

# Second Language Teacher Education: A Review of the Literature

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**Abstract:** *During the past decade, an increasing number of publications have critically examined traditional views of second language teacher education and research and have called for a reconceptualization of the field (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Richards & Nunan, 1990; Schulz, 2000). The field has also recognized the need to establish standards for the content of language teacher education and outline its knowledge base so that new research avenues and effective teacher education models can be developed (Guntermann, 1993). This article attempts to delineate the “state of the art” of second language teacher education through a review of recent research and presents an overview of current perspectives on the field’s knowledge base. The article concludes with a proposal for a reflective approach to the preparation of second language teachers that draws from the literature review.*

## Introduction

The field of second language teacher education seems to be slowly evolving from a perspective that “was animated more by tradition and opinion than by theoretical definitions” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 398) to a new perspective that seeks to reconceptualize the field and establish a research-based approach to language teacher education. Richards and Nunan (1990) hold that we are moving from a approach of acquainting teacher candidates with classroom techniques and skills to an approach whereby teacher candidates develop their own theories and become aware of their own learning-to-teach processes. The field is realizing that to understand how language teachers learn to teach and how their professional lives evolve, we must inquire into their cognitive worlds and personal teaching practices (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Freeman & Richards, 1996).

This new perspective has resulted in a paradigm shift toward more qualitative-oriented research approaches, that is, inquiry conducted in naturally occurring settings that allows for deeper understanding of phenomena and participants’ lived experiences. Qualitative-oriented methods such as ethnographies, case studies, narratives, life stories, diary studies, and action research studies have been found particularly well suited to exploring teachers’ ways of knowing and the contexts in which they work (Crookes, 1997; Freeman & Richards, 1996).

Recognizing the centrality of the teacher and the need for more principled approaches to second language teacher education, however, is only a first step. Freeman and Johnson (1998) assert “that teacher education has been much done but relatively little studied in the field” (p. 398). The field of theory and research on language teacher education is still in its early infancy and is said to be lagging a decade behind generic teacher education (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). The field has no common conceptual framework of organization, and very little attention has been paid to how second language teachers learn to teach, how they develop teaching skills, how they link theory and practice, and how their previous experiences inform their belief systems

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and thus what they do in the classroom (Freeman & Richards, 1996).

Moreover, second language teacher education itself is not an integrated field in many respects. It is encompassed by three different subfields with their own orientations and sets of practices: English as second language (ESL) teacher education, foreign language (FL) teacher education, and bilingual teacher education. Tedick and Walker (1994, 1995, 1996, 2000) have argued cogently for a paradigm shift that could integrate the second language teaching subfields.<sup>1</sup> The authors recognize that each context is unique and serves a different population; however, there is a common goal that drives all subfields: effective second language teaching and learning. Even though differences must be carefully controlled for when research is conducted in FL and ESL/EFL, the fundamental similarities of these subfields justify joining forces and sharing research findings — thus avoiding duplication of efforts (Freeman & Richards, 1996; Hammadou, 1993; Lange, 1990; Tedick & Walker, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000).

Lange (1990) points out that both ESL and FL teacher education could benefit from sharing research into the nature of language teacher preparation and devising models for effective teacher education. Steps taken in this direction have been documented by Johnston and Irujo (2001) and Tedick and Walker (1996). Johnston and Irujo (2001) present selected papers from a conference on language teacher education and research that had the aim of bringing together “research, theory, and best practices from all contexts of language teacher education, and to initiate and sustain meaningful professional dialogue across languages, levels, and settings” (p. 1). Tedick and Walker (1996) describe the merging of ESL and FL teacher education programs to prepare teacher candidates to work in more than one second language setting.<sup>2</sup>

### **Second Language Teacher Education:<sup>3</sup> The State of the Art**

Research focusing on second language teacher education is conspicuously missing from the large amount of literature on general teacher education. Lafayette (1993) reports that foreign languages are not included among the 11 specific curricular areas treated in the *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education* (Houston, 1990). A review of a more recent version of the handbook (Sikula, 1996) and of current indexes of general educational journals confirms that issues related to second language teacher education are largely absent from this literature.

Similarly, the literature on second language teacher education research is remarkably small compared with the considerable amount of literature on language teaching and learning, as demonstrated by reviews by Bernhardt and Hammadou (1987), Freeman and Johnson (1998), and

Schulz (2000).

In a landmark article, Bernhardt and Hammadou (1987) reviewed a decade of literature on foreign language teacher education, covering the years 1977 to 1987. The review addressed three questions: “What should foreign language teachers know? What should they do? How should foreign language teachers be prepared?” (p. 290). The authors were able to locate a mere 78 articles on these topics.

What is most disturbing, however, is that only 8 of these 78 articles were research-based. Furthermore, the literature reviewed showed a lack of awareness of or reliance on general teacher education research. Only two citations referred to articles published in the American Education Research Association’s *Handbook of Research on Teaching*. These findings led Bernhardt and Hammadou (1987) to conclude that the research base in foreign language teacher education was comprised of the perspectives of foreign language teacher educators rather than of a systematic and principled approach to research and theory building.

More recently, Freeman and Johnson (1998) and Schulz (2000) have also referred to the dearth of publications on second language teacher education. Freeman and Johnson report that only 9% of the articles published in *TESOL Quarterly* between 1980 and 1997 pertained to the topic of language teacher preparation. The meager amount of research that took place in the 1980s was process-product oriented and focused almost exclusively on effective teacher behaviors as reflected in learner outcomes and in teacher-student interactions that appeared to lead to successful second language learning. The teaching process was thus viewed merely as a set of discrete behaviors and techniques carried out by the teacher during instruction.

According to Freeman and Johnson (1998), process-product research ignores and undervalues teachers’ mental processes, experiences, and perspectives. It also reduces teaching to quantifiable discrete behaviors, thus failing to recognize the complexity involved in the teaching endeavor.

Schulz’s 2000 historical review traces the main developments in second language teacher education from 1916 to 1999 from the perspective of articles published in the *Modern Language Journal*. The author notes that almost no research on teacher education, other than surveys, was conducted prior to 1961 and that only a very few, scattered studies that included teacher observation systems were undertaken in the following years. In the last decade, only two of the seven articles dealing with language teacher education published in the *Modern Language Journal* were research-based. This scenario led Schulz (2000, pp. 516–17) to conclude that “FL teacher preparation is still long on rhetoric, opinions, and traditional dogma, and short on empirical research that attempts to verify those

opinions or traditional practice.”

There is also a lack of meaningful data on the state of the art of language teacher education programs. Freeman and Johnson (1998) state that recognizing that learning to teach is an ongoing and complex process and the sum of many cognitive, affective, individual, and contextual factors does not necessarily mean that today's language teacher education programs operate under this set of assumptions. The authors express their misgivings about the orientation of current language teacher education programs. They argue that many programs still use a transmissive model whereby teachers are provided with a body of codified knowledge to be applied in the classroom.

For Schulz (2000), the growth of teacher education has been “disappointingly small.” Many issues related to the preparation of foreign language teachers remain unresolved after more than 80 years. According to Schulz, three major problems that continue to plague language teacher preparation programs are: (1) failure of the programs to provide prospective language teachers with the language proficiency required for effective teaching; (2) lack of communication and cooperation between the foreign language departments and education departments responsible for language teacher education; and (3) lack of consensus about teacher certification among states.

### **Second Language Teacher Education Research: The Last Decade**

In spite of the grim scenario painted by the aforementioned reviews, the future of second language teacher education research looks promising. There has been rapid growth in literature examining theoretical views and reporting research on language teacher education. These publications help validate the field as such and lay the foundation for a more theoretical and research-driven approach to preparing second language teachers.

Important publications include Freeman and Johnson's 1998 *TESOL Quarterly* special issue, “Research and Practice in English Language Teacher Education”; Freeman and Richards' 1996 *Teacher Learning in Language Teaching*; Gunterman's 1993 *Developing Language Teachers for a Changing World*; Johnston and Irujo's 2001 *Research and Practice in Language Teacher Education*; Moore's 1996 *Foreign Language Teacher Education*; Phillips' 1997 *Collaborations: Meeting New Goals, New Realities*; Richards' 1998 *Beyond Training*; and Richards and Nunan's 1990 *Second Language Teacher Education*.

The following review of studies draws from the publications cited above and from additional sources generated by computer and manual searches. All studies reviewed have been published in the last decade and are mostly qualitative in nature. Data collection methods included personal language histories, diary entries, teachers' analyses of

their diaries, video recordings, reports of action research carried out by the participants, verbal and written accounts of trainees' teaching experiences, observations, microteaching, introspective interviews, stimulus-recall procedures, practicum reports, and peer observation reports.

The settings in which these studies took place were both preservice and in-service language teacher education programs; thus, the participant teachers included both experienced and inexperienced individuals. They also included both native and nonnative speakers of the languages taught. Many studies focused on ESL/EFL teachers, but there were a few that included French and Spanish teachers.

Although the studies posed questions that differed in scope and complexity and had varied timelines, inquiry about teacher development was at the core of all of them. To provide an organizing framework, I will address five themes emerging from the review that illuminate the current state of second language teacher education research: (1) the role of teachers' previous experiences; (2) the role of teacher education programs and preservice practices; (3) teachers' beliefs and instructional decision making; (4) the role of reflection; and (5) the role of collaboration. The themes are interrelated and overlap, but they all contribute to the “big picture” of language teacher development.

### *The Role of Teachers' Previous Learning Experiences*

Several studies highlight the crucial role of previous learning experiences in shaping teachers' personal theories and beliefs about language teaching and learning. (Bailey et al., 1996; Freeman, 1993; Gutiérrez, 1996; Johnson, 1994; Moran, 1996; Numrich, 1996). All these studies support the notion that teachers' previous learning experiences are as important as education programs in shaping teachers' ways of knowing. It was found that in some cases, the experiences prospective teachers had as language learners were more influential on what they did in the classroom than what they learned in their education programs.

The studies point to the pervasive influence of the *apprenticeship of observation* (Lortie, 1975). According to Lortie's construct, prospective teachers have already spent approximately 13,000 hours in classrooms observing teachers. As a result of this continuous observation, they have deep-seated beliefs of what it means to teach when they start their education programs.

Most studies reviewed revealed how participants used previous teachers as models — and at times antimodels — to fashion what they did or did not do in the classroom. For example, in her quest for a teaching model, a participant in Moran's 1996 study built a composite that encompassed various aspects of her previous language teachers in a way that fit her values, her conceptualization of subject matter, and her students.

The participants in Numrich's 1996 study also tended to emulate positive techniques they observed during the second language learning process. The preservice teachers studied by Johnson (1994) were sometimes critical of their previous formal language learning experiences. This was due in part to the perceptions they had of themselves as teachers that conflicted with the images they had retained of their previous teachers.

However, in the absence of alternative models and in an effort to maintain authority in the classroom, these novice teachers resorted to traditional images and used them as models of teaching. Gutiérrez (1996), who used the term "pretraining" to describe prior formal and informal learning experiences, found that the actions participants undertook in the classroom were informed both by their pretraining knowledge and their new teacher education knowledge. Freeman (1996) found that teachers' prior experiences were the basis for building their local language, that is "the vehicle through which teachers explain what goes on in their teaching on a daily basis" (p. 227).

### *The Role of Teacher Education Programs and Preservice Practice*

Another theme investigated by a number of studies is the impact of language teacher education programs and preservice practice on novice teachers' development. There is evidence in the general teacher education literature that teacher education programs have little bearing on what preservice teachers do in their classrooms.

It has also been found that these programs do not adequately prepare prospective teachers for the challenges they find in their initial practices. In the field of second language teacher education, the findings vary somewhat. For example, Johnson (1994) found that the images participants had of their language teacher preparation program were less influential than those that referred to their learning experiences. Participants' references to their teacher preparation program usually focused on how they viewed the different theories of second language acquisition and on whether or not they were in agreement with them.

Johnson's findings also suggest that preservice teachers evaluated the appropriateness of second language theories in light of their initial teaching experiences. Gutiérrez (1996), on the other hand, found that the methods course attended by her participants contributed to transforming the pretraining knowledge they brought with them. Other studies (Freeman, 1996; Richards et al., 1996) indicated that language teacher education programs made beginning teachers familiar with the discourse of teaching and developed a deeper knowledge of the target language.

Richards et al. (1996) indicated that at the end of the program, the preservice teachers participating in their study had internalized terms such as accuracy, eliciting,

feedback, fluency, intonation, stress, target language, and so forth. Furthermore, the participants used these terms accurately and spontaneously. Using excerpts drawn from the data, Freeman (1993) illustrated how participants used this newly acquired professional discourse to rename their experiences and construct their own ways of knowing, one that at times did not necessarily mirror the contents of the preparation programs.

Golombeck (1998), Johnson (1996), and Numrich (1996) investigated preservice teachers' practicums.

Golombek (1998) examined the characteristics of personal practical knowledge and how it informed the practice of two preservice ESL teachers. Personal practical knowledge encompasses dimensions such as "knowledge of the self, knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of instruction, and knowledge of context" (Golombeck, 1998, p. 451). The author found that participants' personal practical knowledge served as an interpretive framework for making sense of their classroom practices.

Numrich (1996) analyzed the diaries of 26 ESL novice teachers and found that the most important initial concern of these subjects had to do with establishing a comfortable classroom atmosphere and a good class management routine. Analysis of the participant's diaries also revealed their perceptions about effective teaching and their sources of frustration. Skills such as managing class time, giving clear directions, meeting students' needs, and focusing on students rather than on the self were found to be the most difficult to acquire.

Similarly, Kwo (1996) and Mok (1994) found that the second language novice teachers participating in their study went through different stages in their student teaching process. At the beginning, for example, they were more concerned about the image they presented to students than about teaching itself. As their field experience progressed, they began to focus more on being effective teachers. Richards et al. (1996) traced the preparation process of three novice teachers and illustrated how a practicum provided them with an opportunity to start developing their own teaching styles.

Johnson's study (1996) described the tensions faced by a preservice ESL teacher when she perceived a mismatch between her vision of teaching and the realities of the classroom — and how she finally found the means for coping with the emerging contradictions.

### *Teachers' Beliefs and Instructional Decision Making*

Language teacher beliefs and decision making is another realm of interest to researchers (Burns, 1996; Johnson, 1992; Smith, 1996; Woods, 1996). Johnson (1992) examined the decision-making processes of six novice teachers. The results indicated that teachers' decision-making and instructional actions were considerably influenced by their

need to “ensure student understanding, motivation and involvement, and instructional management” (p. 527).

Woods’ (1996) book-length study focused on the beliefs, decision-making, and classroom practices of eight language teachers. The researcher advanced a model for explaining teachers’ decision making and planning. According to this model, teachers interpret classroom events in light of their background knowledge and belief systems. In like manner, the interpretations they make of classroom events contribute to transformation of their knowledge and belief systems and provides feedback for subsequent planning. Woods maintained that study participants’ growth resulted from the resolution of the tensions they faced in their practices and the better consistency they achieved between their knowledge, belief systems, and practices. The study also highlighted the situated nature of language teaching. Through the elicitation of participant’s verbalizations, Woods attempted to document their understanding of events within the work context.

The research studies conducted by Smith (1996) and Burns (1996) lend support to Woods’s findings. Both researchers examined the role of contextual factors in the decision-making processes of language teachers. They illustrated how administrative, institutional, collegial, and instructional issues shaped the decisions teachers made.

### *The Role of Reflection*

A number of researchers have examined the impact of reflective practices on language teacher education (Antonek et al., 1997; Kwo, 1996; Mok, 1994; Wallace, 1996).

Mok (1994) studied preservice teachers’ ways of knowing and how they evolved through reflective practice. The findings showed that participants’ reflections were by no means superficial and that their ways of knowing were shaped by several factors, such as theory, practice, background knowledge, and human interactions.

Kwo (1996) found that through reflective practice, study participants achieved consistency between their perceived learning and their real development. Both researchers claimed that the inclusion of action research in language teacher education programs equipped trainees with skills for reflection and facilitated the integration of these skills into their teaching routines in a structured and systematic way.

Antonek et al. (1997) demonstrated the value of portfolios for fostering reflective practice. The researchers examined the portfolio entries of two foreign language student teachers and documented how the reflective process improved overtime, thus providing a window into the participants’ emerging professional identities.

### *The Role of Collaboration*

Four studies addressed the role of collaboration on second

language teacher education (Bailey et al., 1996, Knezevic & Scholl, 1996; Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997; Pennington, 1996).

Bailey described a language methods class in which a collaborative approach was used. It was found that collaborative dialogue provided increased opportunities for participants to explore their understanding of teaching and learning together and thus enrich each other’s conceptions.

Nyikos and Hashimoto (1997) examined the collaboration patterns of 16 students in a foreign language teacher education program. The results showed that the interactions among the participants were social in nature; however, most problem-solving activities were carried out individually. The extent to which participants were able to engage in co-construction of knowledge varied among the groups examined.

Knezevic and Scholl (1996) showed how teaching a graduate Spanish course collaboratively affected two teachers’ understandings of themselves as teachers and of their teaching processes. The results of this study support the notion that collaboration in second language teacher education programs “can lead to enriched learning and improved instruction” (Knezevic & Scholl, 1996, p. 95). It was also found that collaboration addressed the social nature of learning and the increasing isolation in which teachers often find themselves.

Pennington (1996) examined the role of a collaboration component built into a language teacher preparation program. The author reported that participants hardly took advantage of opportunities to share insights, support each other, and work together in problem solving. One of the reasons for such outcomes was that the participant teachers worked at different places and taught different grade levels. Their cultural backgrounds may have also been a factor in their inability to work collaboratively.

## **Language Teachers’ Knowledge Base: Current Views**

The body of knowledge and skills that a second language teacher needed two decades ago is no longer sufficient in today’s global and rapidly changing world. While knowledge of subject matter — viewed as grammar and pedagogy — sufficed 20 years ago, today’s second language teacher faces challenges that require a wider array of competences (Schrier, 1993).

Although there is no consensus about the core knowledge base of language teacher education, some efforts that seek to define what language teachers should know have been undertaken in the last few years. Some perspectives delineating that knowledge are discussed here.

### *Subject-Matter Knowledge*

In an attempt to describe what foreign language prospec-

tive teachers need to know regarding their subject matter, Lafayette (1993) puts forward three components that encompass language teachers' subject matter content knowledge: (1) language proficiency, (2) civilization and culture, and (3) language analysis.

The author argues that language proficiency is crucial for effective teaching. The appropriate level of proficiency for prospective teachers is determined by the different foreign language associations based on ACTFL's Proficiency Guidelines. Ideally, the minimum level should be Advanced Low; unfortunately, a large number of foreign language programs fail to provide prospective teachers with acceptable proficiency levels.

Concerning the culture and civilization component of content knowledge, Lafayette states that prospective teachers should be cognizant of the culture(s) associated with the language they will teach. In addition, they should be prepared to develop students' cultural sensitivities. This implies making informed and effective use of the cultural content of modern materials, but most importantly, helping students gain awareness of themselves as cultural beings and thus of others, a process that hopefully will make them more accepting of people and things unfamiliar to them.

Regarding language analysis, Lafayette (1993) contends that knowledge of linguistic structures is no longer sufficient. Prospective teachers need to become cognizant of applied linguistics as well. Lafayette lists some widely accepted issues of second language acquisition theory with which prospective teachers should be acquainted. These include acquisition order, fossilization, input/output, universal grammar, input processing, contrastive grammar, error correction, learning versus acquisition, interlanguage, transfer, and communicative competence. To transmit this knowledge to prospective teachers, the author recommends the inclusion of courses on general applied linguistics and second language acquisition in the language teacher education programs.

### *Pedagogical Content Knowledge*

Whereas subject-matter knowledge alludes to what teachers know about what they teach, pedagogical content knowledge refers to what teachers know about teaching their particular subject matter. It includes ideas, forms of representation, concepts, analogies, illustrations, explanations, and demonstrations used to make the subject matter comprehensible to students (Shulman, 1986). The author also discusses the importance of pedagogical reasoning, which is the ability of translating subject matter into instruction that is appropriate to the various levels of ability and backgrounds brought by students.

Richards (1998) finds Shulman's concepts of both pedagogical content knowledge and pedagogical reasoning skills a useful frame of reference for examining the knowl-

edge base of second language teacher education. He puts forward six dimensions that in his view should comprise second language teachers' core base knowledge: (1) theories of teaching, (2) teaching skills, (3) communication skills and language proficiency, (4) subject matter knowledge, (5) pedagogical reasoning skills and decision making, and (6) contextual knowledge.

Richards indicates that in addition to the pedagogical skills that any teacher needs regardless of subject matter, second language teachers must develop competencies that relate specifically to language teaching. These include preparing and implementing communicative-oriented activities, establishing an adequate balance between fluency and accuracy, and identifying and treating learners' errors appropriately.

Wing (1993) uses a learner-centered model as a framework for examining the pedagogical content knowledge needed by second language teachers. There is consensus that the main goal in second language learning is the development of language proficiency and cultural awareness. To achieve this goal, language teachers must be able to implement a number of interactive relationships that place the learner at the center. These include opportunities for learners to interact with the target language, with the other actors in the classroom, and with the instructional environment in which learning occurs. According to Wing, a learner-centered model entails teacher's knowledge and competencies in the following areas: how learners learn languages, language developmental stages, learning styles, strategy training for language learning, meaningful interaction patterns for language learning, structuring the classroom environment for language acquisition to occur, and effective use of language materials and technology.

Wing (1993) argues that each teacher's pedagogical structure is unique and is the result of the amalgamation of his or her learning biography as a language student and a pedagogy student. Prospective language teachers usually have the most structured exposure to pedagogical content knowledge during the foreign language methods course. Wing (1993) favors approaches to methods courses that view prospective teachers as decision makers and assist them in developing their own pedagogies and teaching styles.

Dittrich, Shrum, and Stewart (2000) examine pedagogical content knowledge from the perspective of language practitioners. Based on interviews conducted with six teachers, the authors identify three general categories of what teachers need to know and be able to do. The categories, which are consistent with the language teacher educators' perspective of what constitutes pedagogical content knowledge as reflected in their methods courses, are (1) knowledge of the academic content of the subject matter and how to teach it; (2) knowledge of the learner; and (3)

knowledge of the self. Embedded in these categories are issues confronting the language teachers of the twenty-first century such as the use of technology, the inclusion of students with special needs in foreign language classrooms, and the increasing numbers of heritage language learners. To meet these challenges, prospective teachers need to acquire knowledge and competencies not required two decades ago. With regard to the teaching of heritage students, “little has been done to identify the knowledge needed by teachers” (Dittrich et al., 2000, p. 67).

To better prepare prospective language teachers, the authors suggest including clinical practice in schools as a component of the methods course. This practice would enable teacher candidates to acquire critical contextual knowledge that cannot be learned elsewhere. Exploring avenues for more collaborative relationships between language teacher educators and classroom teachers is also emphasized.

### *The Standards*

Dittrich et al. (2000) also point out the central role that both the standards task forces and the foreign language professional organizations have played in advancing the discussion on language teachers’ knowledge in the last few years. Together the *Program Standards for Foreign Language Teacher Preparation* and the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* provide a framework of reference for what teachers need to know and be able to do.

The NCATE Foreign Language Teacher Standards Writing Team (2001) outlines in a draft document six performance-based standards that delineate “the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to be an effective foreign language teacher” (p. 4). The standards include (1) Language Linguistics, Comparisons; (2) Cultures, Literatures, Cross-Disciplinary Concepts; (3) Language Acquisition Theories and Instructional Practices; (4) Integration of Standards into Curriculum and Instruction; (5) Assessment of Language and Cultures; and (6) Professionalism. The final draft of the NCATE standards is expected in October 2002.

The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (1999), on the other hand, delineate what students should know and be able to do with the target language. Phillips and Lafayette (1996) urge language teacher candidates to become knowledgeable about the standards because they “serve as a frame, a map, to the range of alternative pedagogical strategies used by the teacher to optimize foreign language learning” (p. 201).

### *Freeman and Johnson’s Framework*

Freeman and Johnson (1998) propose a framework for the knowledge-base of language teacher education comprised by three interrelated domains: teacher–learner, social con-

text, and pedagogical process. The teacher–learner domain focuses on the teacher as learner and accounts for the complexities inherent in the learning-to-teach process. The social context dimension views schools and schooling as the social and cultural milieu in which prospective teachers carry out their emerging practices. Since language teaching cannot be divorced from the contexts in which it occurs, it is thus necessary to determine how they affect language teacher education. The third dimension, pedagogical process, refers to the teaching practice.

Freeman and Johnson (1998) distinguish between two categories of the knowledge-base of language teacher education: grounded and a priori. The former is based on classroom practice and how it is experienced and perceived by the teacher; the latter refers to the received knowledge of the discipline. The authors point out the centrality of developing language teachers’ self-understanding as well as their awareness of the contexts of instructional practice. For them the “drive to understand oneself and the impact of one’s work on others lies at the core of the activity of teaching; it is the wellspring of reflective practice, classroom inquiry, and ongoing professional development” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 412).

## **Implications for Language Teacher Education**

This literature review has demonstrated that there is a growing body of theoretical views and research that can inform the development and growth of the language teacher education field, based until now on opinion and tradition. It is suggested here that traditional and transmissive-oriented language teacher education programs should give way to more comprehensive ones. New models and approaches to second language teacher education that place prospective teachers at the center need to be explored. The implications derived from this literature review are presented below in the form of a proposal for a reflective approach to second language teacher education.

### *A Reflective Approach*

A reflective approach should engage teacher candidates in developing their personal theories of teaching, systematically examining their own decision process and teaching practices, and developing critical thinking skills that lead to self-awareness and change (Richards, 1998). A reflective approach views teacher candidates as active agents of their learning-to-teach processes and provides the groundwork for continuous self-development.

For such a model to be effective, it needs to give teacher candidates ample opportunities to acquire both the relevant theoretical underpinnings of the profession and the analytical and reflective skills necessary to complete the connection between theory and practice and thus

develop their own theories.

Second, the model must provide pathways for teacher candidates to critically examine their educational biographies in the light of course content, so that they can become more self-aware. This process involves exploring their previous experiences as learners and the beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes they bring to the education program. The inclusion of procedures such as journal writing, peer observation, self-monitoring, and lesson video recording are suitable tools for collecting data that can serve as the basis for developing self-awareness and critical skills. These tools also provide a window into how prospective teachers think, what they do, what they know, and how they learn to teach (Freeman & Richards, 1996).

A reflective approach to teacher education also requires the creation of meaningful and effective field experiences that lead teacher candidates to integrate theory and practice, to acquire first-hand knowledge about schools and schooling before student teaching, and to start developing essential teaching skills and classroom management skills. Professional Development Schools (PDS) are a vehicle to accomplish these goals. Designed as partnerships between schools of education and local schools, PDS programs offer teacher candidates the opportunity to learn under the tutelage of experienced and effective foreign language teachers prior to student teaching.

Classroom observation is an essential component of a PDS. It is said to lead to enhanced awareness and discovery (Wajnryb, 1992); however, if teacher candidates are to fully benefit from observing full-fledged teachers, it is necessary to train them to become keen observers, or as Richards (1998) puts it, ethnographic observers of the second language classroom culture and the school culture in general. This implies the design of observation tasks that are meaningful and focused, the acquisition of techniques for systematically recording and collecting data in the classroom, and the development of skills for making sense of and interpreting the data collected.

Additionally, it is important to create a forum for teacher candidates to share and discuss the outcomes of classroom observation. The literature on second language teacher education offers some useful sourcebooks with well-structured approaches to observation. Wajnryb's 1992 *Classroom Observation Tasks*, for example, is an excellent source for developing ethnographic observation skills. It presents a series of observation tasks organized around themes such as the learner; language learning; the lesson; teaching skills and strategies; classroom management; and materials and resources. Each task has a number of procedures aimed at guiding the observer through the process of collecting information about specific facets of classroom events and then interpreting them.

Action research is another invaluable tool for language

teacher development that can be tied to observation and incorporated as a component of PDS programs. This teacher-initiated inquiry involves teachers in small-scale research projects that consist of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection (Richards & Lockhart, 1996). By engaging in classroom-based research, prospective teachers can examine their beliefs in a systematic fashion, develop their research skills, and make informed decisions about their practices.

Zéphir (2000) recommends that prospective teachers conduct action research on those topics that concern them the most. For instance, the author has found that grammar teaching is a central preoccupation of most prospective language teachers. Action research focusing on controversial issues such as meaning versus form or explicit versus implicit could help prospective teachers examine the deep-seated beliefs they bring to the teacher education program regarding the teaching of grammar.

A final implication derived from this review of literature has to do with the role of language teacher educators. While it is true that many second language teacher educators are seasoned and reflective researchers, it is also true that many need to rethink their roles and renew their practices. To develop courses and field experiences that are more principled and consistent with a reflective approach, these teacher educators should not only draw from the growing body of research to inform their own work but also practice what they preach. This means engaging themselves in both self-reflection and research. The former will allow them to critically examine their own theories and beliefs about educating second language teachers and to construct the desirable context for fostering reflective teaching. The latter will provide them with opportunities to investigate the contexts of their practices and make better-informed decisions.

For example, action research projects can be undertaken in collaboration with classroom teachers. Besides the benefits derived from researching classroom contexts, this type of collaboration can enable teacher educators to both stay in touch with the realities of the classroom and build more meaningful relationships with classroom teachers, whom in their role as cooperating teachers are important actors in the preparation of prospective language teachers (Dittrich et al., 2001). Examples of action research projects conducted conjointly by language teacher educators and classroom teachers are presented by Phillips (1997).

Finally, language teacher educators should conduct teacher candidates' needs analysis and feedback sessions. The information gathered through these tools can contribute to their awareness of teacher candidates' present stage of development so that they can provide appropriate assistance.



## Suggestions for Further Research

The teaching/learning process varies considerably from subject to subject. Although second language teacher education can benefit considerably from findings in general teacher education research, we must start paying attention to how the process of learning to teach unfolds in second language teachers specifically, and what underlies this process (Freeman & Richards, 1996). The need for second-language-specific teacher education research is underscored by the uniqueness of foreign languages as subject matter (Bernhardt & Hammadou, 1987; Hammadou, 1993; Hammadou & Bernhardt, 1987; Lafayette, 1993; Tedick & Walker, 1994, 1995; Wing, 1993).

Inquiry focusing on both preservice and in-service second language teacher education will enable us to gain insights into what it means to teach a second language, what informs the learning-to-teach process, how language teachers develop understandings of their subject matter, and how this process influences teachers' perceptions of themselves as second language teachers.

In sum, as Freeman and Richards (1996) put it, we need to know more about language teachers: what they do, how they think, what they know, and how they learn. Specifically, we need to understand more about how language teachers conceive of what they do: what they know about language teaching, how they think about their classroom practices, and how that knowledge and those thinking processes are learned through formal teacher education and informal experience on the job (p. 1).

Studies that provide an in-depth examination of the issues addressed in the existing body of research need to be undertaken. For example, studies focusing exclusively on the belief system that prospective second language teachers bring to their field experiences and how it evolves can help us broaden our understanding of a factor that profoundly affects the teaching practice. Similarly, a closer look at the development of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge could allow us to better identify the knowledge and teaching competencies that are germane to teaching a second language in today's world and how they are acquired.

Also needed is further research into contextual factors influencing second language teachers' ongoing professional development, such as school culture, cooperating teachers, university supervisors, parents, and students. Research is also needed on the emerging partnerships between language teacher education programs and local schools. Evidence that elucidates how PDSs or other types of clinical experiences affect the development of teacher candidates can provide avenues for strengthening the collaboration between schools and universities. Only one publication was located that describes a PDS partnership between a foreign language teacher education program and a local school (see Garfinkel & Sosa, 1996).

## Conclusion

As this review has shown, the field of second language teacher education theory and research has experienced unprecedented, substantial, and continued growth in the last decade. The number of publications reporting theoretical views and research on second language teacher education is growing steadily, and the quality of these publications is steadily increasing. It is hoped that this growth will lead to a more theoretical and research-driven approach to preparing second language teachers and ultimately to the improvement of second language instruction.

It was pointed out in the introduction that theory and research on second language teacher education have been remarkably absent from the literature on general teacher education. To date, the dissemination of relevant articles has been confined to second language-related publications, conferences, and forums. Efforts should be made to broaden the channels through which the discipline of second language teacher education communicates its constructs and findings. This may contribute to establishing a fertile dialogue with the teacher education community at large, thereby carving out a space for second language teacher education theory and research in the general teacher education realm.

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## Notes

1. For a complete discussion of this topic, see Tedick and Walker (1994, 1995, 1996, 2000). In these publications, the authors have argued at length for an integration of "instruction and practice across languages, programs, and contexts" (1996, p. 197). Tedick and Walker (2000) trace the evolution of second language teaching in the United States, which resulted in the formation of three subfields — ESL, FL, and bilingual education — that grew isolated from each other in the twentieth century. This ultimately led to the fragmentation of the field and the deemphasis of the commonalities across second language contexts. An open and meaningful dialogue across these settings "can enhance both the development of theory and the refinement of practice" (p. 242). This will contribute to strengthening both the profession and the advocacy of language teaching policies that are adequate and responsive to the needs of the diverse demographic make-up of the American society.

2. The topic of the 2002 ACTFL Annual Convention, "Beyond Our Customary Borders: Language and Culture in Context" seems to be another initiative seeking a more meaningful and open dialogue across the different second language teaching and learning contexts.

3. This review of literature sees ESL and FL teacher education not as two completely different and separate fields. It rather seeks to explore the common ground across both fields. Taking

a cue from the calls to open a more meaningful communication across second language contexts, the papers reviewed in this article draw from both FL and ESL language teacher education; thus, the term "second language teacher education" is used throughout this paper.

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