

Community languages school teachers' pedagogical habitus in transition: an Australian perspective

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The context of Community Language School (CLS)

- There are around 7,000 volunteer teachers teaching at CLS in Australia, and 2,707 teachers teaching one of the 54 community languages in NSW (NSW DoE, [2018](#)).

Key challenges

- recruiting qualified language instructors
- ensuring a quality language curriculum
- Immigrant teachers' retraining and teacher attrition

(Baldauf, [2005](#); Cruickshank, Ellsmore, & Brownlee, [2018](#))

Gaps in the field

- Compared with what is happening in the UK and the US, there is little recognition of CLS teachers in the Australian school system (Cruickshank et al., [2018](#)).
- There are only a few studies focusing on teachers' pedagogical habitus (Fataar & Feldman, 2016; Feldman, [2016](#); Park, Rinke, & Mawhinney, [2016](#)) and even fewer exploring teachers' pedagogical habitus in a cross-cultural context.

Research questions

- (1) What is the nature of CLS teachers' pedagogical habitus, displayed in their pedagogical dispositions, beliefs and strategies?
- (2) How has their pedagogical habitus been adapted in in the process of their professional integration in Australia?

Conceptual framework

- Habitus is explained as “a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions” (Bourdieu, [2000](#), pp. 82–83).
- According to Bourdieu, habitus, along with field (the social space) and capital (the distribution of power), is the product of certain social conditions (Bourdieu, [2005](#); Bourdieu & Wacquant, [1992](#)).

Pedagogical habitus

- Pedagogical habitus, conceptualized as a layer of a teachers' primary habitus, could be viewed as “embodied social and cultural messages from the field of education which organises and positions them as certain types of teachers, and which in turn, structures their teaching practices in particular ways” (Fataar & Feldman, [2017](#), p. 197). These dispositions include different teaching repertoires, which are transacted, for example in their speech styles and patterns, and their use of resources, and the manner in which they both verbally and physically respond to their students (Fataar & Feldman, [2017](#), pp. 197–198).

Analytical tool of pedagogical habitus

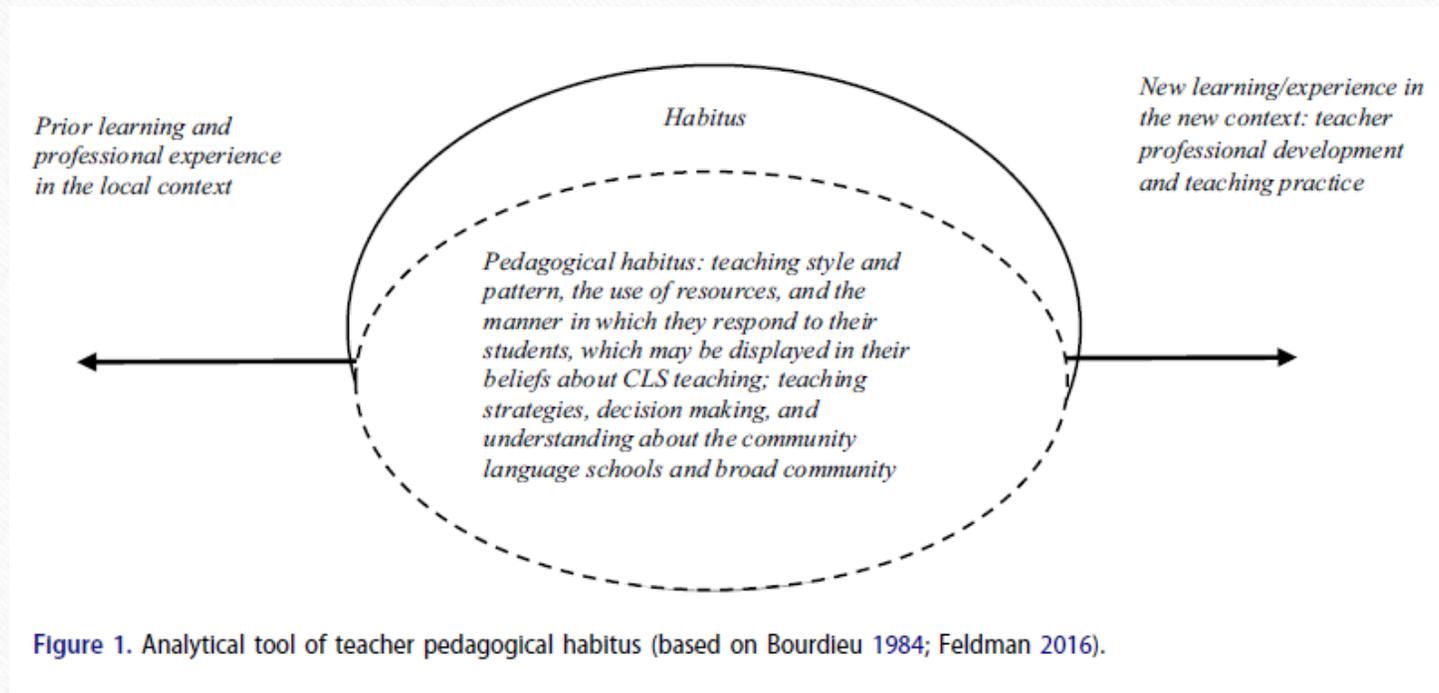


Figure 1. Analytical tool of teacher pedagogical habitus (based on Bourdieu 1984; Feldman 2016).

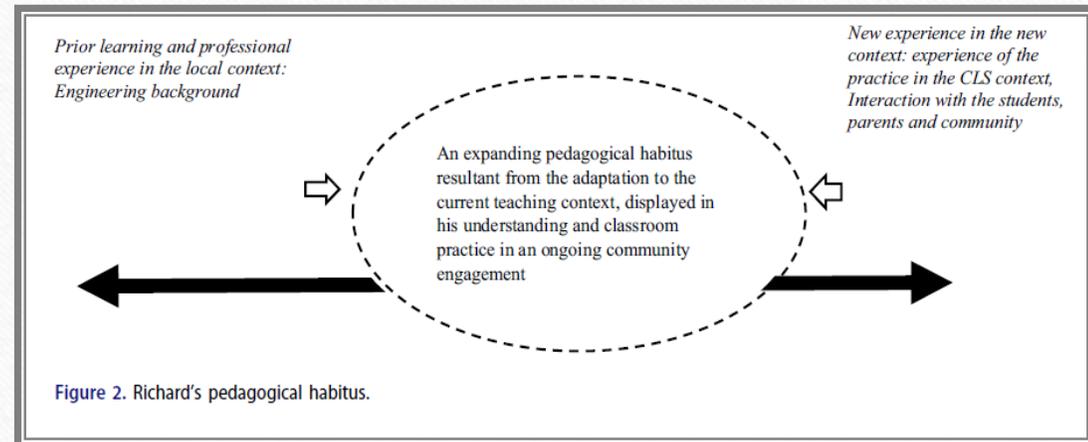
Methodology

- Case study with interview data
- Three volunteer CLS teachers

Participants	Language	Position	Years of teaching
Richard	Malayalam	Principal and teacher	10 years
Liz	Chinese	Principal and teacher	2 years
Jonathan	Chinese	teacher	6 years

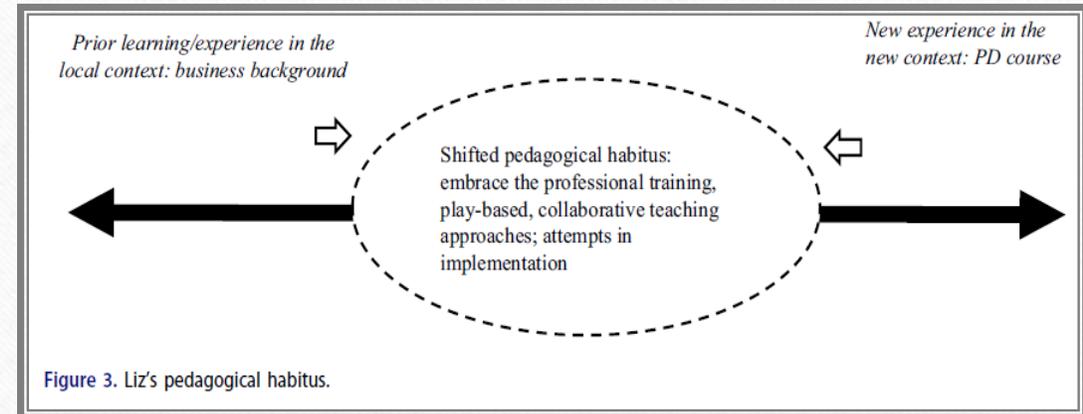
Case 1 Richard: from controlling to student-centered teaching

- discarded textbook-centered teaching and selected more student-centered teaching
- shifted from a “controlling” teacher to the role as a guide and facilitator
- The rapport with students was taken as a form of social capital, which formed a part of his pedagogical habitus
- a process of making constant improvement



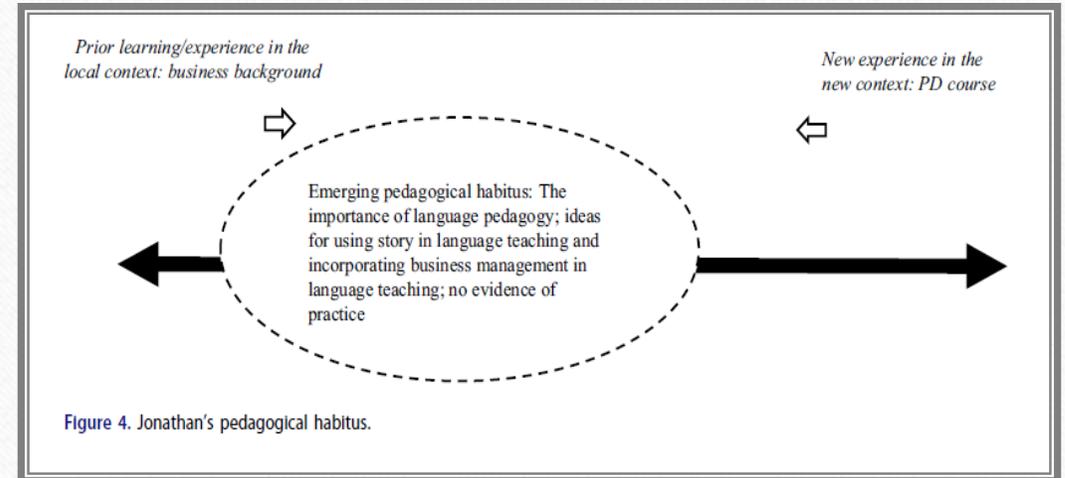
Case 2 Liz Australian way vs. Chinese way

- contrasted the “Australian” with the “Chinese” teaching methodology and expressed her preference for the Australian way
- forming her pedagogical beliefs about collaborative and interactive teaching approach and followed the teaching strategies and methods she had learnt from the CLS training course
- Pedagogical habitus informed by this prior experience: capacity of action taking



Case 3 Jonathan - native speakers \neq language teachers

- Used some authentic language input, such as jokes and songs, for engaging students, but no explicit teaching of specific language items based on these resources
- Teaching requires a great deal of knowledge and techniques. It is not like you can teach Chinese or Korean just because you know how to speak the language
- Initial ideas for story-based teaching and connection with business management



Conclusions

- Their habitus intertwined with both current and prior experiences. In addition, the findings showed the dialectical relationship between the formation of their habitus and the context
- All three participants did not appear to just passively rely on previous experience (e.g. Kim, [2017](#)), but involved evaluating, comparing, selecting and incorporating their prior experience based on the new context. In this regard it showed the necessity to adopt a progressive approach in research by moving beyond a deficiency view about the CLS teachers.
- It appeared that overseas-trained teachers' background had the potential to become a form of cultural capital if applied in the teaching and could further broaden their pedagogical habitus.
- The extent of their habitus adaptation varied depending on the extent of their implementation in the practice, as a teacher's pedagogical habitus depends on how much they immersed in the field (Fataar & Feldman, [2017](#); Park et al., [2016](#)).

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- Education is like the saying that dripping water penetrating a stone. It is hard to see apparent results from just one or two classes, but over time, of maybe in 3 or 5 years, you see each child's growth.