

Content Knowledge and Instructional Practice In Second Language Teacher Education

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This paper seeks to examine approaches to second language teacher education (SLTE) by considering two issues: content knowledge, and instructional practice. The status of both these domains within the field of SLTE will first be examined and then implications for the design of SLTE programs will be considered. While the training and preparation of second language teachers is a well established activity within the field of language teaching, with a wide variety of courses, degree programs, and professional diplomas and certificates being offered world wide, the recognition of second language teacher education as an emerging generic field, is relatively new. This paper considers the extent to which SLTE has developed a coherent theoretical foundation and evolved a specific body of educational practices.

In planning SLTE programs, the basic decisions which have to be considered are the same as those involved in planning any kind of instructional program - namely, what do we teach, and how do we teach it? Decisions of the first kind have to do with what can be termed Pedagogical Content Knowledge, and the latter with Instructional Practice. For example, a decision that prospective language teachers should study something about cross cultural communication is part of the domain of Pedagogical Content Knowledge. A decision that they should acquire this information by attending a workshop in which they take part in simulation-activities designed to raise issues concerning cultural differences in communicative styles, is a question of Instructional Practice. Issues raised in making decisions in both of these domains form the focus for the rest of this paper.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

In the present context, Pedagogical Content Knowledge is defined as the core set of theories, concepts and practices regarding second language learning and teaching which form the content of Second Language Teacher Education. Marks (1990, p. 9) defines Pedagogical Content Knowledge as:

a class of knowledge that is central to teacher's work and that would not typically be held by nonteaching subject matter experts or by teachers who know little of that subject matter.

In order to determine the Pedagogical Content Knowledge of the field of SLTE, it is necessary to identify the sources of this knowledge. At least four sources are available in SLTE: expert opinion, task analysis, teacher-perceived needs, and current practice or "tradition." Expert opinion refers to the views of subject matter specialists and other experts as to what it is that prospective second language teachers need to know. Task analysis refers to deriving pedagogical content knowledge from an analysis of the situations in which teachers work, the tasks they typically perform on the job, and the kinds of skills they need for performing those tasks. Teacher-perceived needs refers to teachers' expressions of need for professional development. Current practice refers to what SLTE programs currently offer to teachers in training. These four sources can provide guidance in setting up new programs and in evaluating how well the profession is meeting its aims.

Expert Knowledge

A long accepted practice in determining curriculum content is to ask experts what they think the clients need to know. In a field such as SLET which draws on a number of source disciplines, it is not always clear who the relevant experts are. This has not always been the case. Forty years ago, linguists regarded themselves as experts in second language teaching and had a considerable influence on both the content and process of second language teacher training programs (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Few would expect linguists to have a major input to the design of SLTE programs today, but there is no consensus as to what the most appropriate expertise is. It could come from such fields as General Education, Instructional Design, Curriculum Development, Teacher Education, Second Language Acquisition, or Applied Linguistics, depending on one's persuasion.

Views of language teaching specialists as to what constitutes the core body of theory, concepts, skills, and practices in the field are most readily seen in what they write about the field. Comparison of the content of introductory textbooks in the field reveals a reasonable base of current expert opinion.

Rivers' (1981) Teaching Foreign Language Skills, for example, covers the following areas:

1. Objectives of Language Teaching
2. Language Teaching Methods
3. Theories of Language and Language Learning
4. Structured Practice
5. Teaching Sounds
6. Listening Comprehension
7. The Speaking Skill: Learning the Fundamentals
8. The Speaking Skill: Expressing Personal Meaning
9. The Reading Skill
10. The Writing Skill
11. Cultural Understanding
12. Testing: Principles and Techniques
13. Technology and Language Learning Centers

Omaggio's Teaching Language in Context (1986), another comprehensive introduction to language teaching, covers the following:

1. First Principles
2. Methodology in Transition
3. The Role of Context in Comprehension and Learning
4. A Proficiency-Oriented Approach to Listening and Reading
5. Developing Oral Proficiency
6. Becoming Proficient in Writing
7. The Accuracy Issue
8. Classroom Testing
8. Teaching for Cultural Understanding
9. Planning Instruction for the Proficiency-Oriented Classroom

A book representing the British approach in TESOL, Abbott and Wingard's The Teaching of English as an International Language (1981) treats these topics:

1. Approaches to English Teaching
2. Pronunciation - perception and production
3. Comprehension and listening
4. Comprehension and reading
5. Oral fluency
6. Writing
7. Assessment
8. Error analysis
9. Remedial work
10. Planning your teaching
11. The teacher and the class
12. Putting things in perspective

Another British text, Harmer's **The Practice of English Language Teaching** (1983), includes:

1. Why do people learn languages
2. What a native speaker knows
3. What a language student should learn
4. Language learning and language teaching
5. Teaching the productive skills
6. Introducing new language
7. Practice
8. Communicative activities
9. Receptive skills
10. Class management
11. Planning

These books share some common themes. They reflect a skills-oriented approach, rather than one which attributes a primary role to the teaching of grammar or literature. They include consideration of such issues as theories of language, second language learning, and learner errors. They do not advocate a specific method of teaching (such as the Audiolingual Method or The Natural Approach.) They differ in the extent to which they deal with cultural issues, classroom management, and assessment.

How did an earlier generation of experts define the core content of the field? Brooks' **Language and Language Learning** (1960) - a classic in the days of Audiolingualism - includes chapters on the following issues:

1. Theory of Language
2. Language and Talk
3. Mother Tongue and Second Language
4. Language Learning
5. Language Teaching
6. Language and Culture
7. Language and Literature
8. Objectives of the Language Course
9. Continuity for the Learner
10. Methods and Materials
11. The Language Laboratory

12. Tests and Measurements

13. Building a Profession

Bright and McGregor's **Teaching English as a Second Language** (1970), another influential book in the seventies which represents the British approach to TEFL at that time, has chapters on the following topics:

1. Generalisations
2. Vocabulary
3. Reading
4. Writing
5. Speech
6. Drama
7. Poetry
8. Grammar

In comparing an earlier generation of books with more recent texts, we see that most of the issues identified by Brooks thirty years ago are still considered central to the field. More recent books, however, acknowledge the last twenty years of research and theorizing in such areas as second language acquisition, language comprehension, language transfer, and interlanguage. Likewise, the "skills plus grammar and literature" focus seen in books such as Bright and McGregor have now been supplemented by treatment of syllabus design and testing and a more sophisticated linguistic base, drawing from disciplines such as sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. However, both recent and earlier texts typically present a view of language content which consists of subject matter knowledge (i.e., language and language related matters) and skills (i.e., presenting new materials, practice techniques, and classroom management).

Task Analysis

Another source for determining the content of SLTE programs is through identifying the kinds of things that teachers do on the job, and deriving components for a teacher education program from the information obtained. As Connell (1985, p. 69) states, "Teachers are workers, teaching is work, and the school is a workplace." In order to identify priorities to be addressed in a teacher education program, Smith (cited in Fanselow & Light 1977, p. 5) suggests it is necessary to:

- a. analyze the job of teaching into the tasks that must be performed;*
- b. specify the abilities required for the performance of these tasks;*
- c. describe the skills or techniques through which the abilities are expressed;*
- d. work out training situations and exercises for the development of each skill.*

Information on the task base of teaching was obtained from a survey of expatriate TESOL teachers in Japan (Richards & Hino, 1983). Respondents (N = 116) indicated that the ten tasks they most frequently had to undertake were:

1. teach speaking
2. teach listening
3. prepare materials
4. use audiovisual aids

5. design curriculum/syllabuses
6. prepare tests
7. teach writing
8. teach reading
9. interpret test scores
10. do administrative work

The same subjects indicated that the methods they most frequently employed in the classroom were:

1. combination of methods
2. direct method
3. notional/functional
4. audiolingual
5. Total Physical Response

In a recent study of Hong Kong English teachers, (Richards, Tung, & Ng, 1990) a number of dimensions of teachers' work were identified in a questionnaire study. In response to a question on the kinds of teaching activities and techniques teachers employed, the ten most frequently cited activities were (N = 137):

1. doing reading/writing exercises in the textbook
2. written grammar exercises
3. composition
4. pair/group work
5. reading aloud
6. dictation
7. oral grammar exercises
8. pronunciation drills
9. role-play
10. games

The differences between the teaching practices of teachers in the Japanese and Hong Kong study reflect the conversational focus of many English language programs in Japan, and the exambased teaching seen in many Hong Kong schools. The teaching approaches and methods the Hong Kong teachers identified as using most frequently were:

1. grammar-based approach: studying the structures of the language
2. a functional approach: using language for communicative purposes
3. a situational approach: learning language used in particular contexts
4. a reading approach: learning language through reading
5. an eclectic approach geared to meeting the requirements of the examinations

As with most areas of SLTE, information on the tasks teachers actually carry out as part of their professional life is generally unreported, though information on the roles and practices of teachers in particular programs is available (e.g., Shaw & Dowsett, 1986; Nunan, 1987).

Attempts to derive educational goals and content from analysis of the tasks that teachers perform in their work has been identified with a “reconstructionist” approach to educational planning, i.e., one which emphasizes the importance of planning, efficiency and rationality and which stresses the practical aspects of education. In second language teaching this approach emphasizes the promotion of practical skills, makes use of objectives, and advocates a systematic approach to needs analysis, program development, and syllabus design (Clark, 1987). It is typically identified with a “training” approach to teacher education, that is, one which sees the teacher as a skilled craftsman or technician, who is concerned “primarily with the successful accomplishment of ends decided by others” (Zeichner & Liston, 1987, p. 27).

Teacher-Perceived Needs

In the case of inservice-program design, teachers can also be consulted directly about the kind of professional development and training they think they need. In the Japanese study cited above (Richards & Hino, 1984), when asked what issues they would like to study more about if they were to pursue a Master’s degree in TESOL, experienced expatriate English teachers in Japan without graduate TESOL qualifications indicated preferences for the following topics/areas (N=75):

1. teaching of listening
2. teaching of speaking
3. second language acquisition
4. materials writing, selection and adaptation
5. curriculum and syllabus design
6. use of audiovisual aids
7. psycholinguistics
8. sociolinguistics
9. teaching of writing
10. teaching of reading

This prioritizing of needs reflects the kinds of work which expatriate English teachers in Japan are typically engaged in -- teaching speaking and listening skills in conversation programs. Using teachers as a source of information about program content raises the tricky question of “Do teachers really know what they need to know?” The difference between what teachers think they need to know and what experts think teachers need to know is often striking. Many teachers disavow any interest in the theoretical issues which occupy an important place in graduate TESOL programs. For example, comments such as the following were typical in the Japan study cited above:

“I would not be interested in any theoretical courses. I am only interested in things that could be used tomorrow.”

“I would have little interest in theory and research per se.”

Compare these views with an expert’s opinion of what teachers’ need:

The professional teacher of English as a Second Language needs pedagogical training to be a teacher, and academic training in English language and linguistics to be a professional in our field. But of the two, there is a certain priority for English language and linguistics, for a decision on the

nature of language and on the psycholinguistic mechanisms of language acquisition will determine to a large extent our decision on the principles and methods of teaching. Diller, cited in Richards & Hino, 1984.

Current Practice

Another source for the content of SLTE programs is information about what is typically offered in current programs. What kinds of courses and learning experiences are typically provided in second language teacher education programs around the world? Information of this kind is available from various sources, including directories of programs as well as surveys of aspects of different programs (e.g., Richards & Crookes, 1988). In the Japanese survey, teachers with MA TESOL degrees were asked to indicate the subjects they studied as part of their graduate training. The data was collected in 1982 and the average number of years since graduation was 7 (N = 41). The following courses had been taken:

Rank	Subject/Area	% who took course work in this area
1.	phonology/phonetics	97
2.	transformational grammar	95
3.	structural linguistics	92
4.	second language acquisition	88
5.	first language acquisition	85
6.	contrastive analysis	84
7.	teaching of speaking	79
8.	teaching of writing	79
9.	teaching of listening	76
10.	teaching of reading	76
11.	sociolinguistics	75
12.	method analysis	73
13.	psycholinguistics	73
14.	practice teaching	72
15.	<i>traditional grammar</i>	70
16.	error analysis	68
17.	semantics	66
18.	materials writing, selection, and adaptation	63
19.	language testing	63
20.	history of language teaching	58
21.	curriculum/syllabus design	58
22.	use of audiovisual aids	57
23.	pedagogical grammar	56
24.	varieties of English	52
25.	classroom management	47
26.	discourse analysis	46
27.	statistics and research	46
28.	bilingual education	45

It can be seen that “theory” courses predominated in the graduate courses taken by most of these teachers. A useful source of information about the content of graduate TESOL programs is the Directory of Professional Preparation Programs in TESOL in the United States 1989-1991, (Kornblum, 1989). The directory lists all graduate programs available in the US, and also contains information about the required courses in such programs.

The content of the courses listed varies widely, since US programs are directed at different kinds of students: the focus may be research oriented, oriented towards teaching skills, or directed towards the requirements of state school systems. Thus the required courses in the program offered at California State University, Domingues Hills, are:

- Phonology
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Psycholinguistics
- Contrastive analysis
- Linguistic theory
- Teaching methods (2 courses)
- English literature

By contrast the program offered at Eastern Michigan University has the following required courses:

- Observation and analyses of ESL programs
- Theoretical foundations of second language pedagogy
- A pedagogical grammar and phonology of ESL
- Methods of TESOL (Reading, Writing, Grammar)
- ESL materials: review, adaptation and development (Reading, Writing, Grammar)
- Methods of TESOL (Listening, Speaking, Pronunciation)
- ESL materials: review, adaptation, development (Listening, Speaking, Pronunciation)
- Foreign language testing and evaluation
- TESOL practicum
- TESOL seminar

An examination of the course requirements in a sample of 50 MA TESOL programs listed in the TESOL directory reveals the following required courses:

Course	Number of programs requiring
TESOL methods and materials	47
English grammar/syntax	36
linguistics	36
practice teaching	33
phonology	32
second language acquisition	29

syllabus/curriculum design	24
testing	24
research in TESOL	16
language and culture	12
teaching reading	11
contrastive/error analysis	11
sociolinguistics	11
bilingual education	10
teaching writing	10
history of English	7
psycholinguistics	5

Discussion

Pedagogical content knowledge in SLTE programs typically consists of courses selected from two main areas: subject matter knowledge (language theory, English grammar, phonology, second language learning, etc.) and teaching skills (methodology, classroom management, presentation and practice techniques, etc.).

Traditionally, language-based courses have been given a major emphasis, and this is partly a reflection of the history of the TESOL profession. In a survey of MA TESOL programs in 1977, Acheson noted: The lack of concern with such **educational** matters as competency and performance in the classroom is partly explicable by the fact that only about ten of America's 50 TESOL departments appeared to be affiliated to schools, departments, or colleges of education. The remaining 40 were attached to departments of linguistics, English, foreign languages, speech, or other administrative units in the academic institutions. Furthermore in many cases, it is surmised that the preparation of teacher educators in the TESOL teacher preparation programs has been exclusively in linguistics, rather than in education and/or the **teaching** of ESOL. (Acheson, 1977, p. 33)

The current Directory of Professional Programs in TESOL in the United States (TESOL 1989) gives a somewhat similar picture of where MA TESOL programs are currently located:

Home department	Number of programs
English	46
Education/Curriculum	41
Linguistics	25
Foreign languages	10
ESL/TESOL	6
Other	19

Some 28% of programs are now located in departments of education, compared with the 20% found in Acheson's survey. The lack of consensus as to what the core disciplines underlying SLTE are is seen in the widely different components of programs as well as in the fact that they are located in such a spectrum of different university departments. This supports Freeman's observation:

Language teacher education has become increasingly fragmented and unfocused. Based on a kaleidoscope of elements from many different disciplines, efforts to educate individuals as language teachers often lack a coherent, commonly accepted foundation. In its place, teacher educators and teacher education programs substitute their own individual rationales, based on pedagogical assumptions or research, or function in a vacuum, assuming -- yet never articulating -- the bases from which they work. (Freeman, 1989, p. 27)

This kind of problem is not unfamiliar in other areas of teacher education. Students preparing to enter the general teaching profession, for example, are generally required to take courses in “the psychology of education”, but increasingly both student teachers and educators have begun to ask why such a subject should be required, what such a field is supposed to include, what relevance it has to classroom practice, and how it should be taught (cf. the entry on **Teacher Training** in Harre and Lamb 1986).

Freeman (1989) argues that SLTE is confused about its pedagogical content base because the profession has failed to appreciate the distinction between language teaching and the areas of inquiry on which it is based (linguistics, applied linguistics, methodology, SLA, etc.). He points out that applied linguistics and methodology should not be confused with teaching itself, and “should not be the primary subject matter of language teacher education” (1989, p. 29). In a paper with a similar focus Richards (1987, p. 205) noted that “there has been little systematic study of second language teaching processes that could provide a theoretical basis for deriving practices in second language teacher education”. It was argued that pedagogical content knowledge in SLTE should be derived from a theory of teaching, that is, a statement of the general principles that account for effective teaching, including a specification of the key variables in language teaching and how they are interrelated. This would focus on examining the concepts and thinking processes that guide the effective second language teacher. Freeman (1989, p. 31) sees this as a focus on language teaching as “a decision-making process based on four constituents: knowledge, skills, attitude, and awareness.” Such a reorientation of the content of SLTE programmes would entail a reexamination of the teaching approaches used in such programmes. It is to this dimension of SLTE that we now turn.

Instructional Practice in SLIT

How is the content of SLTE programs typically taught and what instructional options are available? Unfortunately, there is no data available on this issue, though observation of and participation in a number of such programs suggests that most often “information transmission” is the major mode of instruction. The assumption is that by providing teachers with information about language, language learning, and methodology, teachers themselves will be able to apply such information to their own classroom practices. There is a considerable irony here. For years, language teaching specialists have argued “teach them the language, not about the language.” But in SLTE programs, the focus is often on giving information, rather than on exploring the process of teaching itself.

If an attempt is made to link theory with practice, it is generally through the practicum or teaching practice experience. In a survey of the practicum course in US graduate programs (Richards & Crookes, 1988,) it was found that the second most frequently cited objective for the practicum was “to apply instruction from theory courses”. Often however, this application is left entirely to chance, and the practicum is run as a self-contained and independent component of the student teacher's teacher education program.

What alternatives are available if we are interested in developing second language teacher education programs which move beyond subject matter knowledge and teaching techniques and which focus in a substantial way on the process of teaching itself? A starting point is the development of goals which acknowledge teaching and the study of language teaching as the fundamental content of the field of second language teacher education. The following are examples of goals which identify the teaching process itself as the subject matter of SLTE:

- to develop a high level of competence in language teaching and its related activities;
- to develop a personal theory of teaching and a reflective approach to one's own teaching;
- to become aware of the contexts of teaching (settings, participants, curriculum, materials) and the effects of these on teaching and learning;
- to recognize the theories and beliefs underlying one's own teaching practices;
- to understand the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom and the different levels of interaction they take part in;
- to develop awareness of different options available in language teaching and the consequences of selecting different options;
- to acquire skills needed for classroom based inquiry;
- to recognize the kinds of decision-making teaching involves and to utilize decision-making effectively in one's own teaching;
- to be able to analyze and evaluate one's own teaching practice;
- to be able to redirect goals and strategies in teaching;
- to know how to initiate change in one's own classroom and how to monitor the effects of such changes.

In developing teacher education programs, activities are then needed which enable these kinds of goals to be realized. While lectures, seminars, and discussions will continue to provide one mode of input to program implementation, more experientially based approaches are needed to address the kinds of goals identified above. Activities of this kind include the following:

1. Observing teaching in different settings
 - a. Observation of experienced teachers
 - b. Peer observation
 - c. Study of video protocols of lessons
2. Experiencing teaching in different settings
 - a. Microteaching
 - b. Practice teaching
 - c. Team teaching
 - d. Internships
3. Investigating teaching and learning
 - a. Case studies
 - b. Investigative projects
 - c. Analysis of lesson protocols
4. Reflecting critically on teaching/learning experiences
 - a. Diaries
 - b. Language learning experiences

- c. Reflective teaching
- d. Self-monitoring
- 5. Focusing on critical events in teach
 - a. Problem-solving
 - b. Role plays and simulations
- 6. Carrying out project-work
 - a. Action research
 - b. Curriculum and materials projects

Let us now consider how some of these activities can be used in pre-service and inservice programs in teacher education. Examples are drawn largely from programs currently being taught or developed at the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong -- an in-service degree for teachers of English, and a pre-service BA (Hons) degree in TESL.

Observing Teaching in Different Settings

Observation of teaching is a standard component of most teacher education programs. In both pre- and in-service courses it can serve to help develop concepts that can be used to describe and analyze the nature of classroom events. In pre-service programs, observation (both of live teachers and of videotaped lessons) can be used to help teachers develop a terminology to describe and discuss teaching, and to provide data with which to examine central concepts in their own teaching. In our work with in-service teachers, teachers are first taught techniques of ethnographic observation in order to disassociate observation from the notion of evaluation, to develop the ability to focus on the objective description of classroom events, and to develop a language to describe classroom processes. In the pre-service program, observation has a related focus. Since the participants in this program have no teaching experience, observations of different kinds of ESL classes are intended to orient student teachers to the nature of the second language classroom, its organization, practices, and norms, and to enable student teachers to develop an awareness of the kinds and levels of interaction that happen in language classrooms.

Experiencing Teaching in Different Settings

In our pre-service degree we are exploring a number of alternatives to depending solely on the teaching practicum as a source for practical experience of teaching. One avenue we are exploring involves a re-examination of micro-teaching.

Microteaching is traditionally associated with a training-based view of teaching. This view is built on the assumption that teaching can be broken down into individual skills that can be isolated and practiced individually, such as drilling, correcting errors, and presenting new vocabulary or grammar. While this skills-based view of teaching has been criticized as offering a limited view of teaching, microteaching activities can be used to provide different kinds of teaching experiences, which can then be used as a basis for reflection and analysis.

The emphasis is placed not on mastering a specific isolated skill, for example, but on identifying and reacting to the total teaching act. The task given to the students is accordingly more holistic and the expectations from the feedback sessions are both broader and less precise. (Kornblueth & Schoenberg, 1990, p. 17)

Cruikshank et al.,(1981) have developed an approach which has the following features:

1. student teachers are divided into small groups of four to six;
2. each are given an identical lesson to teach and have a few days to prepare for teaching to the small group;
3. content is not drawn from their academic subject (i.e., future English teachers might present a geography lesson: this is intended to encourage focus on the process of teaching rather than on the content);
4. lessons are taught within a 15 minute time frame;
5. a reflection process follows, within each group and then with the class as a whole.

Modifications of this approach are used in the pre-service program.

Investigating Teaching and Learning

A primary goal in inservice programs is to provide teachers with ways of looking at their own classrooms from a different perspective. Activities which promote self-inquiry and critical thinking are central for continued professional growth, and are designed to help teachers move from a level where their classroom actions are guided by routine to a level where their practices are guided by reflection and critical thinking.

One course in the in-service program, for example, focuses on exploring classroom processes. Each week one aspect of classroom life is examined. Topics covered include structuring, learner roles and strategies, teacher roles, teacher decision-making, tasks, grouping, teacher-student interaction, and classroom language. Initially in seminar sessions, video protocols of actual lessons are used to identify different dimensions of classroom behaviour. Each week the teachers audiotape one of their own lessons and then write a reflective response to it, focusing on the topic under discussion that week. An assignment during a week in which the topic of teacher decision-making was being discussed consists of the following activity:

- A. Planning decisions: As you plan a lesson for the coming week, make notes of the planning decisions you made:**
 1. What alternatives did you consider?
 2. How did your belief system influence your decisions?
 3. What final decisions did you make? Why?
- B. Interactive decisions: Audio-record the lesson you planned. Later that day, review the lesson by listening to the recording and comparing the actual lesson to your plan. Write a commentary on your lesson focusing on the interactive decisions that you made during the lesson:**
 1. What happened during the lesson that you didn't plan for?
 2. What kinds of interactive decisions did you make? Why?
 3. On reflection, do you think an alternative decision would have been better? Why?

Investigation of different aspects of language teaching, language learning, and language use, is a strand running through many of the courses in both the pre-service and in-service programs. In a course on pedagogic grammar, for example, as part of a unit on aspect and tense in English, students

might build up a data base of native-speaker usage (based on occurrences in newspapers or other sources) as well as of learner usage (based on a written corpus either collected by teachers themselves or provided by the course instructor). This is then used to test out particular theories of tense and aspect or of second language acquisition. Or in a course on second language acquisition, teachers might administer a language attitude questionnaire to their students, to compare published findings on language attitudes with data from their own students. With students in pre-service programs, small scale investigative projects help develop an awareness of the significance of issues they study in their theory courses, as well as give them a familiarity with collecting and analyzing different kinds of language data. This is also true at the in-service level, but here such activities help teachers develop a research orientation to their own classrooms and to appreciate their potential roles as classroom researchers.

Reflecting Critically on Teaching/Learning Experiences

Activities which involve critical reflection focus on conscious recall and examination of experiences as a basis for evaluation and decision making and as a source for planning and action. Reflection is seen as a process which can facilitate both learning and understanding, and plays a central role in several recent models of teacher development. Zeichner and Liston (1986, p. 4) suggest that a teacher education program which seeks to develop a reflective view of teaching seeks to develop student teachers who:

are willing and able to reflect on the origins and consequences of their actions, as well as the material and ideological constraints and encouragements embedded in the classroom, school, and societal contexts in which they live. These goals are directed towards enabling teachers to develop pedagogical habits and skills necessary for self-directed growth and towards preparing them, individually and collectively to participate as full partners in their making of educational policies.

Many different approaches are available to engage teachers and student teachers in critical reflection. Central to any approach however is a three-part process which involves:

1. The Event Itself

The starting point is an actual teaching or learning episode, such as a lesson in a foreign language (for pre-service students, where a goal might be the study of language learning strategies) or a lesson taught by a student teacher or a practicing teacher. While the focus of critical reflection is usually the student's own learning or teaching, reflection can also be stimulated by observation of another person's teaching, hence both peer observation and team teaching can also be employed.

2. Recollection of the Event

The next stage is to produce an account of what happened, without adding explanation or evaluation. This might be through the written description of an event, through the use of a video or audio recording, or through the use of checklists or other procedures.

3. Review and Response to the Event

The student or teacher now returns to the event and reviews and questions it. The goal here is to process the event at a deeper level. Procedures used in programs at City Polytechnic of Hong Kong include:

- a) **Autobiographies.** Groups of up to 10 students meet regularly with the teacher. Throughout the course each person creates a written account of experiences and observations in teaching. These are read aloud and discussed during the weekly sessions.
- b) **Reaction sheets.** These are short responses written after particular learning activities have been completed. The students are encouraged to “stand back from what they had been doing and think about what it meant for their own learning and what it entailed for their work as teachers of others” (Powell, 1985, p. 46). In a teaching practicum, for example, students work in pairs with a co-operating teacher, and take turns teaching lessons. One serves as observer while the other teaches, and both complete a reflection sheet after each lesson. They then compare their responses in a follow-up session.
- c) **Journals.** Journals or diaries are another experience which can help develop a reflective orientation towards teaching. With the journal experience, the student or teacher regularly enters information about lessons he or she taught (or learning activities of other kinds), and regularly reviews these, with the help of classmates (if journals are shared with peers) or the teacher. Journal writing experiences provide a record of significant learning experiences, help the participants understand their own self-development process, and foster a creative interaction between the student and other classmates or the instructor.

Focusing on Critical Events in Teaching

An important dimension of teaching is interactive decision-making, that is, the ability to analyze a classroom problem, determine what range of options is available, and decide on the best course of action. Decision-making for some educationists is the most crucial dimension of the teacher's work. In teacher education, decision-making can be approached in a number of different ways, including through the use of problem solving and role play.

Pennington (1990) gives examples of problem-solving activities which involve a sequence of activities beginning with individual or small group discussion of a problem and then moving to whole-class discussion. For example:

STUDENT CASE

You are a teacher in a large second language program whose administration includes a director of courses or department chair, several student advisors, and a clerical assistant. In speaking informally with you, a student from your class suddenly states that she is very much dissatisfied with her situation in the United States, so much so that she wishes to return immediately to her home country.

Questions:

1. What is the immediate problem?
2. What might be the direct and indirect causes of the immediate problem?
3. What other potential or actual problems do you see?
4. What else do you need to know (e.g. about the student or about the situation relating to the problem)?
5. How do you obtain the information that you need?
6. What should you say or do (a) when meeting with the student and (b) after meeting with the student?

7. What other people (if any) need to become involved?
8. What are some of the things to watch out for or to be particularly sensitive to? (Pennington, 1990, p. 145)

Pennington points out that such an activity can easily lead to a discussion of such things as:

- a) the difficulty of determining the source of student problems;
- b) the appropriate role of the teacher;
- c) the extent to which teachers should become involved in students' personal problems.

Role play is another useful activity which can help develop an awareness of the kinds of beliefs and values implicit in teaching and how these can lead to different kinds of decisions and classroom actions. Pennington (1990) illustrates how role play activities can be used in conjunction with video viewing to explore different perspectives on the same classroom event. In the example she gives, student teachers or teachers in-service first view a short video segment of a class several times, completing viewing tasks from three different perspectives. On first viewing, an objective viewpoint is taken, and details about the lesson are recorded. On second viewing, the viewpoint of someone who has a positive view of the teacher/lesson is taken, and positive behaviors are noted. On the third viewing, a negative viewpoint is taken and negative aspects of the lesson are noted. The following role play activity is then enacted:

As a follow-up to the video that you just observed, two or more role plays will take place. You will take the role of either the person just observed or the teacher's new supervisor. Both positive and negative roles are provided so that you may try out different combinations of these. Assume that you are having a conference soon after the observation has taken place, as part of the normal teaching evaluation process. The aim of the meeting is to review performance in the class observed and to reach agreement on two potential areas for professional growth/improvement and to develop concrete action steps that both parties can agree on to accomplish the goals.

Teacher: Positive role

You have basic confidence in yourself and your teaching, yet you realize that there is always room for growth and improvement. In the conference, your primary objective is to establish a good working relationship with your new supervisor. Secondly, you would like to get some constructive advice about your classes from the supervisor, whom you know to have considerable experience and expertise in language teaching.

Teacher: Negative role

You lack basic confidence in yourself and your teaching, and you are not comfortable accepting feedback on your teaching unless it is 100% positive. Because of negative experiences with a previous supervisor, you feel threatened by this conference. Your primary objective is to convince your new supervisor that you are doing a good job and that no one needs to worry about you. Secondly, you want to establish the fact that you have job security and do not have to listen to any advice.

Supervisor: Positive role

You are a confident and supportive person, with positive attitudes about teachers and teaching. You strongly believe that a “carrot” rather than a “stick” is more effective in changing behavior. Your primary objective is to establish a good working relationship with the teacher. Secondly, you would like to discuss areas of common ground based on your observation of the teacher’s class.

Supervisor: Negative role

You lack confidence in your abilities as both teacher and supervisor. As a consequence, you tend to take a defensive, condescending stance toward those you supervise. Your primary objective is to establish that you are an experienced expert, and know how the teacher can improve teaching performance. Secondly, you want to establish that you have control over the teacher’s job.

Goals (To ...)

Action Steps (By ...)

- 1.
- 2.
- .

Carrying Out Project Work

The use of classroom-based or school-based project work is another strategy available in inservice programs, and often provides a valuable link between campus-based program input and the contexts in which teachers work or in which student teachers do practice teaching or internships. Action research is a central activity in our inservice program, and takes its name from two processes that are central to action research: a data-gathering component (the research element), and a focus on bringing about change (the action component). Many of the courses in the in-service program include an obligatory action-research project. These projects involve a four part sequence of activities:

1. **Identify a Problem.** Through observation of their own classrooms, teachers identify some aspect of their teaching that they would like to change. For example, a teacher may decide that the class is too teacher dominated, that students are not having many opportunities to speak, and that he or she would consequently like to increase the amount of student participation in lessons.
2. **Develop a Strategy for Change.** The next step, developed in consultation with peers or with the instructor, is to work out an action plan that will address the problem. For example, the teacher may decide to change the classroom seating arrangement, or keep a record of how often students initiate talk during lessons. The teacher might use a simple coding instrument for this purpose.
3. **Implement the Strategy.** The teacher decides to put his or her plan into operation for a fixed period of time, say, two weeks. During this time he or she monitors students’ classroom participation, by audiotaping lessons and by inviting a colleague into the class to complete an observation form which records how often students participated in the lesson and for what purpose.
4. **Evaluate the Results.** The teacher decides if the action plan has brought about the intended changes in style of teaching, and reflects on the goals, procedures, and outcomes of the project.

Conclusions

In a recent summary of trends in second language teacher education, Richards and Nunan (1990) suggest that for SLTE to move forward there should be:

- a movement away from a “training” perspective to an “education” perspective and recognition that effective teaching involves higher-level cognitive processes, which cannot be taught directly;
- the need for teachers and student teachers to adopt a research orientation to their own classrooms and their own teaching;
- less emphasis on prescriptions and top-down directives and more emphasis on an inquiry-based and discovery-oriented approach to learning (bottom-up);
- a focus on devising experiences that require the student teacher to generate theories and hypotheses and to reflect critically on teaching;
- less dependence on linguistics and language theory as a source discipline for second language teacher education, and more of an attempt to integrate sound, educationally based approaches;
- use of procedures that involve teachers in gathering and analyzing data about teaching. (Richards & Nunan 1990, p. xii)

In order for this to happen, this survey has suggested that practitioners of SLTE need to reach consensus as to what the fundamental nature of the field is and how its pedagogical content knowledge should be defined. In many situations, SLTE still reflects the history of its development as a branch of applied linguistics. A consistent approach or philosophy of second language teacher education has not yet emerged to serve as a basis for sound instructional practice. If the movement away from language-based approaches to more teaching-based ones gains momentum in the future however, both pedagogical content knowledge and accompanying instructional practices will need to be evaluated to ensure that teaching assumes a more prominent role within the field of second language teacher education.

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