

The Cambridge Guide to

Second Language Teacher Education

Edited by

Anne Burns
Jack C. Richards

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PREFACE

The impetus for this book arose from a course we taught jointly in 2006 as part of a professional doctorate program in applied linguistics from Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, to a group of Mexican doctoral students meeting at the designated teaching location in the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Mexico. In organizing the course content around a selection of key readings on second language teacher education (SLTE), we realized that there were few volumes available that presented a collection offering a broad and contemporary overview of current debates in this field. It became apparent that a volume of the present kind would provide a valuable introduction for those who are both specialist readers and new practitioners interested in developments in the field of SLTE. It would build on an early collection of work in this area (Richards and Nunan 1990) in that it would provide a state-of-the-art survey of current issues, debates, and approaches in contemporary SLTE. We are grateful to our Mexican students for warmly supporting this idea when we first broached it with them, for their enthusiasm in discussing their own concerns and interests in SLTE, and for their anticipation of the publication of this collection.

The field of SLTE has now become well established within applied linguistics and TESOL. Many undergraduate degrees now offer one or more courses in SLTE, and there are also masters and other postgraduate courses with SLTE as a primary focus.

We anticipate that the readership for the volume will be those with a broad interest in SLTE issues – preservice and in-service teachers, including those completing undergraduate and postgraduate programs, teacher trainers and educators, professional development coordinators and administrators, and researchers and academics interested in knowing more about current approaches, theories, and practices.

In putting together the volume, we envisaged it as a companion to the *Cambridge Guide to TESOL* (Nunan and Carter 2001), which similarly offers a survey of current debates. The *Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education* comprises 30 original chapters by key writers working and researching in the field of SLTE. The chapters are grouped into seven thematic sections. As we deliberated on the structure, we also found that this field is complex with overlapping trends, issues, and perspectives, such that readers will find echoes of other chapters in many of the contributions. Nevertheless, the compilation of the contributions into the various sections offers readers a way of focusing from discussion of the broader scope and trends in SLTE to the more specific areas that constitute the different dimensions of theory, research, and practice. Each section is prefaced by an overview that summarizes the key issues raised by the chapter authors. In order to provide a synthesis of themes currently occupying the SLTE field, our introductory chapter draws out the trends noted across the whole volume and points to the specific chapter contributions that take the initial discussion points further.

We hope that this volume will be seen as a valuable contribution to the applied linguistics and English language teaching field, synthesizing current practices, theoretical

insights, and future directions for research endeavors in the developing field of second language teacher education and professionalism in general.

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February 2009

INTRODUCTION

Second Language Teacher Education

Anne Burns and Jack C. Richards

One of the simple facts of life in the present time is that the English language skills of a good proportion of its citizenry are seen as vital if a country is to participate actively in the global economy and to have access to the information and knowledge that provide the basis for both social and economic development. Central to this enterprise are English teaching and English language teachers. There is consequently increasing demand worldwide for competent English teachers and for more effective approaches to their preparation and professional development.

This book brings together key issues and debates in teacher education for language teachers. To provide an orientation to and overview of the book in this section, we will examine the major trends in second language teacher education today and identify some of the key issues that are shaping the way second language teacher education (SLTE) is currently conceptualized and realized.

The field of SLTE has been shaped in its development by its response to two issues. One might be called internally initiated change, that is, the teaching profession gradually evolving a changed understanding of its own essential knowledge base and associated instructional practices through the efforts of applied linguists and specialists in the field of second language teaching and teacher education. Much of the debate and discussion featured in the professional literature in recent years and in this volume, for example, is an entirely internal debate, unlikely to interest those outside the walls of academic institutions. The emergence of such issues as reflective practice ([Chapter 30](#), Burton), critical pedagogy ([Chapter 3](#), Hawkins and Norton), knowledge about language ([Chapter 12](#), Bartels) and teacher identity ([Chapter 17](#), Miller), for example, arose from within the profession largely as a result of self-imposed initiatives.

At the same time, the development of SLTE has also been impacted by external pressures, for example, by globalization and the need for English as a language of international trade and communication, which has brought with it the demand by national educational authorities for new language teaching policies, for greater central control over teaching and teacher education, and for standards and other forms of accountability (see Sections 1 and 2).

The Common European Framework is an example of the profession attempting to respond to external pressures of this kind.

THE GROWTH OF SLTE

The field of TESOL is relatively new and, in the form that we know it today, dates from the 1960s. The origins of specific approaches to teacher training began with short training programs and certificates dating from this period, designed to give prospective teachers the practical classroom skills needed to teach new methods such as Audiolingualism and Situational Language Teaching. The discipline of applied linguistics dates from the same period, and with it came a body of specialized academic knowledge and theory that provided the foundation of the new discipline. This knowledge was represented in the curricula of Masters programs, which began to be offered from this time that typically contained courses in language analysis, learning theory, methodology, and sometimes a teaching practicum.

The relationship between practical teaching skills and academic knowledge and their representation in SLTE programs has generated a debate ever since (Chapter 2, Johnson). In the 1990s the practice versus theory distinction was sometimes resolved by distinguishing teacher training from teacher development, the former being identified with entry-level teaching skills linked to a specific teaching context, and the latter to the longer-term development of the individual teacher over time. Good teaching was seen as the mastery of a set of skills or competencies. Teacher-training qualifications such as the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) were typically offered by teacher training colleges or by organizations such as the British Council. Teacher development, on the other hand, meant mastering the discipline of applied linguistics. Qualifications in teacher development, typically the Masters degree, were offered by universities, where the practical skills of language teaching were often undervalued.

Recently, the contrast between training and development has been replaced by a reconsideration of the nature of teacher learning, which is viewed as a form of socialization into the professional thinking and practices of a community of practice (Chapter 19, Tsui; Chapter 20, Singh and Richards). SLTE is now also influenced by perspectives drawn from sociocultural theory (Lantolf 2000) and the field of teacher cognition (Chapter 16, Borg). The knowledge base of teaching has also been reexamined with a questioning of the traditional positioning of the language-based disciplines as the major foundation for SLTE (Chapter 1, Freeman; Chapter 2, Johnson). At the same time, it has also been affected by external factors – by the need to respond to the status of English as an international language and the demand worldwide for a practical command of English language skills.

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

A common observation is that there is a much higher level of professionalism in ELT today than existed previously. The meaning here is threefold: ELT is seen as a career in a field of educational specialization; it requires a specialized knowledge base obtained through both academic study and practical experience; and it is a field of work where membership is based on entry requirements and standards (Chapter 6, Barduhn and Johnson; Chapter 7, Katz and Snow). The professionalism of English teaching (Chapter 5, Leung) is seen in the growth industry devoted to providing language teachers with professional training and qualifications, in continuous attempts to develop standards for English language teaching and for English language teachers, to the proliferation of professional journals

and teacher magazines, conferences, and professional organizations; to attempts in many places to require nonnative speaker English teachers to demonstrate their level of proficiency in English as a component of certification (Chapter 9, Kamhi-Stein); to the demand for professional qualifications for native-speaker teachers; and to the greater level of sophisticated knowledge of language teaching (Chapter 14, Hedgcock) and language acquisition (Chapter 13, Ellis) required of English teachers. Becoming an English language teacher means becoming part of a worldwide community of professionals with shared goals, values, discourse, and practices but one with a self-critical view of its own practices and a commitment to a transformative approach to its own role.

The focus on professionalism may mean different things in different places. In some it may mean acquiring qualifications recognized by local educational authorities or by international professional organizations and attaining standards mandated by such bodies. It may also mean behaving in accordance with the rules and norms that prevail in their context of work, even if the teacher does not fully support such norms, such as when a teacher is told to “teach to the test” rather than create his or her own learning pathway. However, recent years have seen a wide variety of procedures through which teachers can engage in critical and reflective review of their own practices, for example, through developing personal practical knowledge (Chapter 15, Golombek), peer- and self-monitoring (Chapter 27, Bailey), mentoring (Chapter 26, Malderez), teacher collaboration and support groups (Chapter 24, Johnston), and action research (Chapter 29, Burns).

THE KNOWLEDGE BASE OF SLTE

As noted previously, there have traditionally been two strands within the field of SLTE – one focusing on classroom teaching skills and pedagogic issues, and the other focusing on academic underpinnings of classroom skills, namely knowledge about language and language learning. The relationship between the two has often been problematic. This issue has sometimes been clarified by contrasting two differing kinds of knowledge – *knowledge about* and *knowledge how*. Knowledge about, or *content knowledge*, provides what is the established core curriculum of SLTE programs, particularly at graduate level, where course work on topics such as language analysis, discourse analysis, phonology, curriculum development, and methodology is standard. Language-based courses provided the academic content, and methodology courses showed teachers how to teach it. An unquestioned assumption was that such knowledge informs teachers’ classroom practices. Recent research, however (e.g., Bartels 2005), shows that teachers in fact often fail to apply such knowledge in practice.

The distinction between explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge throws some light on the concepts of knowledge about and knowledge how. Implicit knowledge covers a wide range of terms (e.g., *principles, practitioner knowledge, personal theories, maxims*) that have been used in the literature to refer to the beliefs, theories, and knowledge that underlie teachers’ practical actions (Richards 1996; Chapter 16, Borg). Central to *knowledge how* are concepts such as pedagogical content knowledge (the capacity to transform content into accessible and learnable forms) and practical knowledge, both of which refer to the knowledge and thinking that teachers make use of in facilitating learning in their classrooms and that belong to a third strand that has often been missing from formulations of the core content of SLTE – namely, the nature of teaching itself. Rather than the Masters course being a survey of issues in applied linguistics drawing from the traditional disciplinary sources, course work in areas such as reflective teaching, classroom research, and action research now form parts of the core curriculum in many TESOL programs and seek to expand the traditional knowledge base of language teaching.

THE NATURE OF TEACHER LEARNING

A focus on the nature of teacher learning has been central to a rethinking of both the content and delivery of SLTE programs. Teacher learning from traditional perspectives was seen as a cognitive issue, something the learner did on his or her own. Traditionally the problem of teacher learning was hence often viewed as a question of improving the effectiveness of delivery. The failure of teachers to “acquire” what was taught was seen as a problem of overcoming teachers’ resistance to change (Chapter 20, Singh and Richards). A focus on teacher learning as a field of inquiry, however, seeks to examine the mental processes involved in teacher learning and acknowledges the “situated” and the social nature of learning (Lave and Wenger 1991). From this perspective, learning takes place in a context and evolves through the interaction and participation of the participants in that context. Teacher learning is not viewed as translating knowledge and theories into practice but rather as constructing new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and processes. This latter type of knowledge, sometimes called “practitioner knowledge,” is the source of teachers’ practices and understandings.

While traditional views of teacher learning often viewed the teachers’ task as the application of theory to practice, more recent views see teacher learning as the theorization of practice; in other words, making visible the nature of practitioner knowledge and providing the means by which such knowledge can be elaborated, understood, and reviewed (Chapter 11, Graves). In practical terms this has led to a reconsideration of traditional modes of teaching in SLTE programs and a focus on context involving communities of learners engaged in social practices and the collaborative construction of meanings. Key to the teacher learning processes are the roles of participants, the discourses they create and participate in, the activities that take place, and the artifacts and resources that are employed. All of these shape the nature of the learning that occurs. Learning is seen to emerge through social interaction within a community of practice.

THE ROLE OF CONTEXT IN TEACHER LEARNING

Sociocultural perspectives on learning emphasize that learning is situated, that is, takes place in specific settings or contexts that shape how learning takes place. Teacher learning contexts, whether in the course room (Chapter 20, Singh and Richards); through distance education (Chapter 22, Hall and Knox); the school (Chapter 21, Legutke and Schocker-v. Dittfurth); or virtually, through technology (Chapter 23, Reinders) are settings for patterns of social participation that can either enhance or inhibit learning. Learning and the development of expertise (Chapter 19, Tsui) also occur through the practice and experience of teaching. Both involve induction to communities of practice, Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept for learning that takes place within organizational settings, which is socially constituted and which involves participants with a common interest collaborating to develop new knowledge and skills. For novice teachers, their professional development involves socialization into the profession and adjusting their roles according to the teacher–learner needs (Chapter 18, Farrell).

Typically the campus-based program (in the case of preservice teacher education) is seen as the start of the teacher’s professional development, subsequent learning taking place in the school through classroom experience, working with mentors (Chapter 26, Malderez), and other school-based initiatives. In SLTE programs, making connections between campus-based and school-based learning through the teaching practicum (Chapter 25, Gebhard) is also important as student-teachers often perceive a gap between the theoretical course work offered on campus and the practical school-based component.

THE ROLE OF TEACHER COGNITION

An interest in teacher cognition entered SLTE from the field of general education and brought with it a similar focus on teacher decision making, on teachers' theories of teaching, teachers' representations of subject matter, and the problem solving and improvisational skills employed by teachers with different levels of teaching experience during teaching. Constructs such as teachers' practical knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, and personal theories of teaching noted previously are now established components of our understanding of teacher cognition. From the perspective of teacher cognition (Chapter 16, Borg), teaching is not simply the application of knowledge and of learned skills. It is viewed as a much more complex, cognitively driven process affected by the classroom context, the teacher's general and specific instructional goals, the learners' motivations and reactions to the lesson, and the teacher's management of critical moments during a lesson. At the same time, teaching reflects the teacher's personal response to such issues, hence teacher cognition is very much concerned with teachers' personal and "situated" approaches to teaching. In SLTE programs a focus on teacher cognition can be realized through questionnaires and self-reporting inventories in which teachers describe beliefs and principles; through interviews and other procedures in which teachers verbalize their thinking and understanding of pedagogic incidents and issues; through observation, either of one's own lessons or those of other teachers, and through reflective writing in the form of journals, narratives, or other forms of written report.

A FOCUS ON TEACHER IDENTITY

A sociocultural perspective on teacher learning posits a central aspect of this process as the reshaping of identity and identities within the social interaction of the classroom (Chapter 17, Miller). Identity refers to the differing social and cultural roles teacher-learners enact through their interactions with lecturers and other students during the process of learning. These roles are not static but emerge through the social processes of the classroom. Identity may be shaped by many factors, including personal biography, gender, culture, working conditions, age, and the school and classroom culture. The concept of identity thus reflects how individuals see themselves and how they enact their roles within different settings. In an SLTE program a teacher-learner's identity is remade through the acquisition of new modes of discourse and new roles in and through the learning context. Teacher learning thus involves not only discovering more about the skills and knowledge of language teaching but also what it means to be a language teacher. Teacher-learners negotiate their identity through the unfolding social interaction of a particular situated community, in relation to its specific activities and relationships.

Native-speaker and nonnative-speaker teacher-learners may bring different identities to teacher learning and to teaching. For example, untrained native speakers teaching EFL overseas are sometimes credited with an identity they are not really entitled to (the "native speaker as expert syndrome"), finding that they have a status and credibility that they would not normally achieve in their own country. In language institutes, students may express a preference to study with native-speaker teachers, despite the fact that such teachers may be less qualified and less experienced than nonnative-speaker teachers. For nonnative-speaking teachers studying in SLTE programs, identity issues may lead some to feel disadvantaged compared to native-speaker teachers in the same course (Chapter 9, Kamhi-Stein). Whereas in their own country they were perceived as experienced and highly competent professionals, they now find themselves at a disadvantage and may experience feelings of anxiety and inadequacy. They may have a sense of inadequate language proficiency, and

their unfamiliarity with the learning styles found in British or North American university contexts may hinder their participation in some classroom activities.

A RETHINKING OF TEACHING METHODS AND STRATEGIES

The sociocultural view of learning previously outlined moves beyond the view of the teacher as an individual entity attempting to master content knowledge and unravel the hidden dimensions of his or her own teaching and views learning as a social process. Rather than teaching being viewed as the transfer of knowledge, a sociocultural perspective views it as creating conditions for the coconstruction of knowledge and understanding through social participation. There are several forms such participation may take. One strategy is known as dialogic teaching, that is, teaching that centers around conversations with other teachers focusing on teaching and learning issues during which teachers examine their own beliefs and practices and engage in collaborative planning, problem solving, and decision making (Chapter 24, Johnston). It is often through dialog that teacher–learners create and experience different representations of themselves. This may take the form of both spoken dialog in group conversations as well as through journals or online dialog.

For student-teachers used to more transmission-oriented teaching styles however, dialogic modes of teaching raise issues of identity, power, and agency. “Learning how to talk” is essential in order to participate in a community of practice. It involves learning to share ideas with others and to listen without judgement, and like other forms of collaborative learning, may require modeling and rules if it is to be successful. Key concepts in a collaborative approach to learning are Vygotsky’s notions of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and mediation. These two constructs present a view of learning as a process of “apprenticeship,” where apprentices collaborate in social practices with teacher educators as well as mentors, critical friends, and peers to acquire and construct new forms of interaction and thinking (Vygotsky 1978). Working in collaboration on classroom tasks offers many benefits including exchanging ideas and experiences, developing professional discourses, and reducing isolation.

In addition to collaborative forms of teacher development, professional development is also increasingly viewed as something which is self-directed, inquiry-based, and directly relevant to teacher’s professional lives. The site for such inquiry is the teacher’s own classroom, either through the teacher’s own efforts or in collaboration with supervisors, university researchers, or other teachers. This often takes the form of action research or other research-based activities (Chapter 29, Burns; Chapter 28, McKay).

The growing demand for SLTE courses as a consequence of the spread of English worldwide has also created a need for new ways of delivery of teacher education courses. Advances in technology have provided new opportunities for both traditional forms of campus-based teaching (e.g., Internet-based resources) as well as for distance teaching through online learning. These new forms of delivery allow for the development of teacher networks that cross regional and national boundaries, establishing globalized communities of teachers who can bring their own cultural, social, professional, and personal experiences into the SLTE process (Chapter 22, Hall and Knox).

THE NEED FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

The scope of English teaching worldwide and the subsequent growth of SLTE programs has created a demand for greater accountability in SLTE practices and in the assessment of teachers (Chapter 8, Freeman, Orzulak, and Morrissey). What constitutes a quality SLTE

program in terms of its curriculum, the teaching methods that it gives rise to, and the kinds of teachers that the program produces? What competencies do the graduates of such programs possess? What competencies and forms of training do the trainers and educators of English language teachers need? These kinds of questions are very difficult to answer since there are no widely accepted definitions of concepts of “quality” in SLTE, and likewise there is no internationally recognized specification of English language teacher and English language teacher educator competencies (Chapter 10, Wright). One way to approach the issue of accountability is through the identification of standards for SLTE programs (Chapter 7, Katz and Snow). The standards movement has taken hold in many parts of the world and promotes the adoption of clear statements of instructional outcomes in educational programs as a way of improving learning outcomes in programs and to provide guidelines for program development, curriculum development, and assessment. Critics of such an approach argue that the standards themselves are largely based on intuition and are not research based, and also that the standards movement has been brought into education from the fields of business and organizational management and reflects a reductionist approach in which learning is reduced to the mastery of discrete skills that can easily be taught and assessed.

CRITICAL LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

The field of SLTE, as with other areas of language teaching, has also been influenced by issues posed by *critical theory* and *critical pedagogy*, prompting reflection on the *hidden curriculum* that sometimes underlies language teaching policies and practices (Chapter 3, Hawkins and Norton). English language teaching it is argued, is not a politically or morally neutral activity. Mastery of English, it is claimed, often enhances the power and control of a privileged few, and in addition, English language teaching often consumes an inordinate amount of the scarce educational resources of many countries. Globalization and the spread of English raise the need for SLTE programs to engage teachers in an exploration of the political status of English in today’s world, the role it can play in maintaining positions of privilege and inequality, and the role the notion of “native speaker” has played in TESOL theory and practice. Language teachers have a particular role to play in promoting their learners’ fuller participation in classrooms and communities.

From this perspective, language teachers are not simply teaching language as a neutral vehicle for the expression of meanings and ideas, but should be engaged both in reflecting upon the ideological forces that are present in their classrooms, schools, and communities and in empowering their learners with the language knowledge and skills they need to be able to function as moral agents in society. At the practical level, critical pedagogues would argue that this involves choosing developing curricula and choosing materials and activities that raise students’ awareness of sociopolitical as well as ethical issues and problems (Giroux 1988).

In second language contexts, critical language teacher education implies raising teachers’ awareness of power relations inside and outside the classroom, encouraging critical self-reflection activities on teacher roles and identities, and seeking critically informed ways to enhance classroom learning opportunities.

CONCLUSION

The field of Second Language Teacher Education has expanded considerably both in breath and in depth since its origins in training approaches associated with the major

teaching methods of the 1960s and 1970s (Chapter 10, Wright). Through the efforts of scholars and researchers on the one hand, the field has redefined its goals, its scope, its conceptual frameworks, and its teaching methods. And on the other hand, growing demand for effective SLTE programs in response to worldwide expansion in the use of English has highlighted the need for a coordinated organizational response, which has led to the demand for greater accountability through standards, curriculum renewal, professionalism, and the development of internationally recognized qualifications for language teachers. SLTE today is consequently a vital component of the field of TESOL and makes a vital contribution to our understanding of what lies at the core of this enterprise, namely, teachers, teaching, and the nature of teacher education.

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SECTION I

THE LANDSCAPES OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

The chapters that follow provide an introductory overview of some of the main themes in second language teacher education. Many of these are taken up and elaborated upon in subsequent sections of this volume.

In [Chapter 1](#), Freeman begins the overview by mapping out the broad trajectories and terrains of SLTE over the last half century. He conceptualizes the scope of contemporary SLTE as encompassing three dimensions of *substance*, *engagement*, and *outcomes / influences* in order to map past and present practices and signal new conceptual and theoretical developmental directions. Freeman's chapter sets the scene and raises many key themes that are subsequently taken up and expanded by other chapters in the book.

Following on from Freeman's broad conceptualizations of the scope of SLTE, Johnson ([Chapter 2](#)) identifies significant trends in SLTE arising from changing epistemological perspectives on learning and teaching. They encompass the knowledge base of teaching, the recognition of the legitimacy of teachers' practical knowledge, the sociocultural turn that has seen the broadening of definitions of language and second language acquisition, and changes in the nature of what constitutes language teacher professional development. She signals explorations of the impact of new forms of professional development, and the relationships between teacher learning and student learning as the next frontiers for development.

Extending one of the themes raised by Johnson, [Chapter 3](#) by Hawkins and Norton considers how the impact of sociocultural perspectives has necessitated consideration of critical approaches to SLTE. While considering that the notions of *critical* and *critical second language teacher education* are hard to define, they identify the core concern with social action and empowerment through educational change. Accounts of CSLTE

are still rare in the language education field. However, Hawkins and Norton offer an heuristic and examples of three types – *critical awareness*, *critical self-reflection*, and *critical pedagogical relations* – which highlight the notions and characteristics of current practice and praxis.

In [Chapter 4](#), Franson and Holliday argue that teacher education programs urgently need to include a focus on the social and cultural position of English in the world. A paradigm shift is required in most current forms of SLTE so that novice teachers in particular are introduced to “de-centered,” or “locality-driven,” approaches. De-centered approaches mean turning away from stereotypical representations of local cultures of learning toward ways to enable teachers to “recognize and explore the cultural complexity and diversity within their own experiences,” the political nature of English within the world, and non-Center forms of English. They advocate a case study approach drawing on recent literature, where participants in teacher education programs can be exposed to research describing practices of teaching and learning that are taken from settings different from their own and that demonstrate to them the cultural complexity inherent in classroom language learning.

CHAPTER I

The Scope of Second Language Teacher Education

Donald Freeman

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the scope of second language teacher education (SLTE) from the standpoint of three questions: *How has the substance been and is being defined?* *How has engagement in professional learning processes been and is being understood?* and *How have its outcomes or influences been and are being defined and assessed?* In this discussion, *scope* is understood to be “the range covered by an activity, subject, or topic.” These three questions examine scope in three dimensions: the **substance** of SLTE, which has moved from knowledge and skills to social activity and names what participants are expected to learn through SLTE designs; **engagement** addresses how they are expected to learn through these designs; and **outcomes / influences** speak to measures by which, in the broad and specific sense, the results of their learning through SLTE activities are ascertained. Together these dimensions form a useful heuristic for mapping past and present practices in SLTE. They also help to anticipate the major new directions that are now happening within the field.

DEFINITIONS

THE PROBLEMATIC NOTION OF SCOPE

Although this chapter addresses the scope of what is done in second language teacher education, the very concept of scope itself is an interestingly problematic one. We generally do not think about the activities we do in terms of their scope. Usually the boundaries come about – or are defined – through the process of doing the activity itself. For example, the scope of parenting is understood in multiple ways, depending on how the role of being a parent is carried out in various situations and cultures. Thus the adage “It takes a village to raise a child” has been widely mentioned in U.S. contexts to suggest a broadening of the

scope of who are seen as involved in parenting in industrialized societies. Or consider how the scope of musicianship is defined, and oftentimes stretched, by what individuals who call themselves musicians do, as when John Cage's composition, *4'33"* (*Four minutes and thirty-three seconds*), was first presented in 1952, thus recasting the scope of music to include the absence of sound (Solomon 2007). In both instances, the boundaries of the scope of the activity are fairly permeable, and the process of the activity works dynamically to shape what is – and perhaps what is not – included within that scope. Given these observations about fluidity, dynamism, and implicitness, one could well ask why consider second language teacher education in terms of its scope?

Perhaps the short answer is because thinking about scope helps to frame and reflect on the development of an area of activity, particularly such a complex one as educating individuals to become (better) language teachers. In teaching, we regularly make assumptions about what we are – or are not – teaching, and these assumptions shape the scope of the content. In the era of audio-lingualism, for example, when we assumed that language was a set of habits, classroom activities usually did not include opportunities for open-ended conversation or generative expression (Larsen-Freeman 1986). Thus, what we later came to call language “use” activities were largely outside the scope of classroom teaching. Subsequently, with the so-called communicative revolution in language teaching, “use” came within the scope of the presentation-practice-use framework of lesson planning.

Teachers and educators will talk about certain aspects of teaching and learning as being outside the scope of their responsibilities. In this way, the activity of teaching hinges on certain common understandings, whether implicit or explicit, of a particular scope. These understandings are usually assumed about the content (what content is and what of it learners bring or already know), about how learners learn that content (i.e., what is within versus beyond the scope of the classroom or instructional setting), and what learners should know and be able to do as an outcome of the teaching. These three dimensions of *content*, *process*, and *outcome* can serve to frame the rather shrouded landscape of the activity of second language teacher education, outline what is included or excluded from its scope, and show how those boundaries have shifted over time.

OVERVIEW

A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE SCOPE OF SLTE: A WIDENING GYRE

Until it started to be regularly named as an activity in its own right, the scope of SLTE, like many activities, was largely understood implicitly. Throughout the 1970s, and periods prior to it, language teachers learned to teach through various teacher-training designs, ranging from short courses like the Royal Society of the Arts Certificate of Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults (RSA-CTEFLA) to higher education courses and degrees (see Barduhn and Johnson, Chapter 6). The latter preparation differed for teachers of “foreign” languages, or languages other than English, and those learning to teach English as second or foreign language. For the first group, the scope of preparation and training included language, literature, and cultural studies, with some attention to classroom teaching (Schultz 2000). For the second group, preparing to teach English in situations in which it was either a new or an additional (second) language, the scope included learning about language content through grammar and applied linguistics; about learners, through the study of second language acquisition; and about teaching itself, through the study of classroom methodologies. This second scope coalesced into a field of study known as Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), which was articulated with the founding of the eponymous professional organization in 1981 among other initiatives.

In the 1980s, this scope was refined as increasing attention was given to the person of the teacher. It was argued that the procedural aspects of teacher training could be balanced by the person-centred notion of teacher development (Freeman 1982), and these two could be subsumed as educating strategies within a single superordinate concept, language teacher education (Larsen-Freeman 1983). This line of thinking extended the scope beyond initial preparation in knowledge and skills, usually covered through training, to the development of the individual as a teacher throughout a career (Head and Taylor 1997). The inception of two professional groups, the TESOL Teacher Education Interest Section and the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language Teacher Development Special Interest Group in the early 1980s, helped to catalyze this focus. In a sense, this attention to professional learning throughout a career as part of the scope of SLTE both presaged and ultimately drew upon the growing study of teacher thinking, decision making, and knowledge, all of which had its roots in the late 1980s (Calderhead 1987; Clark and Peterson 1986). When U.S. researchers coined the term *teacher–learner* (Kennedy 1991), they articulated a broad movement in scope. Teachers were now seen as actors in two fields of activity: with students in classrooms where they *taught*, and in formally instructed settings of professional training, from short courses to full postgraduate degrees, and nonformal settings, such as internships or professional development schools, where they *learned*.

Arguably though, the 1990s marked the watershed in refining the scope of second language teacher education. The publication at the start of that decade of Richards and Nunan's (1990) collection titled *Second Language Teacher Education* was significant in several ways. The volume brought together thinking from a variety of sources including trainer accounts of activities, program designs, and conceptual arguments; the chapters focused on practices, or the “doing,” of teacher education; and the authors publicly labeled the activity as such. Thus, scope was set out in different terms, moving beyond the language-learning-teaching framework that had characterized the previous definitions largely situated in higher education or field-based certificate programs. As articulated in the 1990s, SLTE included not simply *what* teachers needed to learn, but increasingly *how* they would learn it. This implication – that there were professional learning processes in which language teachers engaged – was articulated more fully in research in the mid 1990s (e.g., Freeman and Richards 1996; Woods 1996). Accompanying these burgeoning conversations about teacher learning were conceptual discussions about the nature of the knowledge base of SLTE (Freeman and Johnson 1998). These discussions argued for positioning SLTE as a form of activity based on a professional learning process that was identity- or meaning-oriented, contingent of the settings of learning and of work, and that developed over time (Johnson 2006). In a sense, the decade of the 1990s shifted the definition of scope in SLTE in three ways. First, the activity itself was labeled, and thus its boundaries were (re)defined; second, an independent research base for SLTE began to develop; and third, alternative conceptions of what that scope might include were introduced. These three intellectual streams served to define SLTE as an activity in its own right. In this process of definition however, the term *second language* was increasingly taken to refer to English as a foreign, second, or additional language.

The broadening of scope was not without argument, however. Some contended that it sacrificed the focus on what was essential in SLTE, which they defined variously as knowledge of content through applied linguistics and / or understanding of language learning, through second language acquisition (e.g., Yates and Muchisky 2003). Others contended that, by drawing on research and theorizing from education and professional learning more generally, what they saw as the unique focus on second languages was potentially lost or diluted (e.g., Tarone and Allwright 2005). In a sense though, the real challenge was not what would – or would not – be included within the potential scope of SLTE, but rather a changing understanding of the complex interrelation between teachers' professional

learning and how they applied what they learned. Throughout the 1980s, the scope assumed that SLTE concentrated on learning professional input, defined variously as a mix of knowledge and skills, and then that input would be applied in contexts through the activity of teaching. With the development of research into teacher learning and different conceptualizations of the knowledge base, this input-application relationship was redefined. Context was understood as more than simply a venue of application, rather it was seen as a basis for learning.

CURRENT APPROACHES AND PRACTICES

THE DESIGN OF SLTE

This very brief history sketches out a widening gyre of the scope of SLTE, from a focus on training in knowledge and skills, to development of the individual teacher, to a broader examination of a common professional learning process and alternative conceptualizations of what was being learned through that process. As is often the case in defining the scope of a complex activity, each subsequent articulation seems to subsume, or refine, those that preceded it.

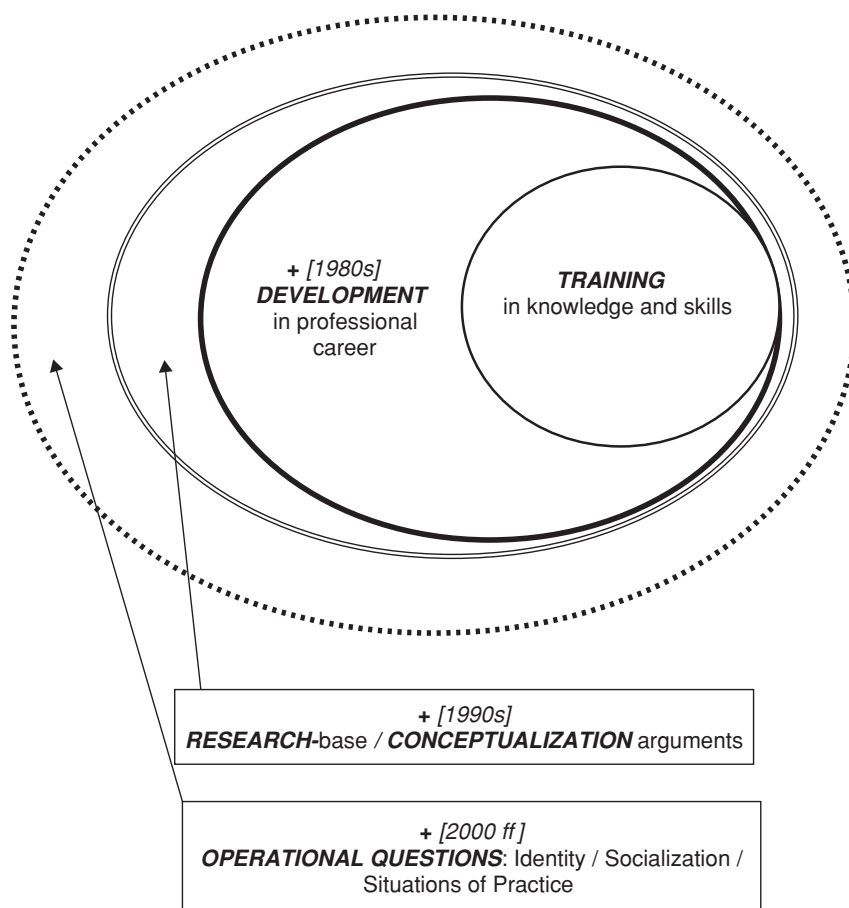


Figure 1 The Widening Gyre of SLTE

In this expanding understanding of scope, the notion of what is – or is not – included in the design of SLTE activities is also expanded. Early concerns focused on the nature of training activities, such as micro-teaching for example (Zeichner 1999). Then subsequently, questions of ongoing support and professional development were raised as teacher training was extended through professional development to encompass a career trajectory. Research and conceptual arguments introduced issues of coherence as questions were raised about the sequence of professional learning and which aspects of teaching were best learned at which points in a career and through which processes.

The challenge in this widening gyre of the scope of SLTE lay in how to operationalize it. When the content started to be defined not simply in terms of disciplinary knowledge – applied linguistics; second language acquisition; or literature, culture, and civilization – accompanied by skills of classroom pedagogy, but rather in terms of social practices, the substance of SLTE became anchored more clearly in classroom interactions and in the activity of teaching itself. Professional learning processes were redefined in a broader sense to include not only what happened in instructed teacher-training environments, but also the wider influences of socialization evident in individual development. These processes were refocused as much on the evolution of participants' professional identities (see Miller, Chapter 17) as on the ways in which they learned new knowledge or ways of doing things in classrooms. Thus, it began to make sense to think in terms of how these new identities are developed: What forms of engagement lead to professional learning?

The notion of where it is all headed has become increasingly important, so the relative impacts, or outcomes, of various SLTE designs have become central to discussions of this expanding definition of scope as well. When SLTE was centrally concerned with inputs, as it was in teacher-training designs, discussions of the longer-term influences, or durability, of those inputs were often confounded by the wide variety in contexts of application (Freeman 2004). How could one teacher-training course adequately prepare all participants for the classroom and school contexts in which they would teach as they left the course and fanned out often across the globe? How could a teaching degree prepare participants for the work they would encounter throughout their teaching careers? These questions raised the gap of applicability; to narrow it, teacher-training activities were maneuvered to be as close to actual teaching contexts as possible. Short-courses, for example, were often run by language schools on their premises, with these organizations then hiring many of these short-course graduates as teachers. However, as teaching contexts – classrooms and schools themselves – came to be seen as scaffolds for professional learning in school-based learning designs like internships and mentoring for example, the question of how particular SLTE designs shaped what participants learned over time was increasingly relevant. Thus, issues of the substance of social practices in SLTE became part of its scope, which raised many related questions, such as How does engagement in particular SLTE designs contribute in shaping participants' professional identities? And how are we to examine the outcomes or influences of SLTE designs on participants' ongoing professional work and careers?

ISSUES AND DIRECTIONS

RECASTING THE DIMENSIONS OF SCOPE: SUBSTANCE, ENGAGEMENT, AND INFLUENCE

These three elements – *substance*, *engagement*, and *influence*, or *outcome* – outline key dimensions of the expanding scope of SLTE. *Substance* raises the question of what SLTE is supposed to be about and what participants are supposed to learn through specific activities or designs. Substance brings together what has conventionally been thought of as

content – what participants are supposed to learn and know – with process, how they are to learn it, and setting or learning and environment in both the physical and social senses. *Engagement*, which grows out of the process aspects of substance, raises questions of how professional learning is supposed to unfold in both the short and long terms. In other words, which learning processes are explicit and implicit in particular activities? And how do these aggregate to professional learning and identity over time, through an SLTE program, and even over a career?

Influence, or *outcome*, introduces understanding and gauging results: How are the outcomes of a particular SLTE design judged? In what terms, in the broadest sense, is the efficacy of SLTE designs described? This leads to the question of metrics or measures, which is an active and controversial aspect of policy discussions about what is known in the U.S. as “teacher quality” for example. Judging or measuring efficacy is not in itself problematic; however, it is important to anchor such considerations firmly in what can – and cannot – be said about the complex interrelations between teaching and learning generally. Since teaching does not make learning happen per se, these metrics must be far more nuanced than simple causal or even correlative measures. At the same time, it is clear that teaching does influence classroom learning, and so the stronger and weaker claims of how that influence happens are well worth examining and tracing back to antecedents and supports in teacher education.

These dimensions combine as three axes into a useful new map of the territory of SLTE.

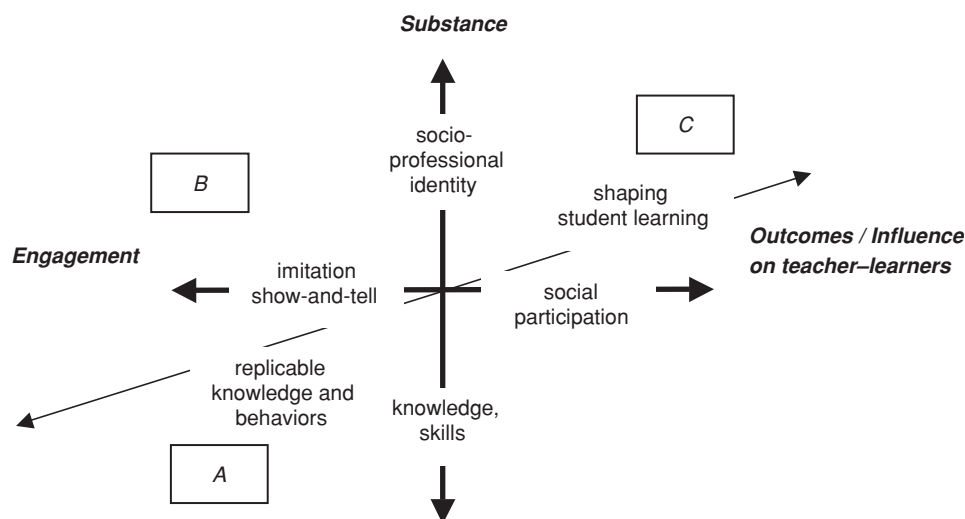


Figure 2 Dimensions of the Scope of SLTE

The axis of *substance* ranges from defining content as knowledge and skills to viewing SLTE as a process of learning and assuming a new socioprofessional identity as a teacher, whereas the intersecting axis shows how participants engage in the content runs from processes of imitation to participation. The sector A then captures what we might think of as most conventional SLTE designs, from lectures to short-course inputs to micro-teaching, which focus on the teacher–learner generating replicable knowledge and behaviors. Sector B, in contrast, abandons formally organized inputs to focus on learning directly in and from school contexts. In the nonformal sense, approaches labeled variously as “learning by doing,” “sink or swim,” or “sitting with Nellie” fall in this sector; they share with

most apprenticeship models of teacher learning an ad hoc view of professional learning as imitating others in the social context of the classroom.

As argued previously, however, the widened gyre of scope has pushed SLTE increasingly toward designs that are fully embedded in social contexts and that emphasize participation as the main vehicle of engagement and learning. Designs in sector C aim at developing professional identity through social participation, as in the formally organized designs of mentoring or team-teaching for example. In contrast to the ad hoc approaches in sector B, the activities in sector C are consciously designed to provide social and intellectual scaffolds that build toward fully competent professional participation. In a sense, the contrast captures the difference between a casual group of classmates who may gather to study together (sector B) versus the structured expectations of team project assignments or peer teaching / feedback groups (sector C). Although both forms of social organization occur within the scope of SLTE designs, they lead to potentially very different outcomes. They both can lead to professional learning, but the key distinction is that the former is an ad hoc social structure, whereas the latter can be carefully orchestrated to use participation as a vehicle for learning.

CONCLUSION

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Defining the scope of any activity – from parenting, to musicianship, to language teacher education – is a tricky undertaking. As I argued at the beginning of this chapter, scope is often a largely de facto notion defined implicitly in the doing of a particular activity. Social expectations and norms contribute to what is seen as part of, or beyond, that scope. In the case of SLTE, arguments about scope have largely been organized intuitively based on tradition and convention. Thus, contentions about the centrality within the scope of SLTE of knowledge of applied linguistics or second language acquisition have been put forward based largely on the history of attendant disciplines, like linguistics or psychology, rather than on clear evidence of how such knowledge influences the activity of teaching or even student learning. In the last decade, an expanding research base has reshaped arguments about the scope of SLTE. Such research has focused on the heart of matter – how people learn to teach languages – and thus has helped to reframe many of the conventional dichotomies, such as theory and practice or content and process. By articulating a different landscape, research and theorizing about professional learning in language teaching has shaped a new conversation of scope. To operationalize these findings and insights, it has been necessary to amplify and redefine known constructs, such as content and process or disciplinary knowledge and application and to examine the enterprise from a new perspective. Substance, engagement, and influence as dimensions of scope should help in this regard.

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CHAPTER 2

Trends in Second Language Teacher Education

Karen E. Johnson

INTRODUCTION

L2 teacher education has been something we have done, rather than something we have studied, for much of our professional history. And the doing of L2 teacher education, that is, how we prepare L2 teachers to do the work of this profession, has been influenced by several trends that have helped to reconceptualize the ways in which we think about L2 teachers, L2 teacher learning, and L2 teaching. Fueling these trends have been shifting epistemological perspectives on learning in general, and on L2 learning and L2 teacher learning in particular, which have occurred in how various intellectual traditions had come to conceptualize human learning. More specifically, these include historically documented shifts from behaviorist to cognitive to situated, social, and distributed views of human cognition (Cobb and Bowers 1999; Greeno, Collins, and Resnick 1996; Putman and Borko 2000).

OVERVIEW

Informed largely by recent research on teacher cognition (Borg 2003; Freeman 2002; Woods 1996), L2 teacher educators have come to recognize that the normative ways of acting and interacting and the values, assumptions, and attitudes that are embedded in the classrooms where teachers were once students – in the teacher education programs where they received their professional credentialing and in the schools where they now work as professional teachers – shape the complex ways in which teachers think about themselves, their students, the activities of teaching, and the teaching–learning process. L2 teacher educators have come to recognize teacher learning as socially negotiated and contingent on knowledge of self, students, subject matter, curricula, and setting. And L2 teacher educators have begun to conceptualize L2 teachers as users and creators of legitimate forms of knowledge who make decisions about how best to teach their L2 students within complex socially,

culturally, and historically situated contexts. L2 teacher education programs no longer view L2 teaching as a matter of simply translating theories of second language acquisition (SLA) into effective instructional practices, but as a dialogic process of coconstructing knowledge that is situated in and emerges out of participation in particular sociocultural practices and contexts. And although L2 teacher education programs around the globe face a multitude of social, institutional, and political constraints that work against the creation of professional development opportunities for L2 teachers that are consistent with the epistemological stance of the sociocultural turn (Johnson 2006), the trends that have helped to solidify these reconceptualizations include call for: 1) reconceptualizing the knowledge base of L2 teacher education, 2) recognizing the legitimacy of practitioner knowledge, 3) broadening the definition of language and SLA, and 4) changing the nature of what constitutes professional development.

ISSUES AND DIRECTIONS

RECONCEPTUALIZING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE OF L2 TEACHER EDUCATION

A knowledge base is, in essence, a professional self-definition. It reflects a widely accepted conception of what people need to know and are able to do to carry out the work of a particular profession. In L2 teacher education, the knowledge base informs three broad areas: 1) the content of L2 teacher education programs, or *what L2 teachers need to know*; 2) the pedagogies that are taught in L2 teacher education program, or *how L2 teachers should teach*; and 3) the institutional forms of delivery through which both the content and pedagogies are learned, or *how L2 teachers learn to teach*. So, the knowledge base of L2 teacher education is, by definition, the basis upon which we make decisions about how to prepare L2 teachers to do the work of this profession.

In 1998, Donald Freeman and I called for the reconceptualization of the knowledge base of L2 teacher education (Freeman and Johnson 1998). We pointed out that the content of L2 teacher education programs (*what L2 teachers need to know*) had been largely drawn from our parent disciplines, most notably theoretical linguistics and SLA, and very little from the work of L2 teachers and L2 teaching itself. Even today, one needs to look no further than the *Directory of Teacher Education Programs in TESOL in the United States and Canada* (TESOL 2005–2007) to see that knowledge of formal properties of language and theories of SLA continue to be positioned as foundational knowledge for the professional preparation of L2 teachers. Our history, instantiated in the curriculum of L2 teacher education programs, reflects the traditional “applied science” model (Wallace 1991), which assumes one can simply take disciplinary knowledge about language and SLA and apply it to the language classroom. Historically such disciplinary knowledge has been neatly packaged into the curricular content of L2 pedagogies (*how L2 teachers should teach*). In fact, SLA researchers have long made claims about the role that SLA research has or should have on how second languages are taught (Chaudron 1988; O’Malley and Chamont 1990; VanPatton 1989). Thus, the knowledge base of L2 teacher education has been defined largely based on how language learners acquire a second language and less so on how L2 teaching is learned or how it is practiced (see Freeman and Johnson 1998).

In order to build a knowledge base for L2 teacher education that includes attention to the activity of L2 teaching itself; that is, who does it, where it is done, and how it is done, Donald Freeman and I argued that the knowledge base of L2 teacher education must include not only disciplinary or subject matter knowledge that defines how languages are structured, used, and acquired, but it must also account for the *content* of L2 teaching;

in other words, “what and how language is actually taught in L2 classrooms as well as teachers and students’ perception of that content” (1998, p. 410). The problem, as Freeman (2004) cogently argues, is that the knowledge base of L2 teacher education has assumed that these two types of knowledge are one in the same. That is, the disciplinary knowledge that defines what language is, how it is used, and how it is acquired that has emerged out of the disciplines of theoretical and applied linguistics is the same knowledge that teachers use to teach the L2 and that, in turn, is the same knowledge that students need in order to learn the L2. However, in mainstream educational research, a distinction has been made between the recognized disciplinary knowledge of a particular field and the pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman 1987) that teachers use to make the content of their instruction relevant and accessible to students. For example, mathematics education in the North American context has been able to tease apart the disciplinary definitions and theories of mathematics from the mathematical content that is useful to teach mathematical concepts in K–12 instructional settings. This is not to say that math teachers do not need to know the disciplinary knowledge of their field, but it does suggest that math teachers also need to acquire the pedagogical content knowledge that will enable them to teach mathematical concepts in ways that will make it possible for their students to learn them (Hill, Rowen, and Ball 2005).

In L2 instructional contexts some very promising research has begun the laborious process of documenting the pedagogical content knowledge of L2 instruction. Given our professional history of teaching “language,” it is not surprising that most of this research has focused on teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge of grammar. Borg’s (1998) study of an EFL teacher’s understanding of grammar teaching placed pedagogical content knowledge of grammar within the teacher’s overall pedagogical system. While he found little evidence of direct translation of linguistic knowledge of grammar in this teacher’s instructional practices, he did uncover deeply held beliefs (see Borg, Chapter 16) about the importance of awareness-raising and grammatical accuracy, the knowledge and needs of the students, and the need to actively engage students in their own learning. Johnston and Goettsch (2000) examined ESL teachers’ working knowledge of grammar in terms of how they crafted grammatical explanations, examples, and activities for their L2 students. They found very little evidence of linguistic knowledge in teachers’ grammatical explanations but instead extensive evidence of “on-the-spot adjudication of sample sentences the student throw out” (p. 9) that focus much more on intention and meaning than structural or even functional rules. Thus, they argue against a knowledge base that is envisioned as a “repository of inert facts” but instead it should reflect the “highly process-oriented” nature of how teachers dialogically engaged with their students as they walk them through “the gradual acquisition of understanding rather than in terms of the transfer of information” (p. 466).

Research that has focused on L2 teachers and the activity of L2 teaching itself has begun to document an essential kind of knowledge that is critical for L2 teachers. Whether we call it the *content* of L2 teaching (Freeman and Johnson 1998), the *pedagogical content knowledge* (Shulman 1987), or the *practitioner knowledge* (Hiebert et al. 2002), it positions L2 teachers as users and creators of knowledge that constitutes the activity of L2 teaching. The knowledge base of L2 teacher education has just begun to recognize, document, and make accessible to L2 teachers the pedagogical content knowledge held and used by L2 teachers as they carry out their work in the diverse contexts where they teach.

RECOGNIZING THE LEGITIMACY OF PRACTITIONER KNOWLEDGE

To build a broader knowledge base for L2 teacher education requires that we accept as legitimate knowledge that is generated by and from practitioners as they participate in the social practices associated with L2 teaching and learning. Practitioner knowledge is linked

with practice in that it develops in response to issues that come up in practice. Thus, it is integrated and organized around problems of practice and as such, it is detailed, concrete, and specific. Practitioner knowledge is integrated in such a way that it is not easily separated out into typologies but instead is organized around making connections among and between types of knowledge to address problems of practice. And while these characteristics make practitioner knowledge useful and valuable for teachers, they also limit its applicability in that the instructional context figures so tightly with activity. For practitioner knowledge to become part of the knowledge base of teacher education, Hiebert et al. (2002), suggest that it must be made public and represented in such a way that it is accessible to others and open for inspection, verification, and modification.

The reflective teaching movement (Burton, Chapter 30; Lockhart and Richards 1994; Schon 1983, 1987; Zeichner and Liston 1996), action research (Burns, Chapter 29; Edge 2001; Kemmis and McTaggart 1988; Wallace 1998), and the teacher research movement (Burns 1999; Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999; Edge and Richards 1993; Freeman 1998) have helped to legitimize practitioner knowledge by highlighting the importance of reflection on and inquiry into teachers' experiences as mechanisms for change in classroom practices. While teacher research stems from teachers' own desires to make sense of their classroom experiences, it is defined by ordered ways of gathering, recollecting, and / or recording information, documenting experiences both inside and outside of the classroom, and creating written records of the insights that emerge. Practitioner knowledge can enrich the knowledge base of L2 teacher education precisely because it is generated in and emerges out of teachers' lived experiences, it highlights the interconnectedness of how teachers think about their work, it is deeply connected to the problems of practice, and it is situated in the contexts in which such problems are constructed (Johnson 2006).

Another form of practitioner knowledge largely absent from the traditional knowledge base of L2 teacher education is how practitioners make sense of the disciplinary knowledge they are exposed to in their professional-development programs. Two very different approaches to the documentation of this sort of knowledge have been published recently. The first is a collection of classroom-based research studies that examine how teachers enrolled in professional course work make sense of and take up the disciplinary knowledge of applied linguistics (Bartels 2005). Conducted by applied linguists, most of the studies in this collection focus on the acquisition and use of disciplinary knowledge about language (KAL). Overall, the collection indicates a usefulness of KAL in shaping teachers conceptions of language but a general lack of transfer of this knowledge to classroom language teaching.

An alternative means of documenting how practitioners make sense of disciplinary knowledge is found in a collection of "dialogues" between *TQ* readers (classroom teachers) and *TQ* authors (researchers) of previously published *TQ* articles that focus on issues of language, culture, and power (Sharkey and Johnson 2003). The dialogs highlight the complex ways in which teachers actively link theoretical knowledge to their own experiential knowledge as they reframe the way they describe and interpret their lived experiences. The new understandings that emerge enable teachers to reorganize their experiential knowledge and this reorganization creates a new lens through which they interpret their understandings of themselves and their classroom practices. Thus, this sort of knowledge has a great deal of experiential knowledge in it but it is organized around and transformed through theoretical knowledge.

The current challenge for L2 teacher educators is to position the various forms of practitioner knowledge alongside the disciplinary knowledge that has dominated the traditional knowledge base of L2 teacher education. This requires that practitioners change their view of teaching as something that is personal and private to teaching as a professional activity that can be improved if it is made public and examined openly. In addition, it requires

that researchers move from undervaluing the knowledge that practitioners acquire in their own classrooms to recognizing the potential of this knowledge to transform both classroom practice and the knowledge base of L2 teacher education (see also Golombek, [Chapter 15](#)).

BROADENING THE DEFINITION OF LANGUAGE AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

About ten years ago, Firth and Wagner (1997) questioned the taken-for-granted assumption in traditional SLA research that language is a stable, neutral, and naturally ordered hierarchical system consisting of predetermined syntactic, phonological, morphological, and pragmatic characteristics that reside on some deeper psycho-cognitive level in the individual. They called for greater attention to the contextual and interactional dimensions of language use, a broadening of the traditional SLA database, and more emic (participant-relevant) sensitivity toward SLA concepts. Calls for broadening the definition of language and SLA subsequently called into question the curricular content and methodologies of traditional L2 instruction; namely, structural and static descriptions of what language “is” and pedagogical practices based on speculations about the mental processes through which language is assumed to be acquired. Even contemporary instantiations of communicative language teaching that consist of making discreet bits of language (both form and function) visible to learners (either explicitly or implicitly) and then create opportunities for L2 learners to try them out in communicative contexts have come under scrutiny.

From the epistemological stance of the sociocultural turn, converging research from anthropology, applied linguistics, psychology, and education has taken up a social and functional understanding of language as social practice. Common to these intellectual disciplines is the unification of language and culture, the notion that social interaction is central to language development, and that the language of the individual develops in relation to its functions within the sociocultural activity in which the individual participates. Likewise, sociocultural theory has worked to underscore the role that language plays in serving as a tool for mediating thinking (Leont’ev 1981; Vygotsky 1978). Grounded in the notion that all social activities are structured and gain meaning in historically and culturally situated ways, the language used to describe an activity gains its meaning not from some underlying representation encoded in the words themselves but in concrete communicative activity in specific sociocultural contexts. Thus, people do not learn a “language” per se, but instead they learn different “social languages” (Gee 1996, 2004), and each social language offers distinctive grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic resources that allow them to enact particular socially situated identities and to engage in a specific socially situated activities. Language as social practice reflects a dynamic constellation of sociocultural resources that emerge out of and are re-created within social and historical usage. Thus, any utterance creates a context of use, or genre (Bakhtin 1981), in which the utterance typically belongs, conjuring up specific meanings and inferences while simultaneously creating a space for one’s own voice to be expressed.

When language is conceptualized as social practice, L2 teaching shifts toward helping learners develop the capacity to interpret and generate meanings that are appropriate within particular sociocultural contexts (Lantolf and Johnson 2007). Instructionally, the point of departure is no longer the discreet form or communicative function but the conceptual meanings that are being expressed that denote ways of feeling, seeing, and being in the L2 world. Emerging research on concept-based L2 instruction focuses learners’ attention on knowing how certain concepts are encoded in the conceptual metaphors, lexical networks, and schemes that represent particular ways of experiencing and representing the world