLIED LINGUISTICS



**Jason Anderson, Dipika Gode,  
Shekhar Khomne, Raju Lingala,  
Kuheli Mukherjee, Nurjahan Naik  
Khwaja, Vinayadhar Raju  
Prathikantam, Manjusha Sagrolikar  
and Gajanan Tayade**

**for British Council India**

**11<sup>th</sup> May, 2022**

This project is supported by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (grants ES/P000771/1 & ES/T502054/1)



# Intended objectives

- to raise our awareness about teacher expertise, why it is important and how it develops
- to learn about some of the features and practices of expert Indian teachers of English
- to get useful ideas for our own professional development that will help us to become expert teachers



# Teacher expertise research

- Started in the 1980s in the USA: Gaea Leinhardt and David Berliner were early researchers (see Berliner, 2004)
- Simple research design:



**Find expert teachers**



**Study aspects of their cognition, teaching, personalities or professionalism**



**Share findings for teacher education and curriculum development**



**Recommendations based on expertise studies are feasible, culturally appropriate and sustainable**

# Teacher expertise research

- Started in the 1980s in the USA: Gaea Leinhardt and David Berliner were early researchers (see Berliner, 2004)
- Simple research design:

Find expert teachers



Study aspects of their cognition, teaching, professionalism



Share findings for teacher education and curriculum development



Recommendations based on expertise studies are feasible, culturally appropriate and sustainable

But what do you mean by 'expert teachers'?



# How do you find expert teachers?



## Prerequisite criteria

1. Sufficient basic qualification (e.g. BEd. in India)
2. Enough time for expertise to develop (over 5 years)

## Indicators of expertise

1. Teacher educator status (alongside permanent job)
2. High student achievement (e.g. exam scores)
3. Receipt of teaching award(s)
4. Commitment to own professional development
5. Recommendation by others (e.g. inspectors, head teachers, etc.)

See Palmer et al. (2005)



# The missing link in teacher expertise research

- There is a strong bias towards higher-income contexts.
- 59% of all teacher expertise studies conducted in USA; 14% in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, remainder in W. Europe.
- Only 1 prior study conducted in India (Toraskar, 2015).
- We do not have a clear vision of Indian teacher expertise.
- No culturally appropriate model for trainee teachers to follow!



# How I defined expertise

- Need to ensure it's context-sensitive:

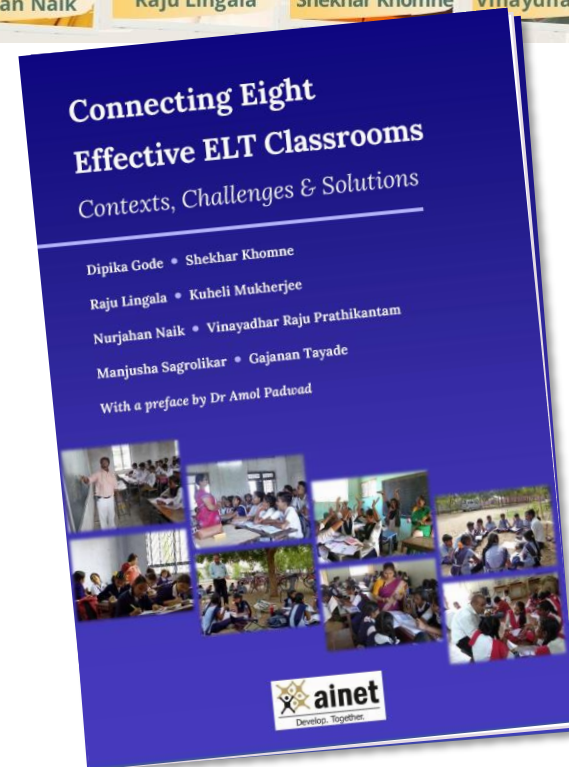
“Teacher expertise is an enacted amalgam of learnt, context-specific competencies (i.e., embodied knowledge, skills and awareness) that is valued within an educational community as a source of appropriate practice for others to learn from.”

(Anderson, 2021, p. 44)



# My research in India

- 8 participant teachers and 3 state contexts (Maharashtra, Telangana, West Bengal)
- Each met at least 5 indicators of expertise
- The study was participatory: The teachers all contributed to the design and products, and waived anonymity
- They wrote a book together to ensure their voice was represented in the project (see Gode et al., 2021):
- [https://www.theainet.net/connecting\\_eight\\_effective\\_ELt\\_classrooms.pdf](https://www.theainet.net/connecting_eight_effective_ELt_classrooms.pdf)
- Thanks to AINET and EFL University Hyderabad for supporting the project.







## 8. Bringing the best out of our learners

*Kuheli Mukherjee*

### 1. My context and challenges

#### My Context

'Creeng-creeng-creeng!' the phone goes on ringing. I open my eyes and pick up the phone. A happy and childish voice says 'Ma'am I just submitted my assignment. Have you received it?' Oh, what time is it? A look at the bedside watch confirms it is just 6 a.m. in the morning and yes, that is how most of my days start during Covid induced lockdown... This was one of my 7th graders completing the task I had assigned on a social media group of my school students the evening before. Well, I have been teaching English as a second language (ESL) in a well-known government run Higher Secondary school in Kolkata for around three decades. My school, with a history of

— 59 —

*Kuheli Mukherjee*

development but the fact remains that even as researcher I find it difficult to record my reflections regularly and systematically due to time constraints. Still I do scribble thoughts or reflective notes in a diary on a regular basis.

### 2. My Teaching

#### My Beliefs

My own experience of learning English has played a vital role in developing my beliefs about learning a second or a foreign language. Studying in a vernacular medium school, my interest in English grew because of the attitude of my English teacher. She was always encouraging us to use English notwithstanding the mistakes we made. She would be recasting my sentences with an affectionate smile that was reassuring and confidence boosting. So from the first day as a teacher I felt I should try to make my class interesting to my learners and try to be someone whom learners are not afraid of. Secondly, I always believed that learning a language means being able to use that language in speaking as well as writing. So enabling my learners to use English in their practical life was my objective. Since childhood I was a voracious reader of literature in Bangla, my mother tongue, and English also. I would always keep a dictionary handy to understand difficult words while reading anything in English. I strongly believed in the effectiveness of such extensive reading on the language learning of my students. Later, my training in TESOL along with my long experience as a teacher and in-service teacher trainer helped me realize that these beliefs have played a significant role in making me the teacher I am.

#### Curriculum coverage and my planning

The mandatory pre-service teacher education course taught me how to plan lessons to facilitate language learning. However, while teaching in school I hardly have time for meticulous planning. Nevertheless, I have realized that if I did not have overall planning to cover the syllabus, it would be difficult to achieve curriculum objectives for my students. Since we have to follow a prescribed syllabus for each grade, at the beginning of the term I make a plan for how much of the syllabus I would cover and what learning outcomes I should be targeting. I do not believe in merely covering the syllabus, but in attaining expected learning outcomes of my learners. So it might happen that I do not complete teaching all the lessons in the prescribed text with equal emphasis. Rather, I would focus on developing skill-specific language

— 62 —

# Key findings – analysis of commonalities

- **Cognition:** Well developed integrated knowledge base, incl. PCK esp. of learners; high levels of English language proficiency; extensive reflection.
- **Beliefs (in):** *Building learner self-confidence*; engaging learners; *ensuring understanding of lesson content*; constructivism; balancing learning needs with exam preparation; *teaching multilingually*.
- **Interpersonal:** Positive relationships of trust and respect; creating *safe*, inclusive, supportive learning environments; high learner engagement → low levels of off-task behaviour.
- **Pedagogy:** Balanced between learner-independent and teacher-led activities; whole-class interactive teaching; regular collaborative learning and individual seatwork; active monitoring; differentiated support; *language-inclusive, translingual practices*.
- **Personal attributes:** Passion for profession; enjoyment of work; care for learners; self-confident; autonomous; *resilient*
- **Professionalism...**

(Anderson, 2021, 2022)

# Key findings – analysis of difference

Biggest areas of difference: teaching and languaging practices:

- Participants' teaching practices varied clinally with regard to two key factors: their **Conception of Subject** (how they understand what "English" is) and their **Degree of Control** (of behaviour, schemes of work, and discourse) (cf. Bernstein, 2000).
- Participants' use of learners' other languages in English classroom varied from 11% to 85%, but all were inclusive of their learners' other languages (see Anderson, 2022).



*"Experts, like other humans, are not all alike."  
(Berliner, 2004, p. 203)*

# How expert **Indian** teachers develop

## Professionalism of expert Indian teachers

- Dedication and hard work
- Continuously striving to improve (lifelong learning)
- Interest in CPD and higher qualifications
- Collaborate frequently and widely with colleagues (e.g. through teacher associations)
- Help others, as mentor, teacher educator, local CoP leader
- Challenge oneself (e.g. experimenting, trying out new ideas)
- Reflect critically on one's own practice
- Seek feedback from others
- Underpinned by 'care' for their learners as primary evaluators



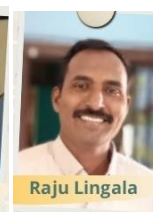
(Anderson, 2021)



# Four breakout rooms: Four developmental pathways

Which of the following would you like to learn more about?

- Breakout Room 1 – Doing and mentoring teacher action research **Manjusha and Vinay**
- Breakout Room 2 – Getting involved in teacher associations **Dipika and Nurjahan**
- Breakout Room 3 – Working as a district/state teacher trainer **Gajanan and Shekhar**
- Breakout Room 4 – Participating in overseas scholarship opportunities **Kuheli and Raju**
- Please choose your room.
- Each presentation will last 20 minutes, including questions.





# Questions, resources and links

## Resources

Gode et al. (2021). Connecting eight effective ELT classrooms. AINET:

[https://www.theainet.net/connecting\\_eight\\_effective\\_ELT\\_classrooms.pdf](https://www.theainet.net/connecting_eight_effective_ELT_classrooms.pdf)

Anderson (2022). Learning from Indian teacher expertise.

University of Warwick:

[https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/people/anderson/learning\\_from\\_indian\\_teacher\\_expertise\\_anderson\\_2022\\_uni\\_of\\_warwick.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/people/anderson/learning_from_indian_teacher_expertise_anderson_2022_uni_of_warwick.pdf)

## References

Anderson, J. (2021). Eight expert Indian teachers of English: A participatory comparative case study of teacher expertise in the Global South. [Doctoral diss., University of Warwick]. WRAP.

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/159940/>

Anderson, J. (2022). The translanguaging practices of expert Indian teachers of English and their learners. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2045300>

Berliner, D. C. (2004). Describing the behavior and documenting the accomplishments of expert teachers. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 24(3), 200–212.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467604265535>

Palmer, D. J., Burdenski, T. K., Jr., & Gonzales, M. (2005). Identifying teacher expertise: An examination of researchers' decision making. *Educational Psychologist*, 40(1), 13–25.

[https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep4001\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep4001_2)

Toraskar, H. B. (2015). A sociocultural analysis of English language teaching expertise in Pune, India. [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Hong Kong] The HKU Scholars Hub.

<http://hdl.handle.net/10722/221032>

