

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-82318-0 - Teacher Language Awareness
Stephen Andrews
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Teacher Language Awareness

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-82318-0 - Teacher Language Awareness
 Stephen Andrews
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE LANGUAGE TEACHING LIBRARY

A series covering central issues in language teaching and learning, by authors who have expert knowledge in their field.

In this series:

- Affect in Language Learning** *edited by Jane Arnold*
Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching second edition *by Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers*
Beyond Training *by Jack C. Richards*
Classroom Decision-Making *edited by Michael Breen and Andrew Littlejohn*
Collaborative Action Research for English Language Teachers *by Anne Burns*
Collaborative Language Learning and Teaching *edited by David Nunan*
Communicative Language Teaching *by William Littlewood*
Developing Reading Skills *by Françoise Grellet*
Developments in English for Specific Purposes *by Tony Dudley-Evans and Maggie Jo St John*
Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers *by Michael McCarthy*
Discourse and Language Education *by Evelyn Hatch*
The Dynamics of the Language Classroom *by Ian Tudor*
English for Academic Purposes *by R. R. Jordan*
English for Specific Purposes *by Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters*
Establishing Self-Access *by David Gardner and Lindsay Miller*
Foreign and Second Language Learning *by William Littlewood*
Group Dynamics in the Language Classroom *by Zoltán Dörnyei and Tim Murphey*
Language Learning in Distance Education *by Cynthia White*
Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective *edited by Michael Byram and Michael Fleming*
The Language Teaching Matrix *by Jack C. Richards*
Language Test Construction and Evaluation *by J. Charles Alderson, Caroline Clapham and Dianne Wall*
Learner-Centredness as Language Education *by Ian Tudor*
Learners' Stories: Difference and Diversity in Language Teaching *edited by Phil Benson and David Nunan*
Managing Curricular Innovation *by Numa Markee*
Materials Development in Language Teaching *edited by Brian Tomlinson*
Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom *by Zoltán Dörnyei*
Psychology for Language Teachers *by Marion Williams and Robert L. Burden*
Research Methods in Language Learning *by David Nunan*
Rules, Patterns and Words: Grammar and Lexis in English Language Teaching *by Dave Willis*
Second Language Teacher Education *edited by Jack C. Richards and David Nunan*
Society and the Language Classroom *edited by Hywel Coleman*
Task-Based Language Teaching *by David Nunan*
Teaching Languages to Young Learners *by Lynne Cameron*
Teacher Learning in Language Teaching *edited by Donald Freeman and Jack C. Richards*
Testing for Language Teachers second edition *by Arthur Hughes*
The Experience of Language Teaching *by Rose M. Senior*
Understanding Research in Second Language Learning *by James Dean Brown*
Using Surveys in Language Programs *by James Dean Brown*
Vocabulary: Description, Acquisition and Pedagogy *edited by Norbert Schmitt and Michael McCarthy*
Vocabulary, Semantics and Language Education *by Evelyn Hatch and Cheryl Brown*
Voices from the Language Classroom *edited by Kathleen M. Bailey and David Nunan*

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-82318-0 - Teacher Language Awareness
Stephen Andrews
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Teacher Language Awareness

Stephen Andrews

University of Hong Kong



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-82318-0 - Teacher Language Awareness
Stephen Andrews
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521530194

© Cambridge University Press 2007

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2007

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Andrews, Stephen, 1948–

Teacher language awareness / Stephen Andrews.

p. cm. — (Cambridge language teaching library)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-53019-4 (pbk.) — ISBN 978-0-521-82318-0 (hardback)

1. Language and languages—Study and teaching. 2. Language awareness.

I. Title. II. Series.

P53.454.A53 2007

418'.007—dc22

2007017363

ISBN 978-0-521-53019-4 paperback

ISBN 978-0-521-82318-0 hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

Acknowledgements	vi
Introduction	ix
Prologue: The challenge of being ‘language-aware’	1
1 Language Awareness, ‘Knowledge About Language’ and TLA	9
2 TLA and the teaching of language	23
3 TLA and the ‘grammar debate’	48
4 TLA and teachers’ subject-matter cognitions	70
5 TLA and pedagogical practice	94
6 The TLA of expert and novice teachers	118
7 TLA and the native-speaker and non-native-speaker debate	143
8 TLA and student learning	167
9 TLA and teacher learning	181
Epilogue: TLA and teacher professionalism	200
Appendix	205
References	207
Index	224
Publisher’s acknowledgements	230

Acknowledgements

Although I am solely responsible for the final version of this book (including any errors), the ideas it contains are the product of more than 30 years' professional involvement in language education and have inevitably been influenced by colleagues, as well as students, past and present. I would like to express my thanks to all those I have had the good fortune to encounter within the profession (some only via the printed page), too numerous to mention individually, whose ideas may have had an impact upon my own thinking.

At the same time, I feel that I should acknowledge the influence, contribution and support of certain specific individuals. During the time I have been involved with language teaching, I have been fortunate enough to have been taught by two of the major figures in Applied Linguistics and Language Education: Eric Hawkins, the 'father' of Language Awareness, with whom I completed my Postgraduate Certificate in Education at the University of York Language Teaching Centre in 1971–2; and Christopher Brumfit, who supervised my doctoral research at the University of Southampton in the 1990s. I encountered these scholars at very different stages of my professional life, but both were an inspiration, not just because of the depth and breadth of their expertise but also because of their humanity and their passion for language education. I owe Chris a particular debt of gratitude as my PhD supervisor. His premature death in March 2006 robbed the profession of one of its finest scholars.

I should also like to thank my friend and colleague Amy Tsui for her unstinting support during the time that I was working on this book, and conducting the research upon which much of it is based. I am especially grateful to Amy for allowing me to gather data of my own from Marina, the 'expert' teacher in her 2003 book (A. B. M. Tsui, *Understanding expertise in teaching*, Cambridge University Press), for use in Chapter 6 of this book, and for permitting me access to the data from the 'Good Practices' project (Tsui et al., 2005), as discussed in Chapter 8.

Two friends and former colleagues also deserve a particular vote of thanks: Arthur McNeill and Peter Falvey. Arthur's work on Teacher Language Awareness and lexis has influenced me greatly. He made a major contribution to the early work on this book, and a number of his

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-82318-0 - Teacher Language Awareness
Stephen Andrews
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Acknowledgements

ideas (and words) have no doubt found their way into this final version. Peter's influence on my thinking about L2 teachers' language proficiency, knowledge and awareness began in the late 1980s, when we were working at the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES, now known as Cambridge Assessment) on the Cambridge Examinations in English for Language Teachers (CEELT), and continued when we were colleagues in Hong Kong throughout the 1990s. His friendship and support helped me through a number of troughs during my doctoral studies.

I should also like to thank everyone else who has contributed in different ways to this book: the publishing team at Cambridge University Press (particularly Mickey Bonin, for his initial support for such a book, and Jane Walsh for seeing it through to publication) for all their professional help, support, patience and flexibility; Jacqueline French for her painstakingly professional editing; Song Yanan for her invaluable help with the references; Joffee Lam for his help with the statistical analyses in Chapter 8; 'Marina', and all the other teachers who allowed themselves to be tested, interviewed and observed when I was gathering data for the book; and the anonymous reviewers of earlier versions of the manuscript for their extremely constructive advice and suggestions.

This book is dedicated to my wife, Veronica, our children (Merryn, Jamie, Tom, and Tamsin) and my mother-in-law, Kathleen McCarthy.

Introduction

1 What is the book about?

This book is concerned with Teacher Language Awareness, or TLA, defined by Thornbury (1997:x) as ‘the knowledge that teachers have of the underlying systems of the language that enables them to teach effectively’. The focus of the book is the language awareness of L2 teachers (i.e. teachers of a Foreign or Second Language (EFL/ESL)), and the examples are drawn from the teaching of L2 English. However, the issues raised are equally applicable to teachers of any language that is not the mother tongue of their students. In many cases, they are likely to be of relevance to teachers of the mother tongue, too.

The book concentrates on teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the language systems, in the belief that these systems are at the heart of the language acquisition process and must therefore form the core of any teacher’s language awareness. As the quotation above from Thornbury makes clear, TLA applies to all the language systems and assumes their interdependence, given that they are, as Carter (in Bolitho et al., 2003:253) points out, ‘closely interwoven in the construction of meanings and of texts, both spoken and written’. The specific focus of the present book is on TLA as it relates to grammar. However, the discussion and the examples in the following chapters acknowledge and reflect the interrelationship between the language systems, and in particular between grammar, lexis and discourse.

The basic argument presented in the book is that the possession of an adequate level of TLA is an essential attribute of any competent L2 teacher. The assumption underlying that argument is that there is a relationship between the language awareness of the L2 teacher and the effectiveness of that teacher as indicated by the language learning achieved by his/her students. Put simply, the book assumes that TLA has a positive impact on student learning: TLA is seen as a potentially crucial variable in the language teaching / language learning enterprise, in the sense that the language-aware L2 teacher is more likely to be effective in promoting student learning than the teacher who is less language-aware.

The book discusses the findings of a number of studies conducted in a variety of locations and in a range of areas relevant to TLA. However,

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-82318-0 - Teacher Language Awareness
Stephen Andrews
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Teacher Language Awareness

the snapshots of the teaching of L2 English presented and discussed in the book are all drawn from one particular context: the Hong Kong secondary school. Although the official English Language curriculum in Hong Kong has been based on communicative principles since the early 1980s, the vast majority of schools and teachers have adopted a very 'weak' version of communicative/task-based language teaching, in which the explicit teaching of grammar continues to play a significant role. The Hong Kong teachers whose performance is examined in the book are all non-native speakers (NNS) of English.

2 Who is this book for?

Although Teacher Language Awareness has received scant attention in terms of published research, it is an area of increasing concern to those involved in language teacher education, as well as those responsible for quality assurance in language teaching. Because of this, the book should be of interest to a wide range of people with an involvement or interest in language education issues: practising teachers, students on in-service teacher education programmes, language teacher educators, academics and other professionals engaged in language education.

3 What is the purpose of the book?

The book sets out to address the following fundamental questions about teachers' knowledge of the systems of language, i.e. their TLA: what form does this knowledge take, and what is its potential impact on teacher effectiveness? The aim in the following chapters is to examine these and related questions by exploring the nature of teachers' knowledge of the language systems (with particular reference to grammar), and the relationship between teachers' knowledge and their handling of language-related issues in their teaching.

The purpose of the book is to encourage teachers and others involved in language education, including teacher educators, to think more deeply about the importance of TLA, the nature of TLA and the impact of TLA upon teaching (and, potentially, upon learning). The book is intended to contribute to a greater understanding of TLA, making teachers more aware of the potential significance of their language-related interventions, and enabling teacher educators to adopt a more principled approach to the planning of those parts of their programmes associated with TLA. At the same time, I hope that the book will provoke debate and raise questions that will help to establish the beginnings of a research agenda for TLA.

4 What is the book NOT about?

This book does not set out to develop teachers' awareness of language via any direct treatment. There are no language-analysis tasks designed to stimulate teachers' reflections on the workings of different parts of the language systems. A number of books containing tasks of this type are already available, such as Bolitho and Tomlinson's *Discover English* (1980; 1995), Wright's *Investigating English* (1994) and Thornbury's *About Language* (1997). The interested reader need look no further than these three texts to find a wealth of activities intended to foster the development of TLA.

The book does not promote particular approaches to the teaching of grammar. Frequent reference is made to data from studies of teachers' language awareness as it relates to grammar. However, in the analysis of these data, there is a deliberate attempt to avoid evaluation of the methodology employed by individual teachers: instead, the discussion focuses exclusively on language-related issues.

There is also no attempt to suggest that a teacher's explicit knowledge of grammar should be based exclusively upon any single model of language. My own views of language and of grammar are the product of a number of influences, including the grammars of Leech and Svartvik (1975), Quirk et al. (1985), Biber et al. (1999) and Carter and McCarthy (2006), as well as systemic functional linguistics (see, e.g., Halliday, 1985), which emphasises the role of the language systems as a resource for making meaning, the close interrelationship of grammar and lexis (the 'lexico-grammar') and the importance of discourse grammar. Inevitably, where judgemental comment is made on an individual teacher's awareness in relation to, for example, a specific feature of grammar, such comment passes through the filter of my own perspective on language. However, as far as possible, such remarks are based upon what might reasonably be expected of that teacher within the prevailing norms of the context within which he or she works. They are *not* set within a single theoretical framework of grammar.

The aim is therefore not to specify the precise form or extent of the knowledge that teachers of language should have about grammar. In my view, the knowledge of the language-aware teacher should not be based upon any single theoretical model, but rather upon informed, principled eclecticism. Such knowledge is not static: it is constantly changing, developing, renewing itself. The developments in any teacher's language awareness over the course of a career are likely to occur idiosyncratically, as a result of a combination of factors, including exposure to theoretical developments and reflections on practical experience. The adequacy and appropriateness of an individual teacher's language

Teacher Language Awareness

awareness at any stage of his or her career need to be considered in relation to the demands posed by the context in which that teacher is working at that time.

5 How is the book organised?

The book consists of a Prologue, followed by nine chapters and an Epilogue. The Prologue introduces some of the major questions addressed in the main body of the book, with snapshots from the Hong Kong secondary school classroom. Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the history of interest in Teacher Language Awareness, in the context of the increased attention since the late 1970s to ‘Language Awareness’ generally, and to the role of explicit language knowledge in language learning in particular. Chapter 2 presents a detailed analysis of the language awareness of the L2 teacher, exploring the complex nature of TLA, its significance in L2 teaching and learning, how it affects teacher behaviour and its potential impact on pedagogical practice. Chapter 3 examines some of the issues and debates concerning the value of explicit knowledge about the language systems, particularly grammar, for L2 learning and teaching, together with the implications for TLA of current understandings of these issues.

Chapters 4 and 5 revisit issues originally discussed in Chapter 2. Chapter 4 focuses on L2 teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, feelings and understandings about the content of learning (i.e. the subject-matter cognitions which form the core of any teacher’s language awareness). Chapter 5 explores various aspects of TLA in pedagogical practice, in particular (a) how the L2 teacher’s language awareness both influences and is influenced by that teacher’s engagement with the content of learning, and (b) the relationship between TLA and teaching materials. Both chapters draw extensively on data from Hong Kong secondary school teachers and classrooms.

Chapters 6 and 7 consider the TLA of teachers of L2 English at different stages of their careers and from different backgrounds. Chapter 6 examines the TLA of novice, highly proficient and expert teachers, while Chapter 7 attempts a dispassionate analysis of the TLA of native-speaker (NS) and non-native-speaker (NNS) teachers.

Chapter 8 focuses on the relationship between TLA and student learning. While acknowledging the difficulty of identifying any direct causative connection between TLA and students’ learning outcomes, the chapter discusses relevant research in relation to three themes: teachers’ subject-matter knowledge; teacher engagement with the content of learning; and teachers’ awareness of learner difficulties.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-82318-0 - Teacher Language Awareness
Stephen Andrews
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Introduction

Chapter 9 also looks at TLA and learning, but in this case focusing on teachers' own learning. The chapter examines issues relating to the development of the L2 teacher's language awareness, and principles that might be applied to the planning of TLA-related courses and activities.

The Epilogue returns to the central argument of the book – that possession of an adequate level of TLA is an essential attribute of any competent L2 teacher – and sets it within the context of the broader debate about teacher professionalism in general and L2 teacher professionalism in particular.