Chapter 3
Literature Review: Methodological Survey

Interests in interpretive content lead the researcher to search for methods that will be appropriate for study of that content (Erickson, 1986:120).

Overview

The methodological survey is devoted to a discussion of research approaches to the study of the conference. It begins with the theoretical base of recent literature on supervision, both in the mainstream and TESOL domains. It then moves to a survey of the research-based literature, until the mid-eighties, embracing both quantitative and more recently qualitative paradigms. The next section focuses on one particular qualitative approach - discourse analysis; places it within its own historical context; demonstrates its methodological appropriateness to the present inquiry; and reports the findings of a pilot study. The following section justifies pragmatics as an appropriate approach to discourse in the light of the purpose of the study. A link is then forged between the substantive focus (critical feedback), defined in Ch. 2, and the preferred research approach (pragmatics/discourse analysis). The chapter ends with an overview of the remaining thesis.

3.1 Clinical supervision - an overview: the first 25 years

3.1.1 Theory-based writing on supervision

No one reading and writing about supervision today would wager that this is a field comprehensively explored and universally understood. On the contrary, it is a complex area characterised by controversy and conflict, and suffused, as has been shown, with its own dilemmas of practice. Indeed, supervision might be termed a 'wicked' problem (Rittel & Melvin, 1974:272), which, as distinct from problems in the natural sciences, lacks clear, definitive boundaries; and like other societal problems, defies explicit and absolute resolution. In Geertz' words (1973:29):

> Progress is marked less by perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debate. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other.

Supervision theory is of concern here insofar as it helps illuminate an understanding of the supervisory conference. In this regard, modern thinking has been dominated by the clinical supervision movement, which had its beginnings in the work of Cogan, Goldhammer and Anderson at Harvard in the late fifties. Early publications (Goldhammer et al. 1980; Cogan, 1973) gave impetus to the movement which since then has generated innumerable other works. It is impossible today to consider the theory of supervision without recognising the immense creativity and academic interest that clinical supervision has generated in the last thirty years. However, issues about the origins of the movement and its timely arrival in the USA (Berman & Usery, 1966; Frymier, 1973; Garland, 1982; McNeil, 1971) are well beyond the scope of this study. Its importance might be summarised in the point that historically, it broke with the inspectional 'hire-or-fire' concept of supervision (Ryan, 1971:556); and sought to replace it with a new, analytical and co-operative approach, involving, crucially, direct feedback to the teacher on issues important to the teacher (Sullivan, 1980). This notwithstanding, it would be naive to suggest that all contemporary practices of supervision are non-evaluative. Wallace offers a useful distinction in which he discerns between general, administrative, out-of-class supervisory activities; and clinical supervision as 'what goes on inside the classroom' (1991a:108).

The concern of the present study with the theory of clinical supervision relates to what it highlights of the SD. According to the theory, the conference provides an opportunity for both parties to review the slice of reality that they have shared through the observed lesson (Smyth, 1984a). In distilling this experience, they act as reflexive spectators (Beasley, 1981), with the supervisor serving rather as an art critic (Eisner 1982), providing a language through which experience might be interpreted and appreciated. The overall process aim is the teacher's 'cognitive incubation' (Goldhammer, 1969:205), achieved through dialogue.

3.1.2 Clinical supervision and TESOL teacher education

It is probably true to say that any instance of clinical supervision is a particular interpretation of the original model, for each instance 'personalises' uniquely (Smyth, 1984a:1). It is helpful here, in view of the data base with which this study is concerned, to consider qualitatively supervision conventions within Adult TESOL teacher preparation courses and in-service

practices. Certainly in the domain of EFL short-course preparation, practice differs so far from the original clinical model (Cogan, 1973; Goldhammer et al. 1980) that some might well dispute its connection: in-class data collection practices are often value-laden and based on imported protocols; the relationship is rarely collegial, usually displaying a marked status differential; a formal pre-observation conference involving planning and negotiation is usually lacking; the tenor of the conference is shamelessly evaluative; it is often 'one-shot, lacking historical and contextual depth (Kilbourn, 1984); the initiative for the cycle is usually external and rarely voluntary (McCoombe, 1984).

In two important ways, however, Adult TESOL practice calls on the clinical model. Firstly, it is staged and systematic. While perhaps not conforming to the precise steps in the supervision cycle - e.g. Cogan's (1973) eight phases; Goldhammer's (1969) five stages; Acheson and Gall's (1987) three steps - the basic events of the cycle are all present: establishing a relationship with the teacher; observing classroom teaching; analysing classroom scenarios; and holding a conference (Garman, 1990). The second factor, and the one crucial to this study, is the emphasis on 'face-to-faceness'. This face element appears in many terms of reference relating to the conference and its lead-up (Cogan 1973; Goldhammer et al. 1980; Smyth, 1984a; Smyth, 1986). Denham, for example, refers to 'those efforts to improve instruction that involve in-class and face-to-face interactive relationships between teachers and supervisors (1977:33).

In descriptions of clinical supervision in the mainstream (Cogan, 1973; Goldhammer et al. 1980; Turney et al. 1990), and in TESOL (Gaies & Bowers, 1990), certain key characteristics of the conference overlap with the type of supervision characteristic of Australian Adult TESOL courses: the relationship between supervisor and trainee is close and face-to-face; the agenda is actual classroom events in which they have both participated: one as observer, the other as teacher; the concern is with the teacher's teaching; the purpose is teacher growth and improved instruction; the supervision is individual-based with the strengths, weaknesses and needs of the teacher driving the conference; the shared observations generate a relationship characterised by intensity and intimacy.

3.1.3 Critical summary

While the literature on supervision has, without question, been inspirational, the domain of supervision continues to be perceived as education's 'step-child' (Waite 1992c:1). Three key points about the first twenty-five years of writing warrant comment here, each of which has

a significance for the present study. These relate to the issues of relevance, limitation and 'groundedness', which to some extent overlap with each other.

3.1.3.1 Relevance

As most supervision scholars (with some notable exceptions e.g. Smyth, Retallick, Turney) live and work in USA, much of the literature is North-American in orientation. Scholarly work on supervision is largely based on and addressed to American conditions and attitudes (although it is apparently fallacious to consider that educational systems across the USA are even remotely homogenous). One example of the American 'flavour' is that much of the literature addresses what appears to be specially designated 'out-of-school', district-based supervisors or in-school staff with an exclusively supervisory function, perhaps administrative or clinical, or both. In some writing (Waite, 1990a) a distinction is drawn between district supervision for established teachers; and university supervision (along with a co-operating school teacher) for student teachers.

Australian models, on the other hand, derive from the British prototype and have evolved in different directions. A notable feature here, as at the time of writing, is the absence of any systematic supervision of teaching as a standard or integral part of school procedures, although in the past there existed a tradition of inspectional supervision linked to certification and promotion. Given the historical differences, it is not surprising that the relevance of American studies has limitations for Australian models (Robinson, 1984). In the field of TESOL teacher education especially, the British influence has been overwhelming, largely through the hegemony of the Royal Society of the Arts (Certificate and Diploma Training Courses) and the proliferation of the British Council (Wajnryb, 1990a). It is only within the last decade that Australian TESOL has begun to assert its independence and 'come of age' (Wajnryb, 1990a).

3.1.3.2 Limitation

Much of what is written about supervision has a restricted focus. For example, many of the works extolling the virtues of clinical supervision portray supervision from the supervisors' point of view. Waite, for example, claims that teachers have been 'marginalised' by the mainstream literature (1993:20). Countering this trend, he shifts the focus to the teacher as the key player: in a study seeking out the teacher's voice, he uncovers a range of roles constructed by teachers in talk (Waite, 1992c).

Secondly, the concerns are often end-focussed - looking at teachers' and supervisors' reactions at the end of the cycle. The view is rarely within the process (McCoombe,1984). Thirdly, much of the writing is presented from the perspective of outsiders and therefore reflects their emphases, rather than those of participants. This is reflected, too, in the research methods traditionally favoured[1]. Fourthly, the supervisory conference has been investigated almost exclusively by educators (with some anthropologists), but few linguists have turned their disciplinary lens to this area. Thus, we have the interesting situation that while supervision is largely achieved through a communication process, those whose expertise lies in language have rarely taken a searching look at it. In addition, the literature is limited in that being individual, it is 'lacking an on-going line of research' (Sullivan, 1980:15). Lastly, the literature is limited in being ungrounded in close analyses of real behaviour. Robinson makes the point that the concentration is 'on the philosophy implicit in clinical supervision rather than the specifics of the practice' (1984:7). The point is a valid one as a reading of the literature shows. For example, Garman's (1986a) indictment of what she calls conference 'posturing' - inauthentic, ritualistic, face-saving tendencies - is ungrounded in discourse studies. A similar lack is perceived in Goldhammer et al. (1980), who identified 'semantic confusion and ambiguity of language as two ploys a teacher or supervisor might use to create an illusion of agreement' (cited by Robinson, 1984:26). This limitation is pursued further below.

3.1.3.3 'Ungroundedness'

While the writing of Cogan (1973) and Goldhammer et al. (1980) emerged from an intensive experimentation with and experience of clinical supervision (Garman, 1990), not all writing on supervision has been similarly grounded, a feature that has been decried in many quarters (Alfonso, 1977; Denham, 1977; Newman, 1980; Sullivan, 1980). Indeed, a prevailing feature of the literature is the prevalence of non-research-based 'position' statements[2].

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[1] The advent of qualitative methods into this domain may herald a change here, with recent studies presented from participants' perspectives: e.g. case studies by McCoombe (1984) and Goodfellow (1993); ethnomethodology by Terrell et al. 1986; Waite's ethnography, 1990b; Juska's personal narrative (1991). This issue is pursued further in this chapter.

[2] The literature is replete with these (Alfonso et al. 1984; Abrell, 1974; Axtmann, 1981; Cowie, 1981; Davis 1982; Dunkleberger 1987; Ellard, 1983; Hogan, 1983; Hoover, O'Shea & Carroll, 1988; Hull & Baker, 1984; Jones, 1980; Kindsvatter & Wilen, 1981; Morris, 1980; Niemeyer & Moon, 1988; Nias, 1976; Price, 1980; Shrigley & Walker, 1981; Tinning, 1983; Tinning, 1984; Toppins, 1983; Warger & Aldinger, 1984).

The fact that the practice of supervision has been largely governed by ungrounded theory is manifested in a number of features. Firstly, an orientation towards idealised behaviour has dominated, even while a range of diverse perspectives has been construed. There is a 'technicist-instrumental' supervision-as-tool approach (Acheson & Gall, 1987; Hunter, 1980; Moshe & Purpel, 1972), which many (Garman, 1986a; Garman, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1976; Sergiovanni, 1984; Smyth, 1989b) view as an unfortunately reductionist approach to 'intellectual capital' (Sergiovanni, 1976:21). In addition, there is the 'developmental' view (Cohn & Gellman, 1988; Glickman, 1981); the 'scientific' approach (McNeil, 1982); the 'artistic' approach (Eisner, 1982); and the 'collaborative-hermeneutic' approach (Garman, 1990), of which multiple variations exist: Mercer and Abbott's (1989) 'partnership' model (a UK counterpart to the USA-based clinical model); and Mansfield's (1986) version, involving teacher and supervisor jointly teaching and observing. Then there are those theorists who advocate a blend or skills-mix (Alfonso, Firth & Neville, 1984; Pfeiffer & Dunlap, 1982; Turney et al. 1990). Lastly and more recently, there is the 'critical' clinical perspective, led by Smyth (1984a; 1984b; 1991a; 1991c) and Retallick (1990a;1990b) which sees in clinical supervision not the delivery of services (Fried, 1980), but the seeds and means of professional empowerment. Here Habermas' 'ideal speech situation' (1979; 1984) is one of symmetry and equality in dialogue (Retallick, 1986). A critical, anti-clinical view is that posited by St Maurice who argues that clinical supervision is a technology that 'subordinates human relations to effective instruction' (1987:248). The proliferation of writing on supervision is what Garman calls its 'intellectual tradition' (1990:201), which she contends has maintained its vitality through the ongoing discourse, despite some abuse and attempts at reification. Waite refers to this as 'theoretical exegesis' (1992a:350). Garman's view (1990) is not unlike Shulman's notion of researcher dialogue as 'a Great Conversation' (1986:9).

To complement the plethora of 'faith', 'belief' or 'wish' statements, there has been little evidence to support any particular supervisory model (Sellars et al. 1988). That which exists is by no means blessed with consensus. As an example, the research into the effectiveness of the clinical model is often conflicting: Reavis' review (1978) is cautious; McCoombe's (1984) points to favourable reactions; yet Pavan's (1983) survey uncovered little that was conclusive. Many of the alleged positive advantages of one model or practice, as yet, await substantiation: for example, Glickman's contention (1985) that a 'positive disequilibrium' (Grimmet & Crehan, 1987:19) is to be gained when the supervising teacher is one stage of development ahead of the supervisee. In the words of Housego and Grimmett, 'there is a need... to test the feasibility of (a given) perspective in the crucible of empirical practice' (1983:334).

It has been argued, too, that as supervision is more a matter of 'managing messes' (Schon, 1983:16), a theoretical perspective is limited as a guide to practice. Sergiovanni argues that as supervision is characterised by uncertainty and complexity, it is not responsive to theory which is logical, linear and rationale (1986). In addition, a theoretical perspective does not take account of the way practitioners learn (Hopkins, 1985; Sergiovanni, 1984), as Sergiovanni (1985) shows in his graphic and contrasting representations of theoretical and practical 'mindscapes'.

A focus on idealised behaviour has meant that much of the theory is characterised by admonition and prescription, as borne out by this sample from Sullivan (1980:13):

> Both teacher and supervisor are to be open, flexible individuals who are careful in making judgements. Each is to contribute toward a productive relationship that benefits both.

As well, there is a thread of 'adulation' (Alfonso & Firth, 1990:182). Perhaps uncharitably, Waite writes that the field has had 'its share of proselytizers, idols, gods and demi-gods, sacred texts, rituals, priests and priestesses' (1990:30). This means, too, that a gulf yawns between what is offered as ideal and what is indeed practised; between instructional plan and curriculum-in-use; between intended and 'enacted' curriculum (Erickson, 1986:129). Cohn contrasts the model as 'pure' and the reality as 'routinised variation' (1981:26). Increasingly, the significance of this hiatus is emerging as researchers urge that credence be granted to the ways in which a model is shaped and given meaning by its users (Zeichner & Liston, 1985; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1982).

The value of the early studies was limited in that being prescription-bound, they reflected an *a priori* bias (Firth, 1976); and were often shaped to reflect these biases (Alfonso & Firth, 1990). There was a neglect of inquiries grounded in the descriptive study of actual conference behaviour, leading to Denham's plea (1977) for a new, data-based theory of supervision. She claims that current clinical supervision theory is premised on assumptions and characterised by procedures that remain empirically untested. Others, too, have found the research base of supervision to be wanting (Fullan & Connelly, 1987; McNeil, 1982; Weller, 1971; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1982). Christensen began her paper with the following words: 'the major problem presented here is the almost non-existent research base for supervisory processes in student teaching' (1988:275). In sum, the studies have been criticised for being 'idiosyncratic'

(Firth, 1976:331); 'fractionated' (Moshe & Purpel, 1972:52); untidy and fragmented (Alfonso & Firth, 1990); methodologically flawed (Reavis, 1978; Sullivan, 1980); and subservient to outside interests (Alfonso & Firth, 1990).

Linked to this are laments, such as that by Cyphert, deploring the limited impact of research on the professional decision-making and practice of teacher educators: 'dogma and conviction are frequently substituted for evidence' (1977:162). Comparably, in a parallel field, investigators into the language of therapy (Labov & Fanshel, 1997) called for studies that were intended to help train newcomers to the profession to be attentive to the nature of what actually happens in professional practice. A decade later, Kagan and Albertson stated that 'empirical researchers have yet to focus on the content of specific supervisory meetings' (1987:49).

The situation in language education is comparable. A recent review of foreign language, including TESOL, teacher education (Bernhardt & Hammadou, 1987) found an absence of a data-driven research base: practice was premised almost entirely on experts' theory-driven perceptions and in-house anecdotal, experiential sources. There are some signs of change, as the notion of action research takes hold (Nunan, 1989a; McDonough & McDonough, 1990; Ramani, 1987); and as methods courses and texts are offered in post-graduate courses (Nunan, 1992a); and in the recent publication of a research data base in language teacher education (Daniel, 1992). Yet the research is still largely oriented to idiosyncratic concerns and based on captive samples (Gairns, 1991/2).

If supervisory feedback can be termed a 'wicked problem', then the process of formulating the problem is integral to the conception of a solution (Rittel & Webber, 1974:272). Certainly, a compounding difficulty is the complex relationship between researchers and the teacher educational curriculum (Lanier & Little, 1986). This itself is rendered more complicated by issues such as 'intellectual imperialism' (Harris, 1979); the discounting of practitioners' experiential wisdom (Smyth, 1989b); whether teachers ought to be providers or consumers of research (Widdowson, 1984; Van Manen, 1977); the issue of ownership (Gore, 1991; Noddings, 1986) and whether perhaps research can serve dual interests (Clandinin, 1989; Niemeyer & Moon, 1986; Noddings, 1986). Despite these complicating factors, the message that emerges from the literature is that we need to keep our understanding fairly well grounded in the realities of daily lived practice.

3.2 Review of research approaches: traditional and changing paradigms.

3.2.1 The empirical-analytical orientation toward inquiry and its impact on supervision

Before 1980, research in teacher education was dominated by an empirical-analytical orientation notable for two features: its methodology and its perceived relationship with practice (Tisher & Wideen, 1990). The methodology, drawn from the pure sciences, and sometimes referred to as the agricultural-botany paradigm (Parlett & Hamilton, 1977), was characterised by hypothesis formulation and verification; the identification and manipulation of variables; the assurance of scientific experimental process; and the presentation of evidence governed by criteria of objectivity, validity and reliability. The perceived aim was the construction of theory: the purpose was to guide practice by the specification of process linked to predicted outcomes (Jacknicke & Rowell, 1987; Tisher & Wideen, 1990). The taken-for-grantedness of the quantitative paradigm is highlighted by Apple who contends that the outlook is 'ingrained in our consciousness' to the point of being a value, not merely a means of gaining knowledge (1975, cited by Jacknicke & Rowell, 1987:64). A similar point about implicit assumptions in research approach is made by Van Manen (1977) and Popkewitz (1984). Certainly, the orientation represents one particular way of looking at the world and at knowledge.

The empirical-analytical research paradigm in supervision spawned a quest for a behavioural science of supervision, which like quests in pure science research was assumed to be 'discoverable' (Retallick, 1986). Typically, such studies isolated variables from their contexts - presumed to be data contaminants - and manipulated them toward a pre-defined outcome (Copeland, 1980b; Copeland & Atkinson, 1978; Blumberg & Weber, 1968; Isherwood 1983; Martin, Isherwood & Rapagna, 1978; Reavis, 1978; Sanders & Merritt, 1974; Thorlacius, 1980). Retallick criticises such studies for being cast within the empirical-analytical tradition: 'construed as context-free, they have little meaning' (1986:88); and hence do not advance the understanding of supervision. Citing Rose (1984), he argues that reductionism requires a 'disassembling', with an implicit assumption that the component parts are 'in some way more fundamental than the wholes they compose' (Retallick, 1986:107). His critique includes such works as Hunter (1980) and Acheson and Gall (1987), which reduce supervision to a technical instrumentality - a reification through models and behavioural templates.

The dominance of the empirical-analytical orientation may be seen, too, in the prominence given to surveys. Indeed, Dussault's review of the literature over a four-decade period concluded that it had 'consisted largely of surveys of opinions and beliefs' (1970:56)[1], a tendency which continues well beyond the end of the period surveyed by Dussault (Danaher, Elliott & Marland, 1982; Duck & Cunningham, 1985; Heichberger & Young, 1985; McIntyre & Norris, 1980; Reed, 1990; Pullen & Sistrunk, 1990). Copeland and Atkinson (1978), arguing that results from survey research are equivocal and limited, attempt to remedy such procedural weaknesses in their own survey of response to supervisory style. Perlberg and Theodore's (1975) criticism goes beyond local methodological flaws to find fault with the research approach - manifested largely in the use of a priori category systems and frequency measures - an approach, they argue, that pays dearly for its high statistical reliability (1975:203):

> Tiny, sometimes critical incidents may be discounted, frequency itself is not an adequate measure of psychological significance and rarely are the patterns and sets of patterns which constitute a supervisor's unique style explored.

Blumberg, too, whose own research on perceptions of supervision involved surveys, observations and self-reports, moved toward a different position where he came 'to realise... that perhaps motivated by our search for rigour, some of the intensely human perspectives on interpersonal, group and organisational life get left behind' (1976:286).

Studies using imported category systems, reviewed earlier, are consonant with the prescriptive link that characterises the relationship between research and practice in the empirical-analytical paradigm. Kilbourn (1986) argues that because the 'categorical attitude' is oriented towards quantification, it ignores situational factors pertinent to issues of quality and worth. Like others before him, Kilbourn (1986) links research modality with world-view. Garman (1990), too, contends that imported observation systems impose a rationalist, scientist orientation on events; in contrast, within a hermeneutic approach, a supervisory record of teaching events is perceived as, at best, an approximation, yielding only hypotheses, and requiring a dynamic process of text interpretation. Erickson (1986) makes the point that a presupposition about power underpins nomothetic science; and that this is manifested in notions of prediction and control, infusing the top-down relationship between researchers and their audiences.

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[1] These were reviewed substantively in Ch. 2.

3.2.2 The paradigm shift and the impact on supervision

By the start of the 1980s, when the research base in teacher education was viewed as 'a valid field of study in its own right' (Tisher & Wideen, 1990:6), a growing disquiet was developing with the dominant research paradigm. An alternative orientation toward inquiry, borrowed from the social sciences, increasingly became accepted as a valid means for the pursuit of understanding within educational research, as reflected in the first-time dedication of a chapter to interpretive research in the 1986 edition of the Handbook of Research on Teaching (Wittrock, 1986). Tisher and Wideen term this a 'movement towards pluralism' (1990:6) during which time debate about methodology became a prominent and ongoing issue, spawning a widening range of methodologies and broadening the scope of research. With it came attitudinal change and new ways of valuing knowledge. The 'situational-interpretive' orientation sees human beings as context-embedded - 'influencing and being influenced by their surroundings' (Jacknicke & Rowell 1987:65). Van Manen refers to the 'disclosure of human lifeworlds', and the rendering visible of 'meaning structures' embedded within them (1977:215). No longer is there one objective reality, awaiting discovery through one way of knowing; but multiple realities, each determined by the complexities of subjective experience. Reality is deemed to be 'socially constructed', and the goal of research is insight through the clarifying and making explicit of personally-constructed meaning (Jacknicke & Rowell, 1987:65-66). The research is exploratory, inductive and open-ended, with an emphasis on process, not outcomes (Merriam, 1991). The understanding of situations in and for their own uniqueness is an end in itself (Patton, 1985). Indeed, Erickson argues that 'the chief usefulness of interpretive research... may be its challenge to the notion that certain truths can be found' (1986:158). Potentially, 'bottom-up' research can change the distribution of power in educational institutions and shift the relationship between researchers and service providers (Erickson, 1986). Certainly, through the face-to-face contact characteristic of qualitative research, a very different working relationship is forged between those researching and those being researched (Noddings, 1986) - something Goffman touched on in commenting on the 'democracy implied in narration' (1981:152).

Debate rages as to nomenclature. Tabachnick (1989), not unlike Erickson (1986), frowns on the labels 'quantitative' and 'qualitative', for the former erroneously suggests a lack of interest in quality, the latter a lack of interest in quantity. In addition, while some writers view the two paradigms as fundamentally epistemologically opposed (Barrow, 1988), others see them as compatibly complementary (Miles & Huberman, 1984), while still others (Erickson, 1986;

Shulman, 1986) argue that the differences are substantive rather than methodological, based on implicit conceptions, perspectives and purposes. Shulman contends that if positivist research is employed to guide policy, then that of interpretive researchers is employed 'to criticise and question, to vex with precision' (1986:31). A different perspective is offered by Lanier and Little (1986) who hold that the issue is centrally ethical and epistemological, being a question of defining an appropriate role for researchers within their relationship to practitioners and knowledge. Roberts (1990) makes the point about discourse analysis that because it is as yet embryonic, there is an opportunity to guard equally against the drawbacks of 'scientism' (Sergiovanni, 1989) and those of 'blitzkreig ethnography' (Rist, 1980).

Within supervision literature, echoes of the same disquiet may be heard. This is not surprising, for, as Waite points out, research and writing on research have reflected both methodologically and ideologically 'the times which gave them birth' (i.p.:2). In the last decade, many writers have lamented the dearth of attention given to the study of real, grounded, naturalistic, contextualised supervisory conferences; and there have been many calls for a new orientation (Tisher & Wideen, 1990). Sergiovanni (1985) views the need as a practical (as opposed to a theoretical) 'mindscape'. Because 'supervision will not improve very much by doing better that which we are now doing' (1985:5), a view shared by Starratt (1992), he argues for a new way of perceiving it, suggesting that the traditional (theoretical) perspective seeks an abstract notion of truth, whereas 'change occurs when events of the world make sense to people'(1985:7). This rejection of 'brute' data in favour of 'sense' data (Sergiovanni, 1985) parallels the larger paradigm shift in educational research (Gordon, 1992). There is a perception that like the research on teaching, that on supervision is flawed by the persistent assumption that behaviour can 'somehow be reduced to a scalar value that can be indicated by a frequency' (Duncan & Biddle, 1974:353). Nolan and Huber (1989) end their review with a call for empirical inquiry from the practitioner's perspective. Similarly, Holland ends hers with a plea for qualitative approaches that might explore 'the interpretative aspects of the supervisory conference' (1988:25). Waite points to the lack of qualitative studies of the supervision conference, especially those that focus on 'the orientations participants demonstrate through their conduct and the meanings (they) attach to them' (1990b:29-30). His own study (1990b) aims to rectify some of the imbalance. It is not without some irony that Pajak and Glickman end their experimentally designed study of supervisory interaction with a call for research that is sensitive to 'personal meanings and social contexts' (1989:103). Even more ironic, however, is Pajak and Seyfath's (1983) thesis: borrowing from Gestalt psychology and management theory, they claim, and rightly so, that supervision has been dominated by the imperative

thrust of 'should' rather than by impulses drawn from the supervisor's inner world, what they call 'authentic supervision'. There are two ironies here. One is that an article addressed to the negative influence of 'should' actually continues the prescriptive tradition by ending with its own implicit 'should'. The second is that the new imperative called 'authentic' is not itself based on a descriptive analysis of 'real' language. In by-passing a close examination of supervisory language, it ignores some of the most basic elements of authentic face-to-face interaction (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Goffman, 1967; Hymes, 1962).

A crucial element in the search for a new way of perceiving supervision is the primacy of context; and through this, the recognition of heterogeneity and complexity as the hallmarks of classroom experience. Learning milieux are considered to be intrinsically diverse (Parlett & Hamilton, 1977). Tisher and Wideen comment that conclusions from qualitative studies reviewed since about 1985 recommend that researchers continue to 'delve in an even more fine-grained manner' into the experiences of participants (1990:176). Waite argues that the unreflective implementation of supervisory models is symptomatic of a destructive 'one size fits all' mind set (1992b:322). Elsewhere, he aligns research method with research purpose, arguing that because conferences are 'nested within their contexts', rather than discrete, unconnected events, they are not 'amenable to scientific analysis' and sense can only be made of them through qualitative methodologies (1992a:351). Indeed, he argues, the technico-rational perspective errs by putting 'out of focus' the framing contexts in which learning happens (1993:2). For Waite, the dominance of research attention on supervisory verbal behaviour as categorised by coding systems, derives from a misperception of the conference as unbounded. He argues for 'an emic perspective', one that seeks to understand 'the subject's own meaning system' (1992a:350). For this to happen, the conference must be viewed as 'reflexively embedded within numerous contexts, any of which are available as a resource to conference participants' (i.p.:6). This 'new supervision' is much removed from the homomorphic orientation of supervision-as-control (Gordon, 1992).

Other voices, too, are disparaging of prior research for its neglect of context (Doyle, 1985; Garman, 1990; Gaskell, 1975; Hersh, Hull, & Leighton, 1982; Smyth, 1989a; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1982; Zeichner, 1986). Tabachnick (1989) distinguishes 'naturalistic' from 'abstracted social research' and cogently describes the contextual and temporal embedment of social events. Commenting on the two major paradigms, Brown and Gilman pointedly remark that 'both offer the analyst rich opportunities to be deceived, but the naturalist is not likely, at least, to under-estimate the complexity of the topic' (1989:208).

3.2.3 A qualitative approach to the study of supervision

While the qualitative approach has had acceptance since the early 1980s (Tisher & Wideen, 1990), the paradigm shift has been slower to impact on supervision (Waite, 1992a). Nevertheless, a methodological review of recent supervision literature reveals an increasing orientation towards the importance of context, as seen, for example, in naturalistic case studies and participant observations; and towards participants' meanings, as seen in the use of reflective journals and personal narrative as data sources and the use of ethnographic and discourse instruments. In reviewing the literature, Waite makes the important point that quantitative and qualitative studies in supervision have had different foci or areas of concern: studies on the conference have tended to be theoretical or quantitative; while the recent qualitative trend has been with the holistic nature of the supervisory process as seen by one of the participants, but not with conferences, their contexts or meanings (1990b). This has left a gap, which his research aimed to remedy, for a qualitative approach to the conference and its context. The present study, falling within the same broad methodological/substantive classification - i.e. qualitative/conference-focussed - aims to build on Waite's qualitative insights into conference processes.

The richness of qualitative studies is often achieved through a blend of methods and data sources (Merriam, 1991). The broad terms 'qualitative' and 'interpretive' often serve inclusively as a rubric under which a range of different types of studies are grouped. For example, Shulman's (1987) case study of a mature-age student teacher uses an ethnographic approach involving participant observation, interviews, document and materials analysis, audio and video taping. Waite's (1990b) qualitative study of conferencing combines an ethnographic perspective with techniques of CA to throw light on cultural and linguistic processes.

Overview

The next section will survey qualitative contributions to the understanding of supervision, beginning with a broad category, headed 'interpretive studies' and then narrowing to cover studies that focus on 'context' (case studies, participant observation); 'participant meanings' (journaling; narrative); and discourse studies. These categories are certainly not exclusive: the very nature of qualitative research makes such a sub-division more an artificial analytic imposition rather than an empirical reality, useful primarily for the convenience it affords a survey purpose.

3.2.3.1 Interpretive studies

Interpretive studies, employing a range of data collection resources, focus on the human and the particular through which they seek insight and interpretation. Such research is grounded in the belief that 'no social phenomenon... is wholly idiosyncratic, nor is any overarching social pattern uncontingent' (Miles & Huberman, 1986:40). In this section, the purpose is not to survey exhaustively, but rather selectively to show how such studies embed supervision firmly within their 'nesting' context. For example, Dufficy's (1991) case study of the developing, reflective orientation of eight Sydney Graduate Diploma pre-service ESOL teachers focuses on the subjects' struggle to 'engage' meaningfully within a practicum context of intermeshing behavioural, cognitive, psychological, social and political concerns. Here, the researcher in the interactive role of participant observer, sought to problematise the curriculum, both through the pedagogy - described as 'interactive' and 'scrutinised' - and through the type of supervision - described as 'interactive' and 'symmetrical' (1991:19).

Another study is Mansfield's (1986) non-participant observation of supervisors in conference with teachers, which was the second stage of a larger investigation of pre-service education. The earlier study (Terrell et al. 1986) had used a non-participant, ethnomethodological approach to avoid a reliance on participant testimony and to gain an intimacy that Zimpher et al. (1980) had noted was needed in research into supervision. Mansfield (1986) focussed on pedagogy and found that supervisors were constrained by the lack of a clear pedagogical framework, as well as by the interpersonal 'difficulties of presenting students with valid critical information in an emotionally charged situation' (1986:259). The latter finding corroborates the widely-held view of the conference as a pressured and confronting experience.

Another study worthy of mention here is Roberts' (1991b) investigation of supervisors-in-training. Using a range of data sources, including supervisor notes, conference tapes and reflective self-reports, Roberts captures supervisors' startling discovery that failed instructional outcomes - i.e. teacher non-improvement - was often caused by supervisory ineffectiveness. The study analysed and quantified central aspects of this supervisory failure, and in so doing, paints a detailed portrait of the conferencing skill.

Other examples of interpretive research that contribute to the understanding of supervision are: Calderhead's (1988) case study of impediments to learning in the intersection of competing elements in field experience; Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann's (1987) case study of student

teaching as a potential occasion for teacher education; Grimmett and Housego's (1983) study of supervisors' conceptual functioning, which has been criticised by Retallick (1986) for attempting to abstract variables from their social and historical context; Housego and Boldt's (1985) 'critical incident' analysis of participants' experience of the practicum; Johnston's (1992) exploration of the construct of 'image' as a way of understanding how student teachers acquire practical knowledge; Kagan and Albertson's (1987) multi-perspective content analysis of supervisory conferences over time; Le Clercq's (1993) study of supervision in the early childhood educational context; Lucas & True's (1991) study of 'dilemmas' in supervision in the context of program goals of self-directed, reflective practice; and Rovegno's (1992) ecological study of the development of pedagogical content knowledge in a field-based methods course.

3.2.3.2 Context-sensitive studies

Researchers drawn to insight and interpretation rather than hypothesis verification are attracted to case study for its properties, summarised by Merriam (1991) as being particularistic, descriptive, heuristic and inductive. Cronbach calls case study research 'interpretation in context' (1975:123). Yin (1984) highlights its suitability to situations where the variables within a phenomenon are incapable of separation from their context. Within Waite's 'nesting' interpretation of supervisory processes, the context-sensitive nature of case study renders it highly suitable to inquiries in supervision, being particularly valuable for the rich attention to detail perceived from an insider perspective. Robinson's case study (1984), for example, focuses on the nature of change from the viewpoint of a supervisor who traces the path of events after introducing clinical supervision to a colleague. McCoombe's case study (1984) sees life from the other side of the classroom, as it were, detailing the supervisee perspective, in all its fragility. Gebhard and Ueda-Motonaga (1992) use a case study approach to describe an experience of non-directive supervisory interaction, notable for the personal construction of meaning achieved by the teacher. Waite's case study (i.p.) combines CA and ethnography to explore an instance of teacher resistance to supervision, showing that even within the 'communicative hegemony' (Briggs, 1986:90) of the supervisory conference, the teacher is not powerless. Other case studies in recent years have continued to enrich understanding[1].

[1] These include: Bolin, 1988; Feiman-Nemser and Buchman, 1985; Fitzclarence, 1983; Gitlin et al. 1982; Goodman, 1985; Grimmet and Crehan, 1990; Kilbourn, 1984; McFaul and Cooper, 1984; Moon, Niemeyer and Simmons, 1988; Sellars, 1981; Shulman, 1987; Zahorik, 1988; Zimpher et al. 1980.

That case studies are particularly sensitive to context is shown in the great care Robinson (1984) takes in gaining 'entry' (into the room) and 'entree' (into the process)[1]; and in the awareness he shows of the impact of 'historical context' (1984:5) on one's understanding of events. Case studies in supervision provide an excellent instance of how interpretive research begins with detailed particulars in a quest for concrete (rather than abstract) universals (Erickson, 1986). Pointedly, Wolcott's pithy response to the question 'but what can we learn from a single case?' is 'all we can!' (1988:16).

Like case study, participant observation offers a valuable window on process. The relationship between observer and observed is a complex one; and might best be considered a point on a continuum (Junker, 1960; Merriam, 1991), partly influenced by the overt/covert nature of activities pursued (Guba & Lincoln, 1983). Spradley (1979) describes the participant observer as a person with two purposes - engagement and observation - a polarity that Merriam terms 'schizophrenic' (1991:94). Gans captures the essentially marginal status of the role in describing the characteristic 'emotional handcuffs' and 'internal tug of war' (1982:54). While participant observation is usually combined with other means of collecting data, in some studies it serves as the major collection instrument (as in studies by Gaskell, 1975; Richardson-Koehler, 1988; Shulman, 1987). Richardson-Koehler's (1988) study of student teaching exposed highly complex barriers to effective supervision by university supervisors, largely due to the influence of co-operating teachers on process and interaction within the practicum. It is the richness of detail pertaining to these interactions that makes this study particularly valuable. So too are the participant observation field notes gathered by Shulman (1987) as she tracked the process by which her subject, Debbie, responded to challenges in field experience. Gaskell's (1975) study uses participant observation to expose the context-embedded, institution-specific orientation of student teaching experiences, which are often masked by undifferentiated treatments; and is harnessed by Zeichner (1986) in pointing to the importance of context as an area typically neglected in supervision studies.

3.2.3.3 Participants' meanings

Erickson highlights, as a feature of interpretive research,'the immediate and local meanings of actions as defined from the actors' point of view' (1986:119). The investigative spotlight is on 'the slippery phenomena of everyday interaction and its connection, through the medium of

[1] c.f. Goffman's (1986) 'natural' and 'social' frameworks.

subjective meaning, with the wider social world' (Erickson, 1986:120). In recent years, research in supervision has witnessed increasing efforts expended through qualitative means to access and highlight participants' subjective meanings. It is no accident that this coincides with the recognition of teaching as essentially a personal activity (Eisner, 1983; Zahorik, 1992). Munro, for example, writes that 'personal lives are not shed like coats' as people enter classrooms (1991:80); and Zeichner (1992) argues the case for wisdom derived from reflecting on one's *own* experience. Robinson accents the need for such studies when he observes that 'considerable discrepancies can be expected between what teachers think they are doing, what they say they are doing, and what they appear to a supervisor to be doing' (1984:9). Two examples of such modalities, often employed together (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), are journaling and narrative inquiry. Each is notable for giving primacy less to events *per se* as much to participants' sense-making of events. In this valuing of subjective realities, these modalities are not unrelated to the critical incident method (Housego & Boldt, 1985).

Journaling is an excellent research means of accessing the introspective world at the heart of subjective meaning; and in the context of recent research interest in invisible internal processes, it is a highly appropriate choice. First person accounts - variously termed journals, diaries or logs - may be maintained by learners, student teachers and participant observers; and can furnish the researcher with a rich and candid source of qualitative data which is analysed for 'recurring patterns or salient events' (Bailey, 1990:215). Within second language research, diary studies already form a veritable research genre (Allwright, 1983; Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Bailey, 1985; Brinton & Holten, 1991; Chaudron, 1988; Gaies, 1983; Long, 1983; Van Lier, 1988). This is separate from, but not unrelated to, the purpose journals may serve within teacher education and development programs (Bailey, 1990; Brinton, 1994; Nunan, 1992a; Porter, Goldstein, Leatherman & Conrad, 1990) where they may provide a valuable adjunct in the construction of 'a personal vision of teaching' (R. Smith, 1993:4); in the fostering of reflectivity (Bartlett, 1990); and as a hedge against 'quiescent conformity' (R. Smith, 1993:5).

A good example of journaling is Bolin's (1988) case study of a pre-service teacher, Lou. This investigation of teacher thinking rests on a solid base of primary qualitative data derived from journals maintained by the subject through early field experience. Its value lies in the way in which the journals demonstrate how the subject responded to experiential ambiguities: these presented him with 'dissonance' which, critically, broke down the taken-for-grantedness of his previous belief and value system, triggering a process of 'demythologising' (Garman,

1986b:11) which culminates in insight and growth. The value of the journal is in its tracking of this process.

Other studies employ journaling as a means of exposing such phenomena as supervisor thinking (Niemeyer & Moon, 1987; Rust, 1988); supervisor judgements (Niemeyer & Moon, 1986); the role of personal experience in neophyte induction (Shulman, 1987); and student teacher thinking (Borko, Lalik & Tomchin, 1987). Notwithstanding the inevitable criticisms faced by journaling, like other introspective methods using 'unstable data' (Garman, 1986b; Rust, 1988) - in respect to threats to external and internal validity (Nunan, 1992a) - there is no question that it offers a valuable glimpse into an inner world that would otherwise perhaps remain unaccessed.

Like journaling, with which it is closely linked, narrative is increasingly being deployed as a means of inquiry to provide insight into participants' sense-making processes. The fact that 'we live our lives through texts' (Heilbrun, 1988, cited by Connelly & Clandinin, 1990:2), is beginning to be applied through research to educational settings, as Connelly and Claninin (1990:2) write:

> Education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are story-tellers and characters in their own and others' lives.

Narrative inquiry is a relatively new instrument of interpretive research, despite a long history in other disciplines (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), and a recognised place in social science and history, where it has achieved recognition through what Northrup Frye called 'explanation by em*plot*ment' (cited by Holland, 1989:62, emphasis added). Given its newness in educational research, most writers include some discussion of the method and its relevance to their substantive concerns (Clandinin, 1989; Connelly & Claninin, 1990; Goodfellow, 1993; Holland, 1989). Holland refers to the 'narrative alchemy' (1989:63) through which participants make sense of their own experience. She contends that the 'compelling' and 'memorable' qualities of narrative - the fact that stories 'touch' and potentially 'transform' - make it a powerful vehicle for communication among educators (1989:63). For Holland, the power lies in the subjective 'construals of meaning' (1989:63) by which experience is personally distilled, given voice and conveyed, through an unmediated discourse, quite distinct from the more traditional, research discourse of 'technical rationality' (1989:62). Holland's (1989) narrative

inquiry into supervision gives primacy to the particular, subjective and context-dependent nature of the supervision experience; and uncovers a very deep sense of frustration and alienation within supervisory practices (see also App. 3).

Holland (1989) is not alone. Juska's narrative article (1991) exposes the teacher's perspective of the experience of supervision: it takes the reader along a passionate path of indignant frustration as the teacher is subjected to a myopic and non-'ecological' supervisory experience. Like the subjects of Holland's narrative inquiry, Juska gives credence to the quiet rage and surface compliance that supervision can invoke in supervisees. Goodfellow (1993) used narrative inquiry to investigate what it means to be a co-operating teacher: 'the telling and retelling of teachers' stories offered the opportunity to use narrative as a means through which teachers' beliefs and values could be explored' (1993:5). Blumberg's (1976) analysis of supervisory relations emerged through the rich source of participants' 'fantasy data': subjects were asked to fantasise about their supervisor's house. While the data here are elicited, imagined and symbolic, rather than 'storied' in experience, the links to the narrative method are clear. Stories feature, too, as a data source in Kremer-Hayon's (1991) qualitative study of supervisors' perspectives on self-growth in which a comparative analysis was conducted of expert and novice supervisor's relayed professional stories. Clandinin's (1989) case study of the novice teacher, Stewart's 'developing rhythm' very appropriately utilised the subject's reflective reconstruction of his narrative of experience as a means of accessing the path of personal shift. Like the student teachers of Johnston's (1992) study, Stewart experiences dilemmas because the practical expression of his image of teaching conflicted with the rhythmic cycle of school time. Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann's (1987) study included subjects' stories of 'prideful occasions' as a way of highlighting what is learned and valued in practice teaching. Other researchers, too, have represented teachers' thinking in terms of conflicts experienced: these are variously termed 'dilemmas', 'conflicts', 'tensions', and 'knots' (Freeman, 1991:443 and references contained therein; Kremer-Hayon, 1987). Generally, narrative studies all employ a 'bottom-up', subjectively posited, context-rich approach to supervision which demonstrates insights into processes that lay outside the focus of many previous, quantitatively-oriented studies.

3.2.3.4 Discourse studies

Until very recently, studies of conference interaction have been dominated by the quantitative paradigm. Being unable or unwilling to capture contextual and participant nuance, this

orientation 'runs the risk of reductionism' (Waite, 1990b:16). What is needed, he warrants, is a qualitative approach to conferencing; and it is here that a discourse approach may make a valuable contribution.

A hallmark of qualitative research has been its willingness to blend research tools from other disciplines - notably anthropology, linguistics and sociology - and bring them to bear in the qualitative search for knowledge. In particular, discourse analysis is increasingly perceived and valued as an example of a research method sympathetic to and harmonious with the inner world and lived realities of key participants. Together with the new interest in supervisory thinking and the attraction of discourse as a window on such thinking, it is not surprising to see a new orientation in the research that blends linguistic tools and educational concerns. Tisher and Wideen's review gathers up the conclusions of many recent qualitative studies pointing to the 'need to look more carefully at the interactions or discourse phenomena' integral to supervision settings (1990:176). Certainly it is here that the present study is most closely attuned.

The relevance of discourse analysis as an interpretive tool derives from the defining nature of language within supervision, which, as outlined at the end of Ch. 1, is a vital term of reference within the present study. As stated there, an activity like supervision may be equated with the talk that defines it (Gronn, 1981; Waite, 1992a). Levinson's criterion, by which activities are differentiated along a continuum according to 'the degree to which speech is an integral part' (1979:368) shows that supervision, like a telephone conversation or a lecture, is one of those social activities that belongs to 'a class of verbal exchanges... that are social activities effectively constituted by talk itself' (1983:309). This means that it is not possible to conceive of the activity outside of the language used to achieve it: supervisory feedback *is* supervisory discourse. Goffman also made this point when he differentiated between activities which require verbal interchange, wherein the relevant unit for analysis is the utterance; and those activities where 'non-conversational work' is being done (1981:142) and where physical transactions provide both the meaningful context and unit of analysis.

All the studies surveyed in the following section have three features in common. Firstly, from a substantive point of view, they all relate in some way to supervision, very often to the supervisory conference. Secondly, from a methodological standpoint, they all employ discourse analysis as a research instrument. Thirdly, in terms of intention or purpose, they all approach discourse as a window on the invisible mental processes infusing supervision. In an

attempt to sort the discourse studies logically, a useful first question is 'what discourse is being looked at?' and a related, follow-up question is 'within this discourse, who are the interactants?'

Some studies look directly at the discourse of the conference (Christensen, 1988; O'Neal, 1983); while others are concerned with discourse on discourse: that is, they embody language by people involved in supervision about supervision, often about the conference (Zahorik, 1988); and some incorporate both (Cervi, 1991; Mansfield, 1986). Of the former group, studies which focus directly on the discourse of the conference, the interactants may be the dyads of supervisor-student teacher (Borrie, 1992); or co-operating teacher-student teacher (Fleet, 1993); or a triad of the three parties (O'Neal, 1983). Some studies are pre-service (Dufficy, 1991; Fleet, 1993); others, in-service (Grimmett & Crehan, 1990; San Miguel & Stevenson, 1992). Of the studies where the discourse directly examined is discourse about the conference (rather than the actual discourse of the conference), the channel of discourse may vary. It may be spoken, as in the case of interviews between researcher and teacher or supervisor (Cervi, 1991); or written, as in the case of the researcher analysing diaries or journals of teachers and/or supervisors (Rust, 1988).

In regard to 'what is being looked at in the discourse', there seem to be three broad domains of interest, or foci, with which discourse studies are concerned. One is a concern with the experiential domain - the message content or information that is being imparted. The second is a concern with the organisation of the discourse, where managerial or structural-mechanical elements of the discourse are considered potential sources of insight on processes. The third is a functional category, in which the researcher is looking at the speech acts associated with conveyed messages, or what purpose the language is being used for, or what the language achieves. Of course, this division is itself artificial, because often studies combine a number of concerns, such as Fleet (1993) who combines a structural and functional interest; and Zeichner et al. (1988) whose statistically-aggregated study embraces both functional and experiential elements.

In the first (experiential) domain, data are typically subjected to a content analysis to determine the central issues, threads, or 'images' (Johnston, 1992). A characteristic example is Kremer-Hayon's (1986) discourse analysis of the 'thinking aloud' of supervisors, conceived in the hope of shedding light from the 'hidden' side of supervision on the more visible aspects of the process. Zahorik (1988) is also interested in the experiential domain: he uses a grounded

theory approach to the analysis of interview data of supervisors' views on their observing-conferring role. Rust (1988) compared what supervisors think about their practice of supervision (gleaned from interviews) with what supervisors conveyed to student teachers (gleaned from supervisors' responses to students' diary entries). Holloway et al. (1989) researched supervision (in counselling) and through a content analysis of conference interactions, established a correlation between a supervisor's theoretical orientation and their supervisory style. Zeichner et al. (1988), whose study is described in greater detail below, formulated six major substantive categories to cover what it is that supervisors talk about; and found that 'procedural' matters dominate conferences at the expense of inquiry-related issues, like objectives and goals. Other discourse studies which focus on the experiential content of supervision are Mansfield (1986), who was concerned with a lack of a clear pedagogical framework in supervision; and Cervi (1991), who was interested in the notion of resistance in pre-service TESOL training.

The second focus area embraces the studies which are concerned with how organisational elements of the discourse may throw light on supervisory processes. Typically, such studies employ techniques borrowed from CA (Sacks, Schegloff & Jackson, 1974) to highlight how language is negotiated through the discourse: issues typically are how turns are negotiated; who raises topics and whether they are sustained; who initiates and who responds; and how talk-time is distributed. A good example is Retallick's (1990b) study which employs CA to demonstrate that the larger power relations of educational hierarchies are reproduced within the hegemony of supervision. He argues that within such asymmetry, learning is subjugated to the distortions of power. Fleet's research (1993) used discourse analysis to investigate the practicum, looking at dyadic conferences between co-operating teachers and student teachers over the period of a practicum; and argued that studies which focus only on the post-lesson conference give a distorted view of talk-time distribution. Borrie's (1992) case study of an institution as a teacher preparation centre, analysed conference interaction using tools from CA and pragmatics to reveal structural elements of discourse control; the schematic structure of the text; and internal turn-taking and topic-raising conventions. Grenfell's (1993) discourse-based study investigates how student teachers contest and resist positioning.

The third group, and the largest, are studies which are concerned with the functional domain - what language is being used for. An important study which signalled the new value given to supervisory mental processes was that by Zeichner et al. (1988) whose concern that program goals may not be filtering down to program practices in teacher education prompted

them to undertake a contrastive analysis of the conference practices of supervisors from two allegedly very different programs, the one traditional-craft oriented; the other, inquiry-oriented. The study generated a typology of 'logical' categories, which are functional in that they name what it is the supervisor's language is doing (e.g. describing, instructing, advising); as well as substantive categories (discussed in Ch.2). The study confirmed the suspicion that the articulation of program goals does not of itself affect the nature of supervisory discourse. Grimmet and Crehan's (1983) investigation into levels of supervisory conceptual thinking involved a functional analysis of what supervisors do within their conferences; and ended with a recommendation for supervisory training to develop supervisors' ability to supervise in a way that promotes greater professional autonomy and responsibility in teachers. Grimmet and Crehan's later study (1990) also used discourse analysis of the conference, this time in a case study context, to show how language may be used to facilitate reflection, or unwittingly, to prevent it. Roberts takes a speech act approach to her discourse analysis studies (1990; 1991a), which fall within the functional class because they look at language from the point of view of purposes intended and achieved. A main focus here is on how language is interpreted by participants in context. Roberts' (1991a) study of risky interactions calls on Brown and Levinson's politeness framework (1978) which is a functional interpretation of social interaction. Interestingly, included in Roberts' data, in her 1990 study, was the case of Barry, from Grimmett and Crehan's (1990) study. Roberts suggests that an important factor in whether or not a teacher takes up a supervisor's suggestion ('request for action') has to do with the teacher's perception of the degree of 'fit' between the articulated suggestion and the teacher's self-perceived ability to enact the solution. Other studies which take a functional approach to the discourse of the conference or of participants' discourse about supervision are: Borrie, 1992; Christensen, 1988; Freeman, 1991; O'Neal, 1983; O'Neal and Edwards, 1983; San Miguel and Stevenson, 1992; and Saunders et al. 1992.

The fact that the categorisation employed here - experiential, structural and functional - is more a matter of the convenience of discussion than a clear-cut, empirical reality is reflected in the overlap of some studies into more than one category, and in the failure of the system to accommodate studies such as those by Waite (1990b; 1992a) which exhibit a firm blend of anthropology-ethnography and CA, a blend of elements he acknowledges (1992c) as derived from Moerman (1988). Participant observation, contextual knowledge gained from a close working knowledge of the participants, as well as 'career history interviews' (Agar, 1986) of the supervisors, combined with CA, give Waite the instrumental tools for an interpretive entry into the participants' discourse. This meaning-embedded-in-context approach to the conference

as 'unbounded' gives Waite's work the richness of thick description, which is the hallmark of ethnography (Geertz, 1973); and allows him eclectically to discuss a range of substantive issues e.g. the role of observational data in the conference, and conference 'focus' (1992a); structural issues e.g. conference phases (1992a); and functional issues e.g. the mitigating process (1992a); frame-breaking and counter-discourse (i.p.).

It has been said that the unique value of a discourse approach is the insight it gives through the provision of a window on language. Given that supervision *is* talk (Waite, 1992a; Gronn, 1981), a window on such talk offers great promise. In the case of Zeichner et al. (1988), examining the discourse of the conference afforded a way of determining whether, at the end of the day, so to speak, progressive thinking in teacher education had made any difference at all. Likewise, Christensen's (1988) study allowed discourse analysis to spell out the differences in the functioning of co-operating teacher and university supervisors. San Miguel and Stevenson's study (1992) allowed discourse to map out the language behaviour of three very different supervisors. Waite's (1933) case study of resistance uses discourse to expose how a teacher subverts the supervisory hegemony of unequal encounter. Roberts' (1991a) analysis of the politeness patterns in novice and expert supervisors' discourse shows how the factor of risk permeates the conference and how different supervisors resolve this in their particular conferences. Such examples as these serve to demonstrate both that discourse is an effective research tool to access the invisible world of supervisory thinking; and that the reality of supervisory process is far more enigmatic than may have been perceived when the empirical-analytical orientation governed the design and conduct of research. Certainly, as Brown and Gilman (1989) wrote of naturalistic studies as a research paradigm, discourse analysts are unlikely to err on the side of simplification and reduction, by under-estimating the complexity of the world into which their interest in language makes them delve.

The present study is functionally oriented in that it is centred on the speech act of criticising and the language patterns that accrue to this function. The study with which the present one is most closely linked is that of Roberts (1991a) who focussed on the speech act of 'requests for action'. These were variously differentiated, according to the degree of threat imposed, on a continuum from an order to an indirect question. The present study is related in that it takes, from within the corpus of supervisory roles and obligations, another important speech act - namely, criticising - and examines it closely. As Roberts is interested in the impact of the supervisor's language on the supervisee in relation to requests for action, so the present investigator is interested in how the delivery of criticism operates, what happens in and around

the criticism, and what this can reveal about the supervisory process. If language is a form of social action, studying the text of such talk allows access into the workings - the beliefs and values - of a speech community (Bazerman & Paradis, 1991; Tracy & Carjuzaa, 1993).

One aspect of Roberts' study (1991a) which while not central to her own concern, serves as the metaphoric trigger for the current investigation. Roberts takes the discourse (App. 4) from the case study of the teacher, Barry, and his supervising principal, Margaret (Grimmett & Crehan, 1989; Grimmett & Crehan, 1990) and re-works it in the terms of her own study - i.e. how Barry responds to Margaret's request for action. She points out that after the critical issue is highlighted (i.e. quiet pupils getting less teacher attention), the supervisor appears apprehensive of the possible impact on the teacher of being negative. The apprehension is carried in mitigating language, of which Roberts (1990:24) writes:

> This has the potential effect of limiting the progress of the discussion, but being motivated to improve his teaching, Barry persisted. He had recognised that a problem existed and he appeared to want help.

Roberts' (1990) analysis of the discourse highlights the danger of mitigation within supervisory discourse (although she herself does not pursue the point): in this case, it was Barry's determination to pursue the issue that drives the discourse forward toward potential resolution. What would have happened, however, if he were more compliant, more concerned about 'scoring', less comfortable in a supervisor's presence, less motivated to understand his own teaching?

While Grimmett and Crehan's discussions (1989;1990) are more concerned with how an opportunity for reflection was forfeited in the conference, what emerges too, and is reinforced by Roberts (1990), is that the act of criticism involves two levels of risk. At the more immediate, visible, palpable level, there is the risk of upsetting the teacher, which was discussed in Ch. 2 as a social or interpersonal constraint on criticism. The first type of risk might be termed a *person* risk, as it threatens the face of the teacher.

The second layer of risk is more subtle, less obvious, more 'subcutaneous,' and, to be unearthed, requires a close discourse analysis. This is the risk of neutralisation, mollification or concealment that is achieved through mitigating language, which is itself evidence in the discourse of the supervisor's perception of the risk embedded in FTA of criticism. This second

category of risk is a *process* risk, as it may subvert the process of supervision from its supposed goal of improved teaching to something less than or different from this.

In 1990, Roberts wrote that her own extensive search of the literature on supervision revealed no comparable application of this discourse method; and the literature search that accompanies the present study confirms that, apart from Roberts' work, no other investigator has taken this path toward a functional interpretation of supervisory language. The present study, therefore, aims to build on Roberts' contribution by focussing on the 'process' risk to supervision as posed by mitigation.

3.3 Discourse Analysis

3.3.1 Background

3.3.1.1 The roots of the interest in discourse

The roots of modern concerns with discourse are multiple and disparate: they span the oceans and call on seminal thinking in the British, American and more recently the Australian traditions. Much can be traced back to the anthropologist Malinowski (1992;1923) who recognised that any full interpretation of text required a knowledge of the context of situation and culture in which that text was embedded. This was taken up by Firth (1957) who argued that language was only meaningful in its social context; and who pleaded that the descriptive process of linguistics 'must begin with the collection of a set of contextually defined homogenous texts, and the aim of explaining how the utterances are meaningful in their contexts' (cited by Coulthard, 1977:1). At the same time, in the USA, Chomsky (1968) foreshadowed trends to come when he differentiated between grammaticality and meaningfulness[1]. Working in the area of speech act theory, the philosopher Austin (1962) was concerned to explore the underlying meaning of utterances whose interpretation went beyond a decoding of surface form. These, he argued, perform social acts and are indivisible from their contexts of action. Austin gave us the notion of the 'illocutionary force' of an utterance - the intended meaning of its speaker.

[1] Witness here Chomsky's famous instance of meaningless well-formedness (or 'linguistic nonsense' Roberts, 1994:137): 'colourless green ideas sleep furiously' (1975:15).

It is not a long step from here to the fashioning of significant notions about discourse coherence. Following Austin's work, Searle's major contribution (1965;1969) was the recognition that the illocutionary force of an utterance could be derived from the listener's interpretation of the utterance. This was the underlying link that determines and drives discourse coherence. The move away from words, clauses and sentences (the surface level of the grammatical code) as supposed units of meaning is now complete. The focus is now on a user's 'communicative competence', a term that Hymes (1972a) used to refer to the rules of use - including but extending well beyond linguistic competence - that a language user knows, invokes and harnesses in the making and interpreting of meaning.

Modern developments of these earlier movements have taken different directions. Neo-Firthians, notably Halliday (1978; 1985) and the systemic-functional school have mapped out the features of the context of situation and shown how they operate as systems of choice for the language user in the making of various types of meaning: ideational, interpersonal and textual (Halliday, 1985). Another strand, conversation analysis, developed from a school of sociology called ethnomethodology (Sacks et al. 1974). Here an effective marriage of linguistic and sociological concerns was sought in microcosmic analyses undertaken to reveal organisational aspects of members' social life. Another strand, critical linguistics, sees language as the major locus of ideology (Candlin, 1987; Fairclough, 1989; Kress, 1985); and aims to unearth, de-naturalise and render visible bases of ideology and power conducted though and reinforced by language. Such studies typically focus not on personal meaning but on institutional or ideological meaning made manifest through social roles. A fourth strand, and the one that frames and steers the present study, is pragmatics. Drawing on philosophical foundations laid in speech act theory came the understanding, central to pragmatics, that meaning is a complex collaborative construct involving speaker intention and listener interpretation, each of which call on inner and social worlds, shared and unshared reservoirs of knowledge, in the intricate co-creation and unlocking of meaning (Brown & Yule, 1983a; Levinson, 1983). Pragmatic meaning is a construct derived from the interface of text and context; and central to pragmatics are theories of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Leech, 1977; Leech, 1983) which seek to account for surface form through an understanding of context. It is to the pragmatic branch of discourse studies that the present study relates.

3.3.1.2 The methodology of discourse analysis

Central to the new interest in discourse is the fact that 'grammaticality is not the point' (Roberts, 1990:5). However, apart from consensus about the non-reliance on surface form as well as a concern with supra-sentential units, as evidenced in terms like 'coherence' and 'cohesion', there is little agreement among linguists, and those in related disciplines who employ linguistic tools, about what constitutes the terms and the central concerns of discourse (Fraser & Nolen, 1981; Hatch 1992; Nunan 1992a; Roberts, 1994). One indication of this is the lack of consensus on the number and types of speech acts in discourse (Coulthard, 1977; Roberts, 1990). Perhaps the fact that discourse studies are relatively young has meant that the metaphoric dust has not yet settled: agreement on basic principles has not yet firmed into a foundation of premises and principles such as those that might be said to grace more traditional linguistic concerns, such as syntax and phonology.

If the frontier of discourse analysis is as yet undecided, so too is the methodology: 'there is no agreed-upon set of analytic procedures for the description of discourse (Hatch, 1992:1). While experimental methodologies have had the advantage of time, which has formalised and conventionalised them to 'an almost recipe-style format' (Potter & Wetherell, 1987:158), approaches to discourse are as yet emergent and embryonic. Hence they are inherently dynamic and perhaps for this reason, elusive. Within this methodological fluidity, one point seems clear: 'the units and processes defined in (discourse) analysis depend on the goals of the study' (Hatch, 1992:1). Halliday makes this point, too, when he links an approach - such as 'instrumental' and 'autonomous' - to one's purpose for studying language: 'this is a question of goals; it is the question of why are you doing it' (1978:36). In Erickson's discussion of 'competing paradigms' in research, primacy is given to the substantive concern from which the issue of method derives.

The purpose that drives the present study is to look into the language of conferring for indications - symptoms and signs - of its fragility, as defined at the end of Ch. 1. The key to understanding processes, Roberts suggests (1990:6) is 'identification of patterns embedded in the discourse'. This suggests that discourse will be 'treated as a potent, action-oriented medium, not a transparent information channel' (Potter & Wetherell, 1987:160). There is a heuristic interplay of form and function: 'how is discourse put together and what is gained by this construction?' (Potter & Wetherell, 1987:160). Discourse analysis here assumes that language is a powerful mediating influence, exerting its influence by virtue of this mediation.

J. Thompson argues cogently that when we look to discourse as a methodology of interpretation, we must bear in mind that discourse itself is already an interpretation (1984:133):

> Events, actions and expressions are constantly interpreted and understood by lay actors in everyday life, who routinely employ interpretative procedures in making sense of themselves and others. To undertake an analysis of discourse is to produce an interpretation of that interpretation, to re-interpret a pre-interpreted domain.

3.3.2 Pilot study

Following a survey of the literature, the decision was taken to approach the research question through a discourse analysis and as a first step, a pilot study was conducted[1].

3.3.2.1 Data analysis and discussion

The recording was transcribed and then analysed for the discoursal features of turns, topics, adjacency pairs and talking time. These features - pertaining to 'the mechanics of discoursing' as opposed to the content of a discourse - point to Goffman's sense of the 'partition between the inside and outside of words' (1981:173). Of concern was: who raises topics? who initiates adjacency pairs?[2] how is talk time distributed? These issues, central to CA, were pursued in order to determine who holds the reins of discoursal power.

As the situation is one of power asymmetry - supervisor as knower/gate-keeper; student as learner/supplicant - it was not an unexpected finding that discoursal power lay in the hands of the supervisor who leads, steers and controls the interaction (App. 5). This finding

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[1] The data derive from a transcription of a supervisory dialogue held between a supervisor and a student teacher in the context of a 16-week, pre-service TESOL teacher preparation program. The trainee was an unqualified teacher with some months' classroom experience. Prior to and during the actual teacher training course, he was teaching at the school where he was being trained. The supervisor is in her early thirties, quite an experienced language teacher, though not very experienced as a supervisor. She had some supervisor preparation, and this has meant that her approach tends to be considered, rather than 'intuitive'. The lesson taught was videoed, as was the subsequent supervisory dialogue.

[2] i.e. sets of contiguous utterances in which the first utterance compels and constrains the second (Garfinkel, 1967; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973, cited by Schegloff, 1988b:109).

corroborates a great deal of other research which has exposed an asymmetrical discourse relation in the supervisory conference[1]. Poynton (1985) and Wolfson and Manes (1980) contend that power in discourse is realised through linguistic choices, with equality being indicated by the degree of reciprocity of such choices: 'the greater the inequality between interactants, the more likely it is that their linguistic behaviour will be non-reciprocal' (Poynton, 1985:79). In the case of the pilot data, the choices were clearly non-reciprocal. Clearly, too, supervisors' control is augmented by their ownership and presentation of data (Waite, 1992b). The conference is premised on data derived from the observed lesson, which is owned by the supervisor and shared out in a linear progression: he or she apportions out information per conference topic, so keeping a tight grip on the reins of discoursal power. Thus it would seem that no matter how 'humanistic' (Abrell, 1974) or 'facilitative' (Dunlap & Goldman, 1991) the facade or even the intention, certain core aspects of supervision appear to be intractable: the student teacher wants the skills and the certification; the supervisor is the institutional gate-keeper (Erickson, 1976) who may allow it to happen or prevent it from happening. The power differential is reflected in, realised through and reinforced by the discourse.

3.3.2.2 Felix culpa

The concerns of CA proved revealing, yet limited: the study indicated that an ethnomethodological approach provided only part of the picture. Primarily, it failed to explain the fact that despite, or alongside, the supervisor's discoursal power, there was an overwhelming impression of linguistic restraint. The impression was rather of one powerful interactant treading cautiously and judiciously, hyper-conscious of the fragility of the situation, and the possible reactions of the other party: there is a pervasive sense of effort expended to avoid offence, a restraint which contrasts markedly with other examples of asymmetrical power in unequal encounters (Candlin, 1987; Fisher & Todd, 1986; Thomas, 1985).

In this sense, the approach turned out to be a felix culpa: indeed, its contribution lay in its exposure of this very tension between discoursal power and linguistic restraint. It emerged that the supervisor had the power to raise and steer topics and initiate adjacency pairs through turns; yet while doing so, she nonetheless *failed to exercise power through the utterance-level*

[1] Such studies include: Acheson and Gall, 1987; Barbour, 1971; Blumberg, 1970; Blumberg, 1976; Christensen, 1988; Fleet, 1993; Garman, 1990; Gordon, 1973; Mansfield, 1986; McInnes, 1968; O'Neal and Edwards 1983; Retallick, 1990b; Roberts, 1991b; Waite, 1992a.

language choices being made. On the contrary, she tiptoed as through a minefield, anxious to avoid offence at every step, alert to the need for co-operation and concord. Thus, assertions are downplayed, mollified or disarmed; suggestions are broached tentatively and diffidently; criticisms are wrapped in layers of linguistic 'cotton wool', often to the point of being nullified. There is an incongruence among juxtaposing elements, even a reflexive 'disqualification' (Bavelas, Black, Chovil & Mullett, 1990b:20) The effect is of 'semantic castration' (Crichton, J. 1992, pers. comm., 7 Oct.).

The tendency to neutralise discoursal power at the utterance level appears especially noticeable at certain key moments in the discourse, where particular, greater-than-usual effort seems to be exerted to maintain harmony. The juxtaposition of such linguistic restraint, in the context of obvious discoursal power, seems to create a tension of competing elements, the cumulative effect of which is to render the language taut and brittle.

The question - who holds the power of turns and topics? - then must be recast in the attempt to discover more about the patterns embedded at the utterance level. Indeed, the challenge now becomes to discover how the restraint operates and what ends it serves. Accordingly, in the attempt to uncover an explanatory configuration of patterns, a speech act analysis of the conference was conducted from the perspective of the roles and obligations of supervisors (Table 1). From this study, emerged the finding that the act of delivering criticism[1] seemed to co-occur with the greatest amount of effort in exercising restraint and maintaining harmony. Thus, the great reward of the pilot study of supervisory discourse was that it exposed the 'criticality' of criticism.

3.3.2.3 Power and restraint

Many have pointed to the power imbalance central to supervision, naming it an issue that must be resolved before progress in supervision is to be made (Smyth, 1991c; Retallick, 1990b). In contrast, Waite's context-sensitive research (1992a) suggests that while power is indubitably an element of the scene, there may be 'variables other than power' (1992a:370) figuring in the equation. Indeed, Waite's data demonstrate two important elements, both of

[1] In this study 'criticising' subsumes both direct acts of criticism, which state negative evaluations; and indirect acts of criticism, which are often mollified through 'requests' 'suggestions' and 'advice'. These latter are indirect because the negative evaluation is not stated but has to be inferred.

Target of threat	FTA	NUMBER	TOTAL
Threats to Hearer's positive face	Negative evaluations	13	13
Threats to Hearer's negative face	Requests	10	19
	Suggestions, Advice	9	

Table 1: Type and number of FTAs in pilot data

which complicate the issue of power beyond the simple issue of who-has-it and who-lacks-it. He shows, firstly, that teachers are not feeble and helpless in the face of supervisory ascendancy. This concurs with Kottkamp's (1982) debunking of the myth of supervisor power. In this analysis, schools have two distinct 'zones of hegemony' (1982:2), an administrative one, from which supervisors derive their power; and an instructional one, controlled by teachers, in which supervisors have little sway.

Waite's second point - one that this study will pursue - is that supervisors do not necessarily exercise the hegemony that their institutional position affords them (c.f. Grenfell, 1993). It is this latter area - the notion of power tempered or restrained - that the present study seeks to develop. It is clear that the variable other than power that has heretofore rarely been considered is the factor of face. Waite gives two instances (use of pronouns and modal verbs) of how supervisors attend to face through mitigation of their language. The present study will aim to demonstrate that the network of mitigation that pervades supervisory language is far more extensive than this; indeed, mitigation will be shown to be the major factor by which restraint or reluctance is borne. To play with various metaphors, it is as if the sword, though unsheathed, is somehow blunted; or the mouth that would utter criticism is somehow muzzled; or the words that would be used to perform the intended acts are muffled, even as they are spoken.

It appears that while institutions furnish supervisors with power, individuals choose how and to what degree this power is to be wielded. The fact that supervisory feedback *is* talk is crucial here because talk is not only a means of accomplishing knowledge and control; it is also a constraint. In Kasper's words (1990:207), 'discourse is not only reflective of social relationships and entitlements but just as much instrumental in constructing them'. Language

acts for the user both as 'servant' and as 'master', and words thereby become 'two-edged' (Gronn, 1981:101). In accenting the constraining power of words, Pocock writes (1973:34):

> To use language at all you must make commitments. You have not merely performed upon yourself, you are inescapably perceived as having performed in ways defined by others' acceptances of the words you have used. You have performed upon them, but the means by which you have performed are in some degree not at your power but theirs. *An act of power verbalised is, in this perspective, an act of power mediated and mitigated* (emphasis added).

Likewise, Adelman argues that no action is entirely 'self-contained' or 'untrammelled': 'all actions in the social world are interactions' (1981b:79-80). Commenting on the power of mediating influences, Parlett and Hamilton assert that 'students do not confront "knowledge" in naked form' (1977:12). The metaphor is a telling one and may be as well applied to the context of the present inquiry. Teachers do not confront supervision 'in naked form' - it comes to them clothed in the text of face-to-face encounter. As such it is shaped - both mediated and mitigated - by its modality.

3.3.3 Quest for a marriage of method and purpose

3.3.3.1 Discourse as risk

It has been shown that criticism is a central but neglected lacuna in the body of knowledge on teacher supervision. It is the central substantive concern of this investigation. However, criticism here is not to be explored through a Flanders or Blumberg-like set of imported categories of pre-defined 'brute' behaviour. Rather, criticism is to be established as a construct operationalised through its textualisation. The primary concern, then, is with the textualisation of criticism: i.e. the discovery of the various linguistic penumbra typically associated with the speech act of criticising as bounded by the educational context of teacher supervision.

Given this goal, it is entirely appropriate that a discourse-based approach be adopted: with meaning approached as context-bound, the aim is to build context into the analysis of the significance of utterances for participants. A grounded study of the discourse of supervision is needed, working with actual, naturalistically generated data, seeking out what it is that happens in, around, through and because of the act of criticising. An approach is needed that

will enable one to permeate the 'membrane' (Goffman, 1961:65) created by the interaction of conferring parties.

Such an approach to discourse embraces many of the elements common to recent approaches: naturalistically generated data; a supra-sentential focus; and a concern with the interface of linguistic and non-linguistic activity (J. Thompson, 1984: 98-99). In addition, however, there is an over-arching concept: the notion of discourse as the dynamic unfolding of intention - an evolving, negotiated, process- and participant-oriented, collaboratively constructed phenomenon with a reflexive relationship with its own context. Clearly, here the concern with meaning goes beyond surface form or the more traditional sentence-as-object view (Chomsky, 1968), involving, as Halliday describes Chomsky's approach, 'a twofold idealisation of speaker and sentence (1978:4). It goes, too, beyond the text-as-product view, the approach of text linguistics (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), which affords the analysis of texts without 'consideration of how the product is produced and how it is received' (Brown & Yule, 1983a:24). The approach in this study builds on a discourse-as-process view of communication (Widdowson, 1979; Brown & Yule, 1983a) in which linguistic form is seen 'as a dynamic means of expressing intended meaning' (Brown & Yule, 1983a:24).

The concerns are the particular meanings - vis-a-vis criticism - that are being collaboratively created through the discourse and interpreted by the conferring participants - the teacher and supervisor. It is an inside-looking-out view of discourse, living through the precarious, risk-ridden route of discourse as it is hazardously undertaken by those who participate in it. The orientation is prospective: language in the process of happening; not retrospective, language as completed production. One's understanding of any utterance at any point is constrained by the significance of language within the interaction. The view is function- or purpose-driven, and embedded in process; it allows one to heed Wittgenstein's advice that our concerns should centre on language when it is 'doing work,' not when it is 'like an engine idling' (1953:132). The means of analysis dictates that at every point the analyst must necessarily incorporate and accommodate the notion of risk: the future is somewhat uncertain; meaning is at best tenuous; at worst, under threat. There is a concern with potential costs and damages; loss, injury and repair; and hence with 'shoring up' or insuring against jeopardy. It is tempting to name this approach a discourse-as-risk view.

3.3.3.2 Maintenance of harmony as a window on language

The attraction to explore criticism through a discourse-as-risk approach makes sense, too, in terms of the view of language, adopted within critical linguistics, as a locus of ideology (Fairclough, 1989; Fowler, Hodge, Kress & Trew, 1979; Kress, 1985; Martin, 1985). Candlin (1987) argues cogently the benefits of explaining how actual or potential 'moments of conflict' between participants are resolved in discourse: such explanations may suggest 'modes of typologising different underlying codes and their particular textual realisations' (1987:413). Given the opacity that naturalisation lends language, it does not willingly, as it were, surrender evidence of the forces and factors that both generate it and are reinforced through it. An explanatory mode of discourse, therefore, seeks purposively to 'unpack' the invisible, taken-for-granted naturalness of discourse. Overturning the traditional, uncritically eclectic selection of language instances as objects of analysis, Candlin is attracted to 'interactional cruces': moments in the terrain of natural discourse that require a great deal of maintenance by participants - 'where contradictions are least felicitously textually resolved' (1987:415). It is in the *explanatory analysis of the very act of maintenance* that one can arrive at an understanding of underlying and contributing, and heretofore invisible, tensions.

The approach is Goffmanian in that it seeks, in an exploration of the extraordinary or the pathological, an understanding of the usual or normal (Goffman, 1976). Goffman's approach, for example, to understanding the tacit governing rules of focussed encounters is to examine games and their particular 'rules of irrelevance' (1961:19). In a similar way, the concept of the *faux pas* holds a fascination for Kendon (1990) - as it did, for different purposes, for Freud (1938) - for within the instance of breakdown, he seeks an understanding of the learned, invisible orderliness of interaction. Similarly, Strong used a 'deviant case approach' (1988:236) in his empirical work in medical discourse. Such an approach is consonant with a strand of critical educational research, where, for example, classroom ecology researchers have shown up the inadequacy of the whole - the system - through an instance of failure - a case (Shulman, 1986). Echoes of this may be heard, too, in the perspective of sociolinguists in the CA school who view impending disagreement within interaction as potentially problematic: through the examination of 'troubled' sequences, they are able to attach significance to what is deemed 'normal'. The implicit logic of such an inquiry is that it is premised on the contention that an instance of breakdown or faltering 'presents a strategic site for research' (Shulman, 1986:20). Shulman (1986) also draws parallels to neuro-anatomists studying brain lesions, and psychologists investigating deviance. Stubbs refers to 'systems-management mechanisms',

normally invisible, that emerge as explicit in problematic situations (1983a:241). In such approaches, the researcher is drawn to a particular site, seeking both to understand its particular characteristics but also to discover universals. In a similar spirit of inquiry, in the supervisory conference, one is drawn to suspect that the moments of delivery of criticism afford prime instances of Candlin's potentially illuminating 'communicative crux' (1987:415).

3.4 Pragmatics

3.4.1 The logic of pragmatics as an approach to the research question

The main premises are summarised in Exhibit 2.

- the study seeks to explore the fragility of the supervisory conference;
- the language of feedback is considered a likely locus of the fragility;
- an approach involving discourse analysis is deemed highly appropriate;
- the pilot study has highlighted a tension between enacted, discoursal power and utterance-level restraint;
- in particular, a co-occurrence of the act of criticising and the impression of linguistic restraint has been noted as 'communicative crux' (Candlin, 1987:415);
- it is hoped that an exploration of the language of restraint (mitigation) will throw light on the notion of fragility.

Exhibit 2: Premises of the inquiry

Pragmatics embraces any analytic approach to language that takes account of contextual features (Brown & Yule, 1983a), and certainly incorporates the discourse-as-risk view which is favoured here. Roberts' example - contrasting 'I'm hungry' as spoken by the child trying to delay bed-time and by the homeless man begging on the street (1990:4) - has meanings that cannot adequately be retrieved without resort to context. At the very heart of pragmatics lie theories of politeness which seek to account for linguistic strategies through contextual variables (such as power and social distance). Politeness theory is a highly appropriate tool,

therefore, for the uncovering of participant-meaningful configurations of language, most especially as a tool for investigating the relational notion of restraint.

Pragmatics is an ideal tool within an interpretive approach because it is premised in the signification of context for actors' meanings. Such research, Erickson states, 'is concerned with the relation between meaning-perspectives of actors and the ecological circumstances of action within which they find themselves' (1986:127). Significantly, Erickson harnesses Weber's (1978) definition of a social relationship as that which exists when people 'reciprocally adjust their behaviour to each other with respect to the meaning which they give to it and when this reciprocal adjustment determines the form which it takes' (cited by Erickson, 1986:127-8). As supervision is talk, and as the form of adjustment will be realised in the language spoken, pragmatics is an ideal means of tracking participants' social meanings.

The final phase of the pilot study examined the language of utterances in and surrounding the act of criticism. A plethora of language strategies emerged which seemed naturally to group themselves under the rubric 'mitigation': defined operationally as devices in the language that serve to take the harsh edge off an utterance and mollify the impact of the speaker's words on the hearer. Fraser terms this 'the reduction of certain unwelcome effects which a speech act has on the hearer' (1980:341). Labov and Fanshel describe it as speakers' attempts to modify their expression 'to avoid creating offence' (1977:84). A key element here is the notion of the perlocutionary force of an utterance (Austin, 1962) - 'the results or effects that are produced by means of saying something' (Richards et al. 1985:169). Clearly, mitigation is designed to reduce the impact of a bad news message on the recipient. Just as McKenzie (1992) claims that euphemism in school reporting gives teachers the 'freedom to talk about taboos' (1992:233), so too one might say that the perlocutionary effect of modifying the illocutionary force of an utterance (through mitigation) is to allow the supervisor the freedom to broach taboo (i.e. face-threatening) topics. For Bavelas et al. (1990b:60) such modifications amount to 'equivocation' offering 'a good solution to a bad situation'.

As evidence of the patterns of mitigation emerged, it became clear that the influence of mitigation in supervisory discourse was pervasive, and in so being, was possibly of central significance. The chief concern then became, conceptually, to explore mitigation as a locus of fragility, as well as to identify and classify the mitigators operating in supervisors' language.

3.4.2 The face factor and supervision

The central tenet of politeness theory is the notion of face, drawn from anthropology (Durkheim, 1915) and explored in detail by Goffman (1967; 1972b). It is also connected to 'the English folk term, which ties up with notions of being embarrassed or humiliated, or "losing face"' (Brown & Levinson, 1978:66)[1]. To every social situation, one brings a face or 'mask' (Lyman & Scott, 1968:93), which constitutes the value one claims for oneself; and as everyone does this, social encounters thereby become potential arenas of collision and risk. Goffman wrote (1972b:323):

> To study face-saving is to study the traffic rules of social interaction; one learns about the code the person adheres to in his [sic] movement across the paths and designs of others.

At any point of any interaction, a person has two points of view vis-a-vis face: a defensive orientation towards saving their own face and a protective orientation towards saving the face of the other. There is a delicate tension and balance here, requiring the interactant both to look after 'self' and 'other'. Indeed, acting with demeanour (attending to one's own face) subsumes deference to the face of the other (Holtgraves, 1992). An individual's performance of both the self and other aspects of face work represents their willingness to adhere to the ground rules of social interaction. That they so abide by such rules in focussed unmediated encounters is 'a hallmark' of their socialisation as interactants (Goffman, 1972b:336).

A face-to-face encounter, then, is not the open, free-wheeling scenario one might naively assume, but rather is 'hedged in with social constraints' (Goffman, 1972c:348), with interactants enjoined by a complex set of ground rules, a web of expressive etiquette that obliges them, almost tyrannically, to abide by the rules or else pay the consequences of social ostracism. In that focussed encounters demonstrate, upon analysis, meaningful patterns in apparently unpatterned behaviour, they are typical of the organised ways human beings have evolved to 'live out their lives in one another's company' (Garfinkel, 1978:142).

The face-to-face scenario in which supervisor and teacher meet is a familiar one. The encounter typically takes place after an observed lesson and its agenda primarily deals with

[1] The term 'politeness' is, of course, inadequate: Goffman (1981:17 f.n.10) discusses its advantages and drawbacks, as well as those of other terms (e.g. 'ritual interchange'; 'ceremony').

issues emerging from the observation. The supervisor, having observed the lesson, meets with the student teacher in private to discuss the lesson. The teacher - let us think of her[1] as a woman, in her early twenties perhaps - comes to the meeting knowing that her teaching has been the subject of scrutiny and is now about to be the subject of discussion. She is eager to find out whether she is 'on the right track', whether her teaching has won the supervisor's approval, and if not, what she can do to improve herself. On the other hand, she also feels some apprehension: it is difficult to know with certainty whether the lesson went well, how effectively she taught; her professional experience is so limited that these early attempts seem rather hit-and-miss. Also, in all the concentration of teaching, it is hard to be self-aware. As a result, her professional ego is quite delicate: her teacher's self-image is at stake (Robinson, 1984). As well, she does not know whether she should trust the supervisor: should she avail herself of this opportunity for help and reveal her concerns about her teaching? Or should she put her best foot forward, and appear as confident as she can, knowing that the manner in which she conducts herself in the feedback encounter itself may well be a hidden part of the assessment procedure (Clandinin, 1989; Tinning, 1984). There is an element of risk here, along with a social imperative urging 'the preservation of poise under pressure' (Lyman & Scott, 1968:101). Not surprisingly, she steels herself as she approaches the meeting.

The supervisor - let's think of her as an experienced teacher and trainer, in her early forties - comes to the meeting with notes taken during the previous, observed lesson: some good points to make and also some critical ones. She mentally prepares herself so that her comments will be well received. Where can she best pitch her focus to help the student teacher? She has to bear in mind that the teacher is at a vulnerable stage of her career (Cohn & Gellman, 1988; Fuller, 1969) and needs support, encouragement and confidence to help her keep on trying. Yet she also has to help the teacher teach better, to steer her towards better practice, to raise her own critical awareness of learning and teaching processes. How should she frame her comments to both support and instruct?

It may prove fruitful to re-appraise the meeting of the supervisor and teacher within Goffman's face-oriented terms of reference. The teacher arrives at the meeting with a heightened sense

[1] One is here confronted with the difficulties in English in making non-sexist singular reference to a sex-neutral antecedent. In this instance, the use of the male singular generic is avoided if only because TESOL is a female-intensive profession. While the problem can sometimes be avoided through the use of plural nouns and pronouns, plurality is not a fool-proof strategy especially in the concerns of this study: because 'face inheres in individuals, not in groups', the intended meaning invokes singularity (Brown, 1980:115).

of defensive face: alert to the fact that she is open to being criticised, that the rules of this particular ritual cut across the usual face-saving requirement of interactants, that she may be left open, unprotected. She knows that the role of supervisors requires them to tell the truth unencumbered by the usual baggage of tact, diplomacy or social skills. So, mentally, she prepares herself for this and steels herself for the encounter.

The supervisor is aware that her role requires her to speak frankly about the lesson, that this cuts across the ritual mandate of saving the other's face, that she may not be able to perform her supervisory role without hurting the face of the teacher: the omelette might need eggs to be broken. The dictates of the role, therefore, mean that she has to suppress her usual protective face-saving orientation. That it is not easy to put aside ones's adult repertoire of social skills, one's 'natural' tact, in favour of the unsheathed sword of verbal directness is evidenced in the uneasiness that many supervisors report about their role in giving feedback. In one sense, it goes against the grain of the natural diplomacy that governs human interaction.

What happens, then, is a shift in the usual face-orienting elements of ritual social interaction. Each party knows of the shift, is aware that the ritual rules that protect interactants in normal social encounters have changed, that the protective devices are lowered, and that face is exposed, unguarded and vulnerable. The role relationship of the two, within the institutional context in which they are operating, has its own rules: the teacher is exposed and powerless; the supervisor is unconstrained, empowered to hurt. The supervisor's right to criticise is thus built into the situation, a component of the specific, if tacit, terms of the relationship or 'contract' (Fraser & Nolen, 1981) which determine what will be perceived as appropriate. That this happens and is meant to happen is part of the rules and obligations (Labov & Fanshel, 1977) of this speech event within the speech community which uses it (Swales, 1990).

It might be said then that the context-specific rules of interaction - the set of role rights and obligations that allows the supervisor to threaten the teacher's face - are potentially in collision with the broader, non-specific societal rules of interaction (that constrain interactants to honour face). As long as the lesson has gone well, invoking only praise and positive reinforcement, all is well. However, at the point at which criticism is warranted, then the potential collision threatens to become actual. It is here that 'politeness' comes to the rescue. Precisely how disruption is averted - that is, what language configurations operate to quieten the discord - is to be addressed through this study.

3.4.3 Face and politeness

Preserving face and minimising risk to one's self and one's face-to-face talking partner is primarily, though not exclusively, a matter of language. The model of politeness developed by Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987) is an attempt to interpret language behaviour from this perspective[1]. Their model makes a number of assumptions about adult interactions: firstly, that every person has both positive-face wants (the want for self-approval) and negative-face wants (the want for freedom from imposition); and secondly, that two people in interaction behave rationally and co-operatively so as to cope successfully and harmoniously with 'the mutual vulnerability of face' (1978:66).

Politeness, loosely related to the lay word, is the term given to the various complex manoeuvres, initiated by interactants, realised mostly in language, to 'anoint' each other's face, as well as to deflect and counter threat to each other's and their own face. Thus both speaker and hearer can attend to or attack both positive and negative face; and each can be on the receiving end of face-anointing and face-violating acts (Brown & Levinson, 1978:296) (App. 6). Politeness theory graphically exposes that constructing meaning between people involves not only the transactional, experiential message (e.g. 'I need to borrow your car tonight') but also recognition of interpersonal, relational elements, such that account for the convoluted pessimism of some utterances ('I wonder if you could see your way clear to lending me your car just for tonight'). Politeness theory offers an excellent heuristic (Roberts, 1994) for accessing 'the delicate balancing act of competing concerns' (Tracy & Carjuzaa, 1993:188).

3.4.4 Criticism as a face-threatening act

If politeness is central to pragmatics, and face is central to politeness, then the concept of the face-threatening act (FTA) is central to the notion of face and a convenient unit of analysis. Brown and Levinson view the FTA as a measurable quantity, calculated as the sum total of a number of integral elements in the interaction, namely power, social distance, and the rank or weight of the FTA. Of course, contexts impose their own currency on events and these must be considered in measuring meaning. Different contexts generate different speech conventions

[1] Brown and Levinson's debt to Goffman is borne in their dedication (1987); and to Durkheim, in the citation that begins their preface (1987:1), quoted at the head of Ch.5 of this thesis.

(or genres) each of which is characterised by rules and obligations unique to it, understood by participants, and activated through contact.

Within the context of teacher supervision, the notion of criticism is a speaker-delivered, hearer-violated FTA. It threatens face on both positive and negative fronts. The hearer's positive face is threatened because the act of criticism, like fault-finding, entails 'the creation of a breach between what was done and what should have been' (Morris, 1988:21): 'actual' differs from 'ideal', and therein lies the threat. In addition, the hearer's negative face is threatened because criticism entails a request for action: the intended inference is that the hearer can make things better by taking up the implied suggestion (Gibb, 1969; Lim & Bowers, 1991). The core of this study will be devoted to clarifying how supervisory language takes into account the burdensome face threats borne by criticism - that is, how the conflict is played out and resolved in and through the discourse.

In sum, it might be said that there are cultural constraints that compel interactants to seek harmony and consensus, and that these appear to be more powerful and overarching than the institutional roles and obligations pertaining to supervision. In that giving criticism violates the norm of maintaining harmony, one would expect to find evidence in the language to show the discoursal resolution of conflict. Hewitt and Stokes (1975), in discussing verbal disclaimers, refer to 'aligning actions' which are 'intended to serve as means of bringing problematic conduct into line with cultural constraints' (1975:11). The present study seeks to posit that mitigation - as the linguistic manifestation of psychological restraint - serves in discourse to quell the disruption to interactional harmony that the act of criticism threatens to unleash. It is through these 'assumptive lenses' (Tracy & Carjuzaa, 1993:175), that the discourse data will be approached.

3.4.5 Investigation of supervisory restraint as interpretive research

Erickson (1986:121) has said that questions - such as these that follow - steer the path and process of interpretive research:

> What is happening, specifically, in social action that takes place in this particular setting? What do these actions mean to the actors involved in them, at the moment the actions took place?

The centrality and urgency of these questions derive from 'the invisibility of everyday like' (Erickson, 1986:121). Quotidian familiarity, compounded by an unwillingness to confront contradictions, means that perceived reality is taken for granted. The value of interpretive research lies in its intention 'to make the familiar strange and interesting again': once the commonplace becomes problematic, what is happening can be seen; and once seen, it may be documented systematically (Erickson, 1986:121).

Taken-for-grantedness is nowhere more true than in the language we use to fulfil the actions we intend; and it is as true of the practice of supervision as it is of other social conventions, most especially because supervision, like many other social processes, is achieved through talk. The present study seeks to render visible and then document systematically the phenomenon of restraint - realised in patterns of mitigation - within supervisory discourse.

Overview

In Ch. 1, the central issues of the inquiry were introduced, contextualised and defined. As an outcome of the surveys of the substantive (Ch. 2) and methodological (Ch. 3) literature, discourse studies have been placed in a historical context; and a pragmatic approach to supervisory discourse has been proposed. The necessary link has been forged between the topic of the inquiry and the intended research approach. This leads on logically to Ch. 4 which comprises an outline of the research methodology used in the discourse analysis, as well as the methodological triangulation. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are devoted to the research findings: respectively, to the primary linguistic study (Ch. 5); the ethnographic portrait of supervision (Ch. 6); and the report on the quantitative experiment measuring perceptions of mitigated language (Ch. 7). Chapter 8 draws conclusions from the study; makes suggestions for further research; and outlines projected applications in supervisor training.