Language teacher education

Karen E. Johnson

Introduction

There are three fundamental questions that constitute the core of language teacher education (LTE): what is it that language teachers need to know? What is it that language teachers need to be able to do? And how are these best learned? How the profession answers these questions speaks directly to what constitutes the professional knowledge base of LTE and informs the content of LTE programmes, the pedagogies that are taught in those programmes, and the institutional forms of delivery through which both the content and pedagogies are learned.

All those involved in the education of language teachers make choices about how these fundamental questions are answered. Such choices emerge from and are situated in the social, political, economic and cultural histories that are located in the contexts where language teachers live, learn and teach. Yet while “located L2 teacher education” entails constructing locally appropriate responses that support the preparation and professionalism of language teachers (Johnson, 2006: 245), there are several persistent challenges that have shaped and will continue to shape the programmatic choices that are made about LTE. This chapter begins with a brief history of language teacher education – focusing in particular on the sub-disciplinary area now known as teacher cognition – followed by a discussion of persistent challenges faced by LTE programmes, including emerging areas of debate and calls for future research that will continue to inform the programmatic choices that shape the field.

Brief history of language teacher education

Language teacher education has emerged only relatively recently, both as a professional activity and as a focus of research. Responsibility for preparing language teachers in the North American context moved from schools to and within universities in the mid-twentieth century (Labaree, 2004); EFL teacher training courses in the UK only started in the 1960s, leading to the eventual emergence of the Cambridge ESOL CELTA and the Trinity Cert. TESOL qualifications (Borg, 2011). Meanwhile, published volumes of empirical research on the practices of teacher education (rather than research into the activity of teaching itself) only began to emerge in the late-1980s (Houston, 1990).

Prior to this, the theories and research that informed general teacher education until the 1970s failed to consider the mental lives of teachers (Walburg, 1977). Instead, teachers were
considered to be ‘doers’ rather than ‘thinkers’, and the doing of teaching was conceptualised as a set of instructional behaviours that, if carried out systematically and efficiently, would ultimately lead to greater gains in student learning regardless of institutional and/or social context. Since then, numerous handbooks (e.g. Cochran-Smith et al., 2008) and commissioned reports (e.g. the American Educational Research Association (AREA) Report, Cochran-Smith and Zeichner, 2005; National Academy of Education (NAE) Report, Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005) have helped to consolidate the most up-to-date research on teacher education. And, although at times overshadowed by research on teaching rather than teacher education (Grossman and McDon-ald, 2008), more than three decades of research on teacher cognition in general teacher education (e.g. Cochran-Smith and Zeichner, 2005) and in L2 teacher education (e.g. Freeman, 2002; Borg, 2003; Johnson, 2006) has come to characterise teacher learning as normative and lifelong; it is built through experiences in multiple social contexts and is based on the assumption that knowing, thinking and doing come from participating in the social practices of learning and teaching in specific classroom and school situations.

Within the context of L2 teacher education, therefore, the learning of L2 teaching is no longer viewed as a matter of simply translating theories of linguistics and/or second language acquisition (SLA) into effective instructional practices but as a dialogic process of co-constructing knowledge that is situated in and emerges out of participation in particular socio-cultural practices and contexts (Freeman and Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 2009). Instead, the typical ways of acting and interacting, and the values, assumptions and attitudes that are embedded in the classrooms where teachers were once students, in the teacher education programmes where they receive their professional credentialing and in the schools where they work, shape the complex ways in which they come to think about themselves, their students, the activities of L2 teaching and the processes of L2 teaching-learning (Johnson, 2009).

Additionally, over the past four decades, two parallel paradigm shifts have also helped reshape our understanding of learning in general and teacher learning in particular. Within the field of applied linguistics, shifts in disciplinary knowledge about the nature of language and SLA have been informed by shifts in how various intellectual traditions have come to conceptualise learning – from behaviourist, to cognitive, to situated, social and distributed views of human cognition (Firth and Wagner, 1997; Putman and Borko, 2000; ‘Second language acquisition reconceptualized?’, 2007). In LTE, these shifts have been reflected in shifting characterisations of teachers and teaching respectively as: doing or enacting effective teaching behaviours as determined by others (external); as knowing, or interactive decision-making about subject matter content and teaching processes as determined by teachers themselves (internal); and as interpreting, or knowing what to do within the social contexts and situated meanings that are embedded in and emerge from the cultural practices and institutions where teachers and students live, learn and work (Freeman, 2002; Johnson, 2009).

Overall, this shifting epistemological orientation toward the so-called sociocultural turn (Block, 2003; Johnson, 2006) in our understanding of human cognition and a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of teacher learning and the activities of language teaching have created an array of persistent challenges for all those involved in LTE. Moreover, in the twenty-first century, the work of teacher educators and LTE programmes has expanded exponentially as a result of new technologies (see Gruba, Hinkelman and Cárdenas-Claros, this volume), the globalisation of English (see Seargeant, this volume), and an increasingly globalised world (see Pennycook, this volume). In newly emerging centres of ELT in Asia, East Asia, South America and across the African continent, today’s language teachers are more likely to be non-native speakers of English (see Llurda, this volume), be required to implement national curricula in large-scale public sector institutional settings and, despite the promulgation of communicative
Language teaching (CLT) methods (see Thornbury, this volume), continue to teach mandatory English through the national language rather than in English. The changing demographics of English language learners and the teachers who teach them has intensified the challenges facing the preparation and professionalisation of the English language teaching force around the world.

**Persistent challenges: the nature and role of disciplinary knowledge**

Given this history, if disciplinary knowledge about language and SLA cannot simply be applied to the pedagogies of the language classroom, then the question remains: what constitutes the knowledge base of language teacher education? Answering this question is complicated because few would deny that knowledge of the formal proprieties of language, a meta-language to describe those proprieties (i.e. grammar terminology) and an understanding of how languages are learned and used, as well as insight into users and contexts of use, is essential for the development of language teacher expertise. In fact, this sort of disciplinary knowledge is what distinguishes a professional language teacher from someone who, simply by birthright, speaks the language. And despite attempts to debunk the native-speaker fallacy (Phillipson, 1992), in many regions of the world it is assumed that if someone speaks the language, he/she can teach it, and/or that a second language is learned best when taught by a native-speaker (see Llurda, this volume). Such socially constructed, historically and culturally perpetuated notions about language teaching and language learning have served to minimise the value of language teacher education as the quintessential institutional context for the professional development of language teachers. And given the globalisation of English, traditional English language teacher training programmes (such as the CELTA, mentioned above, which in the past involved mostly native speakers of English and small class sizes) can no longer realistically prepare large-scale public sector teachers who teach mandated curricula to the increasing numbers of diverse English language learners around the world.

**The theory/practice dichotomy**

While disciplinary knowledge about language and how languages are learned (i.e. SLA) has and will continue to play an important role in the professionalisation of language teachers, two persistent challenges remain for LTE. First, the nature of disciplinary knowledge about language and SLA has long been plagued by questions surrounding the relationship between theory and practice. While many SLA researchers have cautioned against attempts to inform practice directly from theory on the grounds that the activities, interests and goals of SLA researchers are simply incompatible with those of teachers as they operate in different discursive worlds (Ellis, 1997; Gass and Mackey, 2007; Long, 2007), more recently, others have argued that theory and practice are simply two sides of the same coin, that is, that educational practice is a form of scientific research, and theory is not for mere observation but an instrument for educational innovation and change (Stetsenko and Arievitch, 2004; Lantolf and Poehner, 2104). Working from a Vygotskian socio-cultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986), the notion of praxis, or the dialectical unity of theory and practice, emerges out of a process of reconsidering and reorganising lived experiences of teachers and their students through theoretical constructs and discourses of the professional discourse community, while simultaneously reconsidering and reorganising theoretical constructs and discourses as they are enacted in language classrooms (Lantolf and Poehner, 2104; see also Negueruela-Azarola and García, this volume). For language teacher educators, if disciplinary knowledge about language, SLA and the learning of language teaching are to have relevance for language teachers, they must be interconnected with the experiential knowledge that teachers bring with them to LTE programmes, while simultaneously grounding them in
the actual activities of being and becoming language teachers in the setting and circumstances in which they live, learn and work.

**The cognitive/social dichotomy**

Scholarly agreement over what constitutes language and SLA also remains contested between the so-called cognitive versus social perspectives in the field of SLA in particular, and in applied linguistics more generally (Zuengler and Miller, 2006; Atkinson, 2011). Cognitive-oriented SLA research typically defines language as a stable, neutral and naturally ordered hierarchical system consisting of predetermined syntactic, phonological, morphological and pragmatic characteristics that reside on some deeper psycho-cognitive level in the individual (see Zuengler and Miller, 2006). Additionally, cognitive-oriented SLA research separates language learning from language use (Kasper, 1997; Gass, 2008) based on the underlying assumption that while systematicity and generativity can be found in fully formed native speakers (Chomsky, 1965), the goal of cognitive-oriented SLA research is to empirically document the increasing complexity and developing fluency of language learners’ mental grammars (i.e. their interlanguage).

Social-oriented SLA research, on the other hand, foregrounds language use in real-world situations as fundamental, not ancillary, to language learning (Zuengler and Miller, 2006). In fact, Lantolf and Johnson (2007: 878) state emphatically that “it is not that social activity influences cognition, but that social activity is the process through which human cognition is formed”. Social-oriented SLA research is grounded in the notion that humans develop as “participants in cultural communities” and “their development can be understood only in light of the cultural practices and circumstances of their communities – which also change” (Rogoff, 2003: 3–4). Social-oriented SLA research defines language learning as building capacity to function in relevant socio-cultural contexts; as positioning speakers in relation to others; as invoking particular cultural schema; as being fluid, dynamic and ultimately unstable; and as accessing resources and making choices about how to be in the target language community. Therefore, from this perspective, attention to participation in various socio-cultural practices is critical to understanding SLA, since the processes of language learning are negotiated with people in what they do, in what such practices collectively mean and in the resources people draw on and the choices they make to achieve their communicative goals.

**Linking disciplinary and experiential knowledge**

Given this state of affairs, LTE programmes are left to grapple with the difficulties of the theory/practice relationship and the cognitive/social dichotomy that persist in linguistic/SLA theory and research. Yet, by rejecting an ‘applied science model’ (Wallace, 1998), in other words, the direct application of theories of SLA to methods of language teaching, LTE programmes have begun to recognise the complexities of teachers’ mental lives, the socially situated processes of learning to teach, and the dynamic nature of the teaching/learning processes that occur in language classrooms. By doing so, what becomes central to the knowledge base of language teacher education is not which ontological SLA camp to draw from but the need to ground relevant disciplinary knowledge about language and SLA in teachers’ understandings of and experiences in the day-to-day activities of learning to teach and being a language teacher.

Put more directly, an essential element of becoming a professional language teacher is gaining a deep understanding of the disciplinary knowledge that reflects the history and current debates that define what language is, how second languages are learned and how language can best be taught. However, this disciplinary knowledge is not the same kind of knowledge that teachers
use to teach languages, nor is it the same kind of knowledge that learners use to learn languages (Freeman, 2004). Thus, while an important part of language teacher professionalism is knowledge of the most up-to-date disciplinary knowledge about language and SLA, an equally important dimension of that professionalism is the development of a specialised kind of knowledge that teachers use to actually teach language.

Discussed in greater depth in the next section, the knowledge that teachers use to teach language does have a great deal of disciplinary knowledge in it, but it is also shaped by experiential knowledge that emerges from teachers’ own lived experiences as students, language learners and language teachers. In fact, it is this interconnectedness between lived experiences and disciplinary knowledge that is most influential in the development of teacher expertise (Kennedy, 1999).

A powerful example of this process can be found in a collection of ‘dialogues’ between TESOL Quarterly readers (classroom teachers) and TESOL Quarterly authors of previously published TESOL Quarterly articles (researchers, drawing on theoretical perspectives) that focused on issues of language, culture and power (see Sharkey and Johnson, 2003). For instance, as an experienced language teacher enrolled in a post-secondary teacher education programme, Jordan (2003) recalls the “discomfort and embarrassment” she felt after reading Auerbach’s (1993) critique of the USA English-only ideology and its detrimental impact on the language and literacy development of English language learners. Because Jordan had long considered herself an “advocate for native language rights” and an “educational progressive”, Auerbach’s article led her to question her long-held assumption that “any departure from English in my ESL classroom was not good teaching practice” (p. 37). Jordan narrates how, over an eight-year period, her approach to teaching shifted toward seeing students’ L1 as a resource that, when integrated into her daily instructional practices, fostered greater student engagement, more authentic communication and greater gains in students’ L2 literacy. Projects such as the TESOL Quarterly Dialogues highlight the complex ways in which teachers actively link disciplinary knowledge to their own experiential knowledge as they reframe the way they describe and interpret their teaching/learning experiences as a result of engagement in LTE programmes.

Another productive means of building the interconnectedness between teachers’ lived experiences and disciplinary knowledge is to develop what Andrews (2007) refers to as teacher language awareness. Such awareness entails not only developing a conscious understanding of and the meta-linguistic terminology to explain both structural and functional features of the language but also developing language teachers’ competence as language users, language analysts and language teachers (Wright, 2002; Andrews, 2007; see also Svalberg, this volume). This process involves not only the ability to use the language appropriately in a variety of situations but also to develop explicit awareness of the social and pragmatic norms which underlie appropriate use. It encompasses a deeper understanding of the grammatical, semantic and pragmatic resources that are available to language users and how it is that users choose and manipulate these resources to accomplish their communicative goals. And it involves understanding how to create and exploit language learning opportunities within the activities of the language classroom that will help language learners develop the capacity to generate meaning from and function in the target language community.

Disciplinary knowledge of all stripes will most certainly continue to inform, in part, the knowledge base of LTE programmes. However, for disciplinary knowledge to be relevant to the work of language teachers, it must be grounded in the actual activities of being and becoming a language teacher, it must be made accessible in ways that enable teachers to reframe how they interpret their lived experiences and it must be reconstituted in such a way that it becomes a kind of specialised knowledge that language teachers are able to use to make the content of their lessons relevant, usable and accessible to their students.
The development of knowledge for language teaching

In the mid-1980s, Shulman (1987) and his colleagues at Stanford University embarked on a research project to define teacher knowledge not only in terms of the disciplinary foundations of what teachers need to know about the subject matter that they are expected to teach but also the knowledge that teachers rely on to make that subject matter accessible, relevant and useful to students. Coined pedagogical content knowledge because it combines knowledge of content, pedagogy, curriculum, learners and educational context, Shulman emphasised this knowledge as being “of special interest because it identifies the distinctive bodies of knowledge for teaching” (p. 8).

Pedagogical content knowledge is neither fixed nor stable but instead emergent, dynamic and contingent on teachers’ knowledge of particular students, in particular contexts who are learning particular content for particular purposes. As a result, its development emerges out of engagement in the activities of teaching since its very nature constitutes and is constitutive of the interconnectedness of content, context, students and pedagogical purpose.

Given its dynamic nature, pedagogical content knowledge develops as teachers engage in the actual activities of teaching. This creates a conundrum for pre-service teacher education programmes because it requires that learners of teaching perform as teachers before they have the necessary competence to do so. Yet it is precisely through engaging in the activities of teaching and the teacher educator/teacher interactions about those activities that teachers are enabled to develop deeper understandings of their actions. They will become consciously aware of the subject matter content and pedagogical resources that form the basis of their instructional decisions and activities.

While most pre-service LTE programmes do require supervised practicum and/or internship experiences, these often come near the end of the programme, remain disconnected from academic coursework and are apprenticeship-like, in that they invoke a ‘discovery learning’ conceptualisation of teacher learning. If, as the research on teacher cognition suggests, participation in particular socio-cultural practices and contexts shapes what and how teachers learn to teach, then LTE programmes must create multiple and varied opportunities for teachers to engage in theoretically and pedagogically sound instructional practices within the socio-cultural contexts in which they teach. More importantly, these opportunities, by design, must create spaces for teacher educators to offer expert mediation that supports language teachers as they are engaged in the processes of being and becoming a teacher.

Thus, while typical practicum activities include teaching a class, self-observation, observing other teachers, the use of teaching journals or discussions in seminars (Gebhard, 2009), new technologies that support computer-mediated communication (e.g. discussion boards, moodles, blogs) have helped to open up these activities by exposing teachers’ thoughts, feelings and concerns as they are participating in the processes of learning to teach, while simultaneously fostering greater teacher educator/teacher dialogue around the activities of planning, teaching and reflecting on teaching (see Yoshida, 2011; Johnson and Golombek, 2013). For example, a study of the private, asynchronous online blog exchanges between novice ESL teachers and a teacher educator during a 15-week MA TESL teaching practicum (Johnson and Golombek, 2013) highlighted the case of Kyla, who struggled to construct a teaching persona that would enable her to function successfully while completing her practicum in a post-secondary ESL oral communication course. Through her weekly blog posts, she expressed this struggle through emotive language that shifted from overconfidence to deep disappointment. The dialogic blog exchanges between Kyla and her teacher educator provided Kyla with emotional support, offered concrete instructional strategies and modelled expert thinking, all of which appeared to work in consort to assist Kyla as she worked to overcome the dissonance she was experiencing between her
imagined teaching persona and the instructional experiences she was attempting to create for the students in her practicum placement.

Additionally, various forms of inquiry-based professional development (i.e. teacher study groups, peer coaching, lesson study, see Johnson, 2009), particularly those that allow for self-directed, collaborative, inquiry-based learning that is directly relevant to teachers’ classrooms, have helped to create structural arrangements where teachers and teacher educators can engage in sustained collaborative dialogue that make explicit the dynamic nature of the pedagogical content knowledge that teachers come to rely on as they make the content of their instruction accessible, relevant and useful to students.

A persistent challenge for language teacher education is to create learning/teaching opportunities that foster the development of language teacher pedagogical content knowledge. What makes this challenge so persistent is, as the original definition suggests, because it is emergent, dynamic and contingent on teachers’ knowledge of particular students, in particular contexts and who are learning particular content for particular purposes, it cannot be acquired in one context and then simply applied to another. At best, LTE programmes must make teachers aware of the emergent, dynamic and contingent qualities of pedagogical content knowledge and create varied and multiple experiences where teachers must draw together their knowledge of content, context, students and pedagogical purpose in ways that enable them to develop a disposition for reasoning teaching, that is, “when teachers are able to assemble and apply their knowledge of their professional landscape flexibly so that it can be used in different situations and for different purposes . . . the kind of reasoning that will enable them not only to recognise that it depends, but to articulate what it depends on” (Johnson, 1999: 2). Developing a reasoning teaching disposition for language teaching leads us to another persistent challenge in language teacher education: recognising the powerful role that context plays in learning-to-teach and teaching.

The challenge of context in learning-to-teach, teaching and educational innovation

In his 2002 review of three decades of research on LTE, Freeman (2002: 11) claimed that “[i]n teacher education, context is everything”. As such, context is not just the physical classrooms where language teaching/learning occurs but also the socio-cultural processes that make up the norms of schooling and which reflect the cultural values and social practices that dictate what teachers and students accept as normal (Denscombe, 1982). Likewise, teacher socialisation that takes place in different contexts has a long reach, emerging from teachers’ schooling histories, intertwining with their professional development experiences in teacher education programmes and extending to the schools and classrooms where they eventually teach (as noted earlier). Participation in these various contexts works in consort to socialise teachers into particular ways of conceptualising themselves as teachers, carrying out their teaching practices and supporting student learning.

Additionally, the power of context in language teacher education makes pedagogical innovation and/or educational reform a persistent challenge. Nowhere has this challenge been more acknowledged than in the ‘importation’ of ‘Western methods’ into instructional settings where policy makers and government officials seek to reform traditional grammar-based English language educational systems. As has been the case in South Korea, shifting English language instruction toward more communicative-oriented outcomes through curricular reform (i.e. the introduction of communicative language teaching) and mandated policies (i.e. teaching English through English) has failed to take into account the limited oral language proficiency of the local
teaching force, the washback effect of the grammar-translation-oriented examination system and the normative ways of schooling that South Korean teachers and their students are socialised into. As a result, despite decades of educational reform efforts, English language teachers in Korea have been found to enact their supposedly communication-oriented curricula in very traditional, non-communicative ways (Ahn, 2011; Kim, 2011).

In emerging ELT contexts around the world, ministries of education have also begun to mandate English language instruction at the primary level to prepare their citizens for an increasingly globalised economy (Graddol, 2006; see also Enever, this volume). Such educational policies are placing increasing demands on LTE programmes to prepare teachers with the necessary English language proficiency to teach English in English and to enact nationally mandated curricula so that all students have access to high-quality English language instruction. Well-known frameworks of language proficiency such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines are often not within the reach of the teachers who work in large-scale public sector institutional settings. LTE programmes are therefore left with the dual challenge of increasing teachers’ overall language proficiency while simultaneously preparing them with theoretically and pedagogically sound instructional practices that meet the local language learning demands of the students in the contexts where they teach.

Moreover, the language learning context in which language teacher education takes place matters as well. In the field of English language teaching generally, much is made of the English as a foreign language (EFL) versus English as a second language (ESL) distinction. Obviously, the goals for language learning differ, the opportunities for language use differ, the motivation of language learners differ and the intended outcomes of language teaching differ. Similar claims can be made for ESL/EFL language teacher education. EFL teachers are typically more concerned with how to teach ‘language as content’, while ESL teachers are more concerned with how to teach ‘content through language’. EFL teachers often have to contend with high-stakes testing and a mandated curriculum, while ESL teachers are charged with keeping ESL students on grade-level with their English-speaking peers. Slogans such as ‘teacher-centred’ versus ‘student-centred’ are sometimes invoked to distinguish between the instructional styles of EFL versus ESL teachers. Yet the research on language teacher cognition is quite clear: the lived, language learning and schooling experiences that teachers have been socialised into will no doubt influence how they make sense of the content and pedagogies of their teacher education programme. Thus, the same can be said whether language teacher education takes place in ESL or EFL instructional contexts. In language teacher education, context matters.

Thus, recognising that context shapes both the processes of learning to teach and the activity of teaching remains a persistent challenge for LTE programmes. It requires that language teachers learn to scrutinise and navigate the consequences that various contexts, and the values and norms embedded in those contexts, have had or will continue to have on their daily classroom practices. This can be accomplished through autobiographical introspection about the schooling contexts from which teachers have come, for example, through teacher-constructed learning-to-teach histories (Johnson, 1999). It can take place through narrative-inquiry practitioner research where teachers seek to expose the normative values that regulate their own instructional practices and/or how students respond to innovative instructional practices (Johnson and Golombek, 2002). It can become salient to teachers as they read case studies of local language teaching/learning practices that demonstrate the cultural complexities implicit in classroom language learning (Canaagarajah, 2003). It can emerge as language teachers attempt to create alternative identities for their language learners (e.g. ‘I don’t need to sound like a native-speaker’) or assist language learners as they fulfil aspirations to develop new identities in the target language community (Norton, 1995).
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Ultimately, recognising the role of context in language teacher education means recognising the social, cultural, political and economic realities within which language teachers live and work, or for many, hope to live and work. Language learners’ ethnicity, gender, heritage, educational level, socioeconomic status and even the perceived status of their L1, all work in consort to situate and construct learners, teachers and the activities of language teaching in particular ways. If, in teacher education, ‘context is everything’, then LTE programmes must recognise how changing socio-political and socio-economic contexts impact upon the ways in which language teachers come to conceptualise themselves as teachers, how they enact their teaching practices and, most importantly, the kinds of learning environments that they are willing and able to create for their students.

Emerging areas of debate

Which English should teachers teach?

With the globalisation of English and the increasing legitimacy of the varieties of English that are spoken throughout the world (see Seargeant, this volume), an emerging area of debate for language teacher education is ‘which English should teachers teach?’ While commercial textbooks, high-stakes tests and language policies tend to propagate native speaker standards, in many regions of the world, non-standard varieties of English are not only widely spoken but widely accepted (Jenkins, 2006). Here again, the mantra ‘context is everything’ can be invoked, because historical, cultural, social, economic and political issues embedded in different contexts will determine which English teachers can and/or should teach.

Scholars working to promote World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) continue to struggle against dominant native speaker standards despite claims that native speaker standards in and of themselves are difficult to define, that the number of non-standard speakers of English around the world far exceeds those deemed in the Inner Circle (Kachru, 1992) and that Outer Circle speakers can and should develop their own norms rather than conforming to those of the so-called native speaker (Seidlhofer, 2005). Yet despite the increasing legitimacy of World Englishes in scholarly circles, there has been very little pedagogical uptake within the field of English language teaching (Jenkins, 2006). At best, scholars agree that teachers and learners should be made aware of what World Englishes are, what they represent to those who speak them and why they serve a valuable function in different contexts around the world. For LTE programmes, this reiterates the point made above: it is precisely the power of context – in particular, contexts with high-stakes exams, language policies and/or public discourses that view varieties of English as linguistic deficiencies – that will in large part determine which English teachers will choose to teach and which English students will be willing to learn.

Where should English language teacher education take place?

Largely due to the globalisation of English, the demand for English language teachers around the world finds increasing numbers of EFL teachers seeking professional development in ESL instructional settings. Within LTE programmes, teachers who have been socialised into typical ways of acting and interacting in EFL instructional settings often find the ESL classrooms where they are expected to learn-to-teach to be qualitatively different in terms of the norms for interaction, teacher/student roles and language learning expectations. The same can be said for teachers who have been socialised into typical ways of acting and interacting in ESL instructional settings when they enter EFL instructional settings. LTE programmes are left to determine whether
the content and pedagogies taught in LTE programmes in ESL settings are appropriate for the professional development of EFL teachers, and vice versa. Often the dilemma of making sense of professional development experiences in different instructional settings is left to the individual teacher once he/she enters the profession. Anecdotal evidence often indicates that much of what might be possible in ESL instructional contexts is not possible in EFL instructional contexts, and what is typical in EFL instructional contexts may not be appropriate in ESL instructional contexts. For LTE programmes, understanding the extent to which the language learning settings in which language teacher education takes place adequately prepares language teachers for any and all instructional contexts in an under-researched yet highly relevant emerging area of debate.

What is the relationship between teacher learning and student learning?

One might assume, as much of the public discourse on educational improvement does, that greater teacher professional development will lead to greater gains in student achievement. Yet direct causal links between what teachers learn as part of their teacher education programme and what students learn as a result of what and how teachers teach have yet to be adequately addressed in the educational literature (Ball et al., 2005; Freeman and Johnson, 2005). This remains an emerging issue of debate because defining learning depends, once again, on epistemological stance. Operating from a cognitive-oriented stance, language learning is believed to be located in the mind of the learner and separated from language use and reflects essentially the same outcome (e.g. so-called native speaker English) regardless of the context in which it is learned. Operating from a social-oriented stance, learning is believed to depend on the specific social activities in which students engage and the tools they use to engage in during those activities. As long as human agency and social context come into play, there will always be differences in how different people react to the same set of circumstances at different times (Lantolf and Johnson, 2007). Thus, the assumption that teacher professional development inevitably causes greater gains in student achievement implies an overly simplistic and inadequate understanding of the dynamic and complex nature of the activities of teacher learning, teaching and student learning.

While no one would argue against some sort of relationship between what teachers learn in their teacher education programmes and what students learn as a result of teachers’ instruction, Freeman and Johnson (2005) argue for a relationship of influence rather than causality. In their study of a high school French teacher involved in a long-term teacher inquiry project, what became salient was not so much what the students learned about the French language but how their teacher’s participation in the teacher inquiry project shaped how they experienced the learning of French. For them, learning French was an ongoing process of collaboratively co-constructing their understandings of the French lexicon and grammar while simultaneously expressing shared understandings of both the topic and the language used to talk about it. Likewise, a similar finding emerged in a narrative inquiry conducted by Herndon (2002) in a secondary ESL literature class for immigrant students in the New York public schools. Based on disciplinary knowledge that Herndon was exposed to in her LTE programme, she began to alter the modes of engagement in how her students interacted with literary texts from teacher-directed to student-directed. And as these new modes of engagement became the new norms for literacy activities in her classroom, her students began to engage with literary texts in much more communicative and personally meaningful ways. While much more research is certainly needed, these two studies provide hints into the challenges of uncovering the relationship of influence between teacher learning and student learning. Such research also points to the need to examine the practices of language teacher education that are instantiated in English LTE programmes around the world, the focus of future research, as discussed next.
**Future research: reclaiming the relevance of L2 teacher education**

While the research and scholarship in teacher cognition has transformed our understanding of how language teachers learn-to-teach and what is involved in the complexities of language teaching, traditional notions of teacher knowledge (i.e. a body of knowledge to be learned) and teacher learning continue to shape current models of second language teacher education practice (Tedick, 2009). In order to encourage greater uptake of teacher education practices that support the development of effective language educators who are skilled at enacting theoretically and pedagogically sound instructional practices in diverse settings, an area of future research is to determine empirically what language teachers actually learn by participating in the practices embedded their teacher education programmes. Such work can begin by examining what teacher educators are attempting to accomplish through these practices, the quality and character of their interactions as they engage in these practices, what teachers are learning as they participate in these practices and, most importantly, how their learning shapes the language learning environments teachers attempt to create for their students (Johnson, 2015). In essence, such empirical work seeks to establish the relevance of language teacher education by not only opening up the practices of LTE for closer scrutiny but also by holding teacher educators accountable to the language teachers with whom they work and, of course, the students their teachers teach. Until the profession establishes an empirical basis that justifies the practices of LTE, the relevance of language teacher education will remain in doubt and the false assumption that speaking a language is enough to teach it will prevail. Ultimately, empirical attention to the design, enactment and outcomes of the practices of language teacher education will establish the relevance of language teacher education in and for the professional development of language teachers.

**Discussion questions**

- How might language teacher education programmes (re)structure their content and pedagogies to deal with the debates surrounding the theory/practice and cognitive/social dichotomies that exist in SLA research?
- Hypothesise about what ‘located language teacher education’ might look like in the setting in which you teach?
- Reflect on the content and pedagogies of your own LTE programme or an LTE programme you have experienced. What choices were made about what language teachers should know and be able to do, and how is this best learned?
- Consider a teacher education practice that you experienced directly or that you routinely carry out in your teacher education programme. What are you attempting to accomplish through this practice? What did you or what did your teachers actually learned as they participated in this practice? What might be alternative ways of (re)structuring this practice to foster greater teacher learning?

**Related topics**

Cognitive perspectives on classroom language learning; Communicative language teaching in theory and practice; Language awareness; Method, methods and methodology; Politics, power relationships and ELT; Sociocultural theory and the language classroom; World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca.
Karen E. Johnson

Further reading


References


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