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**Making the intrinsic explicit: A cultural  
constructivist exploration of the subjective  
educational ideologies of trainee Malay, Tamil  
and Chinese language teachers in Singapore.**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

from

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG**

by

**PETER THOMAS BODYCOTT**

M.Ed (Hons)., M.Stud.Ed., B.Ed., Diploma in Teaching

Faculty of Education

1995

constant support which has helped maintain my personal balance. Throughout life, Syl has brought to each day, to each new twist in the journey, insight, optimism, strength, love and commitment. Her contributions are immeasurable and for them I am eternally grateful.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the intrinsic relationships between the personal constructs of teaching and learning that trainee language teachers bring to their formal teacher education study. The analysis represents an effort to look, from a cultural constructivist perspective, at the subjective educational ideology of trainee language teachers in Singapore. Subjective educational ideologies are grounded in the personal history of trainee involvement in both formal and informal educative cultures. This study demonstrates that it is possible to augment advances in understanding previously gained through research by examining those individuals and cultures that have principally and directly influenced the thinking and learning of the trainee i.e., teachers, parents, family members, peers and schools. Repertory grid and self characterisation written biographies, it is argued, provide a hermeneutic dialectic approach to cultural constructivist inquiry. These techniques are synergistic and ideally suited to the purpose of exploring trainee teacher thinking and underlying ideology.

Analysis of the data indicates that trainee teachers from different cultures, and educated in different mother tongues display a range of intrinsic constructs about language learning, language teaching pedagogy and language teacher characteristics. These trainees, upon entering a formal professional preparatory program, display a knowledge about the language teacher's personal and interpersonal skills and their role in creating an environment that facilitates language learning. Trainee knowledge and constructs about language teaching and learning are grounded in their personal history. That is, both informal and formal experiences of language, teaching and learning environments affect the development of subjective educational ideology.

These ideological principles form the foundation of trainee language teacher thinking and are more closely associated with elements from the informal educative culture of the home, that is, with one or both parents. Furthermore, the closeness of these associations suggests that this group of trainees validated these culturally influenced, personal constructs of language teaching and learning against elements from their formal education. The trainees' preferred approach to language teaching was found to reflect the way they learned language in the context of the home.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**