

# Second Language Teacher Education Today

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One of the simple facts of life in the present time is that the English language skills of a good proportion of its citizenry are seen as vital if a country is to participate actively in the global economy and to have access to the information and knowledge that provide the basis for both social and economic development. Central to this enterprise are English teaching and English language teachers. There is consequently increasing demand world-wide for competent English teachers and for more effective approaches to their preparation and professional development. In this paper I want to examine trends in second language teacher education and to identify some of the key issues that are shaping the way second language teacher education (SLTE) is conceptualised and realized today.

The field of SLTE has been shaped in its development by its response to two issues. One might be called internally initiated change, that is, the teaching profession gradually evolving a changed understanding of its own essential knowledge base and associated instructional practices through the efforts of applied linguists and specialists in the field of second language teaching and teacher education. Much of the debate and discussion that has appeared in the professional literature in recent years for example and which is surveyed in this paper, is an entirely internal debate, unlikely to interest those outside the walls of academic institutions. The emergence of such issues as reflective teaching and critical pedagogy for example arose from within the profession largely as a result of self-imposed initiatives. At the same time the development of SLTE has also been impacted by external pressures, for example by globalization and the need for English as a language of international trade and communication, which has brought with it the demand by national educational authorities for new language teaching policies, for greater central control over teaching and teacher education, and for standards and other forms of accountability. The Common European Framework is an example of the profession attempting to respond to external pressures of this kind.

## **The growth of SLTE**

The field of TESOL is relatively new and in the form that we know it today, dates from the 1960s. It was during the 1960s that English language teaching began a major period of expansion worldwide and that methodologies such as Audiolingualism and Situational Language Teaching emerged as the first of a wave of new methodologies to reinvigorate

the field of English as a second or foreign language. The origins of specific approaches to teacher training for language teachers began with short training programs and certificates dating from this period, designed to give prospective teachers the practical classroom skills needed to teach the new methods. The discipline of applied linguistics dates from the same period, and with it came a body of specialized academic knowledge and theory that provided the foundation of the new discipline. This knowledge was represented in the curricula of MA programs, which began to be offered from this time that typically contained courses in language analysis, learning theory, methodology, and sometimes a teaching practicum.

The relationship between practical teaching skills and academic knowledge and their representation in SLTE programs has generated a debate ever since, although as we will see in what follows is now part of the discussion of a much wider range of issues. In the 1990s the practice versus theory distinction was sometimes resolved by distinguishing "teacher training" from "teacher development", the former being identified with entry-level teaching skills linked to a specific teaching context, and the latter to the longer-term development of the individual teacher over time. Training involved the development of a repertoire of teaching skills, acquired through observing experienced teachers and practice-teaching in a controlled setting, e.g. through micro-teaching or peer-teaching. Good teaching was seen as the mastery of a set of skills or competencies. Qualifications in teacher training such as the CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) were typically offered by teacher training colleges or by organizations such as the British Council. Teacher development on the other hand meant mastering the discipline of applied linguistics. Qualifications in teacher development, typically the MA degree, were offered by universities, where the practical skills of language teaching were often undervalued.

By the present time the contrast between training and development has been replaced by a reconsideration of the nature of teacher learning, which is viewed as a form of socialization into the professional thinking and practices of a community of practice. SLTE is now also influenced by perspectives drawn from sociocultural theory (Lantolf 2000) and the field of teacher cognition (Borg, 2006). The knowledge base of teaching has also been re-examined with a questioning of the traditional positioning of the language-based disciplines as the major foundation for SLTE (e.g. linguistics, phonetics, second language acquisition) (Freeman 2002). At the same time it has also been affected by external factors - by the need to respond to the status of English as an international language and the demand worldwide for a practical command of English language skills.

## **The professionalization of language teaching**

A common observation on the state of English language teaching today compared with its status in the not too distant past is that there is a much higher level of professionalism in ELT today than previously. By this is meant that English language teaching is seen as a career in a field of educational specialization, it requires a specialized knowledge base obtained through both academic study and practical experience, and it is a field of work where membership is based on entry requirements and standards. The professionalism of English teaching is seen in the growth industry devoted to providing language teachers with professional training and qualifications, in continuous attempts to develop standards for English language teaching and for English language teachers, to the proliferation of professional journals and teacher magazines, conferences and professional organizations, to attempts in many places to require non-native speaker English teachers to demonstrate their level of proficiency in English as a component of certification, to the demand for professional qualifications for native-speaker teachers, and to the greater level of sophisticated knowledge of language teaching required of English teachers. Becoming an English language teacher means becoming part of a worldwide community of professionals with shared goals, values, discourse, and practices but one with a self-critical view of its own practices and a commitment to a transformative approach to its own role.

The focus on professionalism may mean different things in different places. In some it may mean acquiring qualifications recognized by local educational authorities or by international professional organizations and attaining standards mandated by such bodies. It may also mean behaving in accordance with the rules and norms that prevail in their context of work, even if the teacher does not fully support such norms such as when a teacher is told to “teach to the test” rather than create his or own learning pathway.

Leung (in press) contrasts two different dimensions to professionalism that will be alluded to throughout this paper. The first can be called institutionally prescribed professionalism – a managerial approach to professionalism that represents the views of ministries of education, teaching organizations, regulatory bodies, school principals and so on that specify what teachers are expected to know and what quality teaching practices consist of. There are likely to be procedures for achieving accountability and processes in place to maintain quality teaching. Such specifications are likely to differ from country to country. For example in Singapore, teachers are encouraged to take up to 100 hours of in-service courses a year. In Australia support for in-service professional development is almost non-existent in many schools.

The second dimension to professionalism Leung refers to as independent professionalism, which refers to teachers' own views of teaching and the processes by which teachers engage in reflection on their own values, beliefs, and practices. Much of the discussion in this paper above has addressed this dimension of individual professionalism and the current literature on professional development for language teachers promotes a wide variety of procedures through which teachers can engage in critical and reflective review of their own practices (see Richards and Farrell 2006), e.g. through self-monitoring, analysing critical incidents, teacher support groups, and action research.

## **The knowledge base of SLTE**

As noted above, there have traditionally been two strands within the field of SLTE – one focussing on classroom teaching skills and pedagogic issues, and the other focussing on what has been perceived as the academic underpinnings of classroom skills, namely knowledge about language and language learning. The relationship between the two has often been problematic. One way to clarify this issue has been to contrast two differing kinds of knowledge – which may be thought of as *knowledge about* and *knowledge how*. “Knowledge about” or *content knowledge* provides what has come to be the established core curriculum of SLTE programs, particularly at the graduate level, where course work on topics such as language analysis, discourse analysis, phonology, curriculum development, and methodology is standard. The language-based courses provided the academic content, and the methodology courses showed teachers how to teach it. An unquestioned assumption was that such knowledge informs teachers' classroom practices. Recent research however (e.g. Bartels 2005) shows that teachers in fact often fail to apply such knowledge in their classrooms. Despite knowing the theory and principles associated with Communicative Language Teaching for example, in their own teaching teachers are often seen to make use of traditional “grammar-and-practice” techniques in their classrooms. Freeman (2002,1) raises the issue of the relevance of the traditional knowledge base of language teaching, observing, “The knowledge-base is largely drawn from other disciplines, and not from the work of teaching itself”. Those working within a sociocultural perspective have hence argued that second language acquisition research as it has been conventionally understood has focussed on an inadequate view of what the object of learning is since it has not considered the way language is socially and culturally constituted (Miller 2006, Firth and Wagner 1997, Norton 1997).

The distinction between explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge throws some light on the dilemma of failed uptake, the former constituting the basis of “knowledge about” and the latter of “knowledge how”. Implicit knowledge covers a wide range of terms that have

been used in the literature to refer to the beliefs, theories, and knowledge that underlie teachers' practical actions (terms such as "principles", "practitioner knowledge", "personal theories", "maxims") (Richards 1996, Tsang 2004). Central to *knowledge how* are concepts such as pedagogical content knowledge (the capacity to transform content into accessible and learnable forms) and practical knowledge, all of which refer to the knowledge and thinking that teachers make use of in facilitating learning in their classrooms and which belong to a third strand that has often been missing from formulations of the core content of SLTE – namely the nature of teaching itself. Freeman and others have emphasized that the knowledge-base of SLTE must be expanded to include the processes of teaching and teacher-learning and the beliefs, theories and knowledge which informs teaching. Rather than the MA course being a survey of issues in applied linguistics drawing from the traditional disciplinary sources, course work in areas such as reflective teaching, classroom research, and action research now form parts of the core curriculum in many TESOL programs and seek to expand the traditional knowledge base of language teaching. Van Lier proposed a way to resolve the theory-practice issue in a 1992 paper:

Instead of the usual linguistic sub-topics such as phonetics, syntax, discourse analysis and so on, I propose that we identify language-related themes from the teachers' own sphere of activity... Within each theme, it is inevitable that straightforward linguistic phenomena of phonology, syntax, discourse, etc will need to be explored at some point. This exploration will necessitate a certain amount of linguistic study in the traditional sense, but it is very important that such study is now motivated by a real-life question that requires an answer. Interestingly in this scheme of Language Awareness development, we treat "the teaching of linguistics" in a similar way to the way in which we treat "the teaching of grammar" in a task-based communicative approach. We do not teach linguistics "because it is there", but because it helps us to solve language problems in real-life tasks.  
Van Lier, 1992: 1996

Kumaravadivelu proposes what he call "critical classroom observation" as a procedure for engaging teachers in the process of theorizing their own practice, a procedure which involves self-observation of a lesson by the teacher together with observation by students in the lesson and an observer, following which their different perspectives are compared and the meaning of the lesson is interpreted and theorized.

## **The nature of teacher-learning**

A focus on the nature of teacher learning has been central to a rethinking of both the content and delivery of SLTE programs. Teacher-learning from traditional perspectives was seen as a cognitive issue, something the learner did on his or her own. Nunan (1995: 55) describes this learner-centered view. " In the final analysis ... it is the learner who must remain at the centre of the processes, for no matter how much energy and

effort we expend, it is the learner who has to do the learning". Teaching was then viewed as a transmission process.

When couched within a transmission model the process-product paradigm examined teaching in terms of the learning outcomes it produced. Process-product studies concentrated on the link, which was often assumed to be causal, between the teacher's actions and the students' mental processes.... In product-process research the aim was to understand how teachers' action led – or did not lead – to student learning.

Freeman, 2002,2)

Traditionally the problem of teacher-learning was hence often viewed as a question of improving the effectiveness of delivery. The failure of teachers to "acquire" what was taught was seen as a problem of overcoming teachers' resistance to change (Singh and Richards 2006). A focus on teacher-learning as a field of inquiry however seeks to examine the mental processes involved in teacher-learning and acknowledges the "situated" and the social nature of learning (Lave and Wenger 1991). From this perspective, learning takes place in a context and evolves through the interaction and participation of the participants in that context. Teacher-learning is not viewed as translating knowledge and theories into practice but as constructing new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and processes. This latter type of knowledge, sometimes called "practitioner knowledge", is the source of teachers' practices and understandings.

While traditional views of teacher learning often viewed the teachers' task as the application of theory to practice, more recent views see teacher-learning as the theorization of practice, in other words, making visible the nature of practitioner knowledge and providing the means by which such knowledge can be elaborated, understood and reviewed. As Freeman (2002,11) puts it: "Teacher education must then serve two functions. It must teach the skills of reflectivity and it must provide the discourse and vocabulary that can serve participants in renaming their experience". In practical terms this has led to a reconsideration of traditional modes of teaching in SLTE programs and a focus on the course room as a community of learners engaged in social practices and the collaborative construction of meanings. Transmission modes of teaching are replaced with various forms of dialogic and collaborative inquiry. This view of learning draws on sociocultural theory and the notion of identity construction and considers how the social processes of the course room or lecture room contribute to and shape learning. Key to the teacher-learning processes are the roles of participants, the discourses they create and participate in, the activities that take place and the artefacts and resources that are employed. All of these shape the nature of the learning that occurs (Singh and

Richards 2006). Learning is seen to emerge through social interaction within a community of practice.

Johnson (2006, 239) captures current views of teacher learning as arising from research which has the following characteristics:

This research depicts L2 teacher learning as normative and lifelong, as emerging out of and through experiences in social contexts: as learners in classrooms and schools, as participants in professional teacher education programs, and later as teachers in settings where they work. It described L2 teacher learning as socially negotiated and contingent on knowledge of self, subject matter, curricula, and setting. It shows L2 teachers as users and creators of legitimate forms of knowledge who make decisions about how best to teach their L2 students within complex socially, culturally, and historically situated contexts.

## **The role of context in teacher-learning**

Sociocultural perspectives on learning emphasize that learning is situated, i.e. takes place in specific settings or contexts that shape how learning takes place. The location of most teacher-learning in SLTE programs is either a university or teacher training institution, or a school, and these different contexts for learning create different potentials for learning. In one, the course room is a setting for patterns of social participation that can either enhance or inhibit learning. In the other learning occurs through the practice and experience of teaching. Both involve induction to communities of practice, Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept for learning that takes place within organizational settings, which is socially constituted and which involves participants with a common interest collaborating to develop new knowledge and skills. In the course room learning is contingent upon the discourse and activities that course work and class participation involve. In the school, learning takes place through classroom experiences and teaching practice and is contingent upon relationships with mentors, fellow novice teachers and interaction with experienced teachers in the school. Velez-Rendon (2006, 321) points out the crucial role cooperating teachers play in novice teachers' professional development, assisting their socialization into the profession and adjusting their role according to the teacher-learners needs, thus serving both as instructional models and as sources of guidance

Typically the campus-based program (in the case of pre-service teacher education) is seen as the start of the teacher's professional development, subsequent learning taking place in the school through classroom experience, working with mentors and other school-based initiatives. In SLTE programs, making connections between campus-based and school-based learning is often problematic and student-teachers often perceive a gap between the theoretical course work offered on campus and the practical school-based component. Challenges include locating co-operating schools, building meaningful co-

operation with schools, developing coherent links between the campus-based and school based strands, training mentor teachers, and recognizing them as an integral part of the campus-based program. While the teaching practicum is often intended to establish links between theory and practice, it is sometimes an uncomfortable add-on to academic programs rather than seen as a core component.

## **The role of teacher cognition**

An important component of current conceptualizations of SLTE is a focus on teacher cognition. This encompasses the mental lives of teachers, how these are formed, what they consist of, and how teachers' beliefs, thoughts and thinking processes shape their understanding of teaching and their classroom practices. Borg (2006, 1) comments:

A key factor driving the increase in research in teacher cognition, not just in language education, but in education more generally, has been the recognition that teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who play a central role in shaping classroom event. Couple with insights from the field of psychology which have shown how knowledge and beliefs exert a strong influence on teacher action, this recognition has suggested that understanding teacher cognition is central to the process of understanding teaching.

An interest in teacher-cognition entered SLTE from the field of general education, and brought with it a similar focus on teacher decision-making, on teachers' theories of teaching, teachers' representations of subject matter, and the problem-solving and improvisational skills employed by teachers with different levels of teaching experience during teaching. Constructs such as teacher's practical knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, and personal theories of teaching noted above are now established components of our understanding of teacher cognition. From the perspective of teacher cognition, teaching is not simply the application of knowledge and of learned skills. It is viewed as a much more complex cognitively-driven process affected by the classroom context, the teachers general and specific instructional goals, the learners' motivations and reactions to the lesson, the teacher's management of critical moments during a lesson. At the same time teaching reflects the teacher's personal response to such issues, hence teacher cognition is very much concerned with teachers' personal and "situated" approaches to teaching. Borg's (2006) survey of research on teacher cognition shows how such research has clarified such issues as the relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practice, the impact of context on language teacher's cognitions and practices, the processes of pre-service teacher learning in language teaching, the relationship between cognitive change and behavioural change in language teachers, and the nature of expertise in language teaching.

In SLTE programs a focus on teacher cognition can be realized through questionnaires and self-reporting inventories in which teachers describe beliefs and principles; through interviews and other procedures in which teachers verbalize their thinking and understanding of pedagogic incidents and issues; through observation, either of one's own lessons or those of other teachers, and through reflective writing in the form of journals, narratives, or other forms of written report (Borg in press).

### **A focus on teacher identity**

A sociocultural perspective on teacher-learning posits a central aspect of this process as the reshaping of identity and identities within the social interaction of the classroom. Identity refers to the differing social and cultural roles teacher-learners enact through their interactions with lecturers and other students during the process of learning. These roles are not static but emerge through the social processes of the classroom. Identity may be shaped by many factors, including personal biography, gender, culture, working conditions, age, gender, and the school and classroom culture. The concept of identity thus reflects how individuals see themselves and how they enact their roles within different settings. In an SLTE program a teacher-learner's identity is remade through the acquisition of new modes of discourse and new roles in the course room. What is involved is not simply "language acquisition", but "discourse acquisition" (Miller 2006). Teacher-learning thus involves not only discovering more about the skills and knowledge of language teaching but also what it means to be a language teacher. In a course room, teacher-learners negotiate their identity through the unfolding social interaction of a particular situated community, in relation to its specific activities and relationships (Singh and Richards 2006).

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

North-American university course rooms may hinder their participation in some classroom activities.

Identity and how it shapes teacher-learning can be explored through case studies, through the review of lesson protocols, through narratives in which teachers describe the emergence of their professional identities and the struggles and issues that are involved. Miller ( p.10) emphasizes the importance of understanding the context in which teachers will work.

Knowing the school, the possibilities of the classroom space, the students, their neighbourhoods, the resources, the curriculum and policy, the supervising teacher- these are all critical elements that affect what teachers can do, and how they negotiate and construct identity moment to moment.

Miller (2006,130) also describes the use of personal journals as “an activity that opens up a range of discursive practices to students, while and allowing them to us their previous Discourses and identities and to renegotiate, to translate and to transform these Discourses and identities”.

## **A rethinking of teaching methods and strategies**

Wallace (1995) identifies three models of teacher education that have characterised both general teacher education and also teacher education for language teachers, which he calls the craft model, the applied science model, and the reflective model. Barduhn and Johnson (in press) characterize these approaches as follows:

In the craft model all of the expertise of teaching resides in the training, and it is the trainee's job to imitate the trainer. The applied science model has been the traditional and the most present model underlying most teacher education and training programs. The followers of this model believe that all teaching problems can be solved by experts in content knowledge and not by the ‘practitioners’ themselves. The third model, the current trend in teacher education and development, envisions as the final outcome of the training period that the novice teacher become as autonomous reflective practitioner capable of constant self-reflection leading to a continuous process of professional self-development.

The sociocultural view of learning outlined above moves beyond the view of the teacher as an individual entity attempting to master content knowledge and unravel the hidden dimensions of his or her own teaching and views learning as a social process. Rather than teaching being viewed as the transfer of knowledge, a sociocultural perspective views it as creating conditions for the co-construction of knowledge and understanding through social participation. There are several forms such participation may take. One strategy is known as dialogic teaching, that is, teaching which centers around conversations with other teachers focussing on teaching and learning issues during which teachers examine

their own beliefs and practices and engage in collaborative planning, problem solving, and decision-making. It is often through dialog that teacher- learners create and experience different representations of themselves. This may take the form of both spoken dialog in group conversations as well as through journals or on-line dialogs.

Of learning through talking with other teachers, a teacher-learner comments:

Talking in a seminar provides you with time to talk about your teaching and hear about the teaching of others and this in itself becomes confidence inducing. You know, you think stuff about your teaching all the time, but when you talk about it in public, with people who know you and where you are coming from, it becomes real. Through this talk, we know what we are doing, we know why we are doing it, we know what we do, and we can tell others why we are doing it.

(Quoted in Freeman and Johnson 2005, p.85)

For student-teachers used to more transmission-oriented teaching styles however, dialogic modes of teaching raise issues of identity, power, and agency. Johnston suggests that dialogue in educational settings has at least three interrelated elements – participation, contingency, and negotiation.

First, it requires the participation of the teacher and the teacher-learners. ...The point is that both these sides are needed: There can be no learning if either one is missing. Next dialogue is fundamentally contingent. Because of the complexity of what the teacher and teacher-learners bring to the classroom, and the further complexity of their interaction in class, it is impossible to predict exactly what teacher learners will or will not learn. ...Finally, dialogue involves contestant negotiation. Because of its contingency, truly dialogical relations can only be maintained through a constant moving to and fro between participants in the domains both of content (what we are studying) and process (how we go about it). (158)

'Learning how to talk' is essential in order to participate in a community of practice. It involves learning to share ideas with others and to listen without judgement, and like other forms of collaborative learning, may require modelling and rules if it is to be successful.

Collaborative approaches to learning are central to current pedagogies of SLTE. The collective knowledge, experience, and thinking of the participants together with the course content and the course-room artifacts, provide the resources through which they learn. Danielewicz comments (2001, 141):

Collaborative learning creates a social context that helps students negotiate entry into the academic discourse community and acquire disciplinary knowledge. But, at the same time, their joint efforts will produce new knowledge, and eventually lead to a critique of accepted knowledge,

conditions, and theories, as well as of the institutions that produce knowledge.

Johnston (in press) four possibilities for collaborative teacher development: collaboration with fellow teachers, collaboration between teachers and university-based researchers, collaboration with students,, and collaboration with others involved in teaching and learning – administrators, parents, supervisors etc. Key concepts in a collaborative approach to learning are Vygotsky's notions of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and mediation. These two constructs present a view of learning as a process of "apprenticeship", where apprentices collaborate in social practices with teacher educators as well as mentors, critical friends and peers to acquire and construct new forms of interaction and thinking (Vygotsky 1978). Crucial to the process is the role of mediating artifacts in constructing new meanings. In the LTE course room these include handouts, worksheets, technology, video, as well as the physical course-room layout (Singh 2004).

Working in collaboration on classroom tasks offers many benefits. Johnson comments:

At the course level, collaborative efforts emerge among cohort groups of teachers as they engage in the meaningful exchange of ideas and experiences based on their understanding of themselves as teachers, of theories and pedagogies presented in their academic course work, of the students they teach, and of the day to day realities of their teaching contexts. .... Whether occurring in face-to-face or via computer-mediated communication, such exchanges foster the emergence of a professional discourse, heighten a feeling of membership in a professional community, and lessen the isolation and irrelevance often associated with university-based professional course work (2000, 2-3).

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

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

## The need for accountability

The scope of English teaching world-wide and the subsequent growth of SLTE programs has created a demand for greater accountability in SLTE practices. What constitutes a quality SLTE program in terms of its curriculum, the teaching methods that it gives rise to, and the kinds of teachers that the program produces? What competencies do the graduates of such programs possess? These kinds of questions are very difficult to answer since there are no widely-accepted definitions of concepts of “quality” in SLTE and likewise there is no internationally recognized specification of English language teacher competencies, though local specifications of essential teacher competencies have been produced in many countries and by a number of professional organizations (Leung and Teasdale 1999). . One way to approach the issue of accountability is through the identification of standards for SLTE programs. The standards movement has taken hold in many parts of the world and promotes the adoption of clear statements of instructional outcomes in educational programs as a way of improving learning outcomes in programs and to provide guidelines for program development, curriculum development, and assessment. In the US the TESOL organization has developed the *TESOL/NCATE Standards for P-12 Teacher Education Programs* which cover five domains – Language, Culture, Professionalism, Instruction, and Assessment, and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages has developed the ACTFL/NCATE Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers (ACTFL, 2002). These provide descriptions both of what foreign language teacher should know and the level of proficiency they should have reached in their teaching language. Critics of such an approach argue that the standards themselves are largely based on intuition and are not research based, and also that the standards movement has been brought into education from the fields of business and organizational management and reflects a reductionist approach in which learning is reduced to the mastery of discrete skills that can easily be taught and assessed.

Another dimension of accountability relates to the impact of SLTE programs. How can the results of teacher education practices be evaluated and what impact do SLTE programs have? Despite the huge investment in ELT teacher training programs in different parts of the world in the last 30 years, there is very little research available on the impact of such investment. Shamin observes (in press); “In English language teaching, while innovations abound – from innovative methods to curriculum, textbooks and assessment practices, literature on exploring the nature of change and its possible effects on innovation diffusion is surprisingly scant.”

We tend to take for granted that the teaching and learning experiences provided in SLTE programs succeed in changing teachers’ beliefs, understandings, knowledge, and

practices. However research often confirms that there is often little immediate evidence for change in teacher's practices as a result of training (Waters and Vilches 2005). Individual and contextual factors can impede adoption of educational innovations, including the amount of risk involved, the communicability of the innovation, compatibility with existing practices, the number of gatekeepers involved, the perceived benefits of the innovation as well as the organizational, political, social and cultural context in which the change is being attempted. An important collection of papers edited by Bartels (2005) explores how teachers are affected by the academic knowledge they received in their graduate courses and the extent to which they are able to access and use this knowledge in their subsequent teaching.

SLTE programs can of course be evaluated in much the same way as another educational program is evaluated, i.e. in terms of content, instruction, relevance and so on but these factors may have little influence on the extent to which the program and its activities initiates a deeper self-awareness of teaching. Typically professional development is intended to bring about change in teachers but change can mean many different things, and while short-term impact may be relatively easy to measure, much teacher development initiatives are designed to produce longer-term changes that are not always directly measurable. Measures are needed that involve teachers in self-evaluation, that enable them to monitor their growth and development over time through the use of self-directed activities such as portfolios, narratives, and journal writing, rather than measures which capture perceptions of change at a given moment in time. Sociocultural views of learning also suggest that evaluation considers not only the products of learning, but more importantly the sociocultural processes that are involved and the extent to which the social processes of the course room serve to inhibit or enhance teacher learning.

## **Critical language teacher education**

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

practice. Hawkins and Norton (in press) argue that language teachers have a particular role to play in promoting their learners' fuller participation in classrooms and communities.

Because language, culture, and identity are integrally related, language teachers are in a key position to address educational inequality, both because of the particular learners they serve, many of whom are marginalized members of the wider community, and because of the subject matter they teach – language – which can serve itself to both empower and marginalize. .... For those whose students may be members of the mainstream community, they nevertheless represent the values, beliefs and practices of the cultural groups with whom the new language is associated. Critical language teachers make transparent the complex relationships between majority and minority speakers and cultural groups, and between diverse speakers of the majority language, thus having the potential to disrupt potentially harmful and oppressive relations of power.

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

But if this is critical language teaching, what is critical language teacher education?

Hawkins and Norton (in press) identify three key practices that they suggest are associated with critical language teacher education. Critical awareness activities seek to raise teachers' awareness of "the way power relations are constructed and function in society, and the extent to which historical, social, and political practices structure educational inequality". Critical self-reflection activities "encourage teacher learners to critically reflect on their own identities and positioning in society." For example student teachers may create narratives or case studies that focus on awareness and meaning of such identities as "non-native speaker" or "female" and whether such identities impose limits on the teacher's abilities to fulfil their potential. Activities that address critical pedagogical relations are those in which "teacher educators reflect on their attempts to restructure power relations between themselves and their teacher learners, not only to model critical educational practices, but to encourage teacher learners to consider ways in which their own teaching can enhance opportunities for language learners in their classrooms."

## **Conclusions**

As this survey has illustrated, the field of Second Language Teacher Education has expanded considerably both in breath and in depth since its origins in training approaches associated with the major teaching methods of the 1960s and 1970s. Through the efforts of scholars and researchers on the one hand, the field has redefined its goals, its scope, its conceptual frameworks and its teaching methods. And on the other hand, growing demand for effective SLTE programs in response to worldwide expansion in the use of English has highlighted the need for a co-ordinated organizational response, which has lead to the demand for greater accountability through standards, curriculum renewal, professionalism, and the development of internationally recognized qualifications for language teachers. SLTE today is consequently a vital component of the field of TESOL and makes a vital contribution to our understanding of what lies at the core of this enterprise, namely, teachers, teaching, and the nature of teacher education.

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