Prologue: A look at uncritical stories

This book examines the process of learning to teach a second or foreign language, through descriptive accounts of the experiences of teachers. It contains sixteen original chapters which present different perspectives on how teachers and student teachers respond to teaching and to the experiences that are provided as part of their professional development. The book thus illuminates the nature of learning to teach second or foreign languages through research-based accounts of how teacher education programs and the experience of teaching shape the knowledge, thinking, and practice of language teachers. We do not limit "second language" to English, since we believe that learning to teach any language shares certain fundamental characteristics.

Like most work of this nature, this book makes an argument. Our point is a basic one, namely, that in order to better understand language teaching, we need to know more about language teachers: what they do, how they think, what they know, and how they learn. Specifically, we need to understand more about how language teachers conceive of what they do: what they know about language teaching, how they think about their classroom practice, and how that knowledge and those thinking processes are learned through formal teacher education and informal experience on the job. Although it should be common sense to examine the teacher as pivotal in the enterprise of teaching and learning, to date questions such as these have been largely overlooked both in general educational research and in the field of language teaching. Thus the argument we make is set against a backdrop that takes a great deal for granted in language teaching – about teachers, their learning, and the cognitive side of teaching.

Although people have been learning to teach languages for a long time, very little attention has been paid to understanding how those learning processes actually unfold or the knowledge and experience that underlie them. Most of what is done in language teaching and in language teacher education is based on conventions that define disciplinary knowledge from linguistics, psychology, and various other fields as the foundation for what language teachers should know and therefore what they should do in their classrooms (see Freeman 1994). These academic traditions spring more from the need to articulate a professional identity for language teachers than from any solid, inquiry-derived understand-

ing of what people need to know in order to teach languages or how they learn to do what they do as language teachers in classrooms.

The metaphor of uncritical stories

To cast this argument in terms of a metaphor, the professional literature of language teaching is stocked with stories of classroom methodologies, of good curricula, of effective practices, of worthwhile programs, and so on. While these stories provide informative and sometimes entertaining accounts of language teaching, they typically offer little examination of the characters or settings in which they transpire, or even a careful examination of how the accounts themselves are put together. Thus we operate in our various roles – as teachers, teacher educators, researchers, curriculum developers, policy makers, and so on – in a landscape of uncritical assumptions and myths about language teaching and language teachers. Although there have been calls to establish a research base in language teaching and language teacher education [Freeman (1989); Freeman and Richards (1993); Richards and Nunan (1990)], there has been little progress until the work reported here. The fifteen research studies that make up this book inaugurate a domain of educational inquiry into how people learn to teach languages. The outcomes of such research will serve several purposes. They can provide a more rational foundation for language teacher education and can help to shape more effective practices. Most important, however, these studies, and the others that will no doubt follow in this domain of research, can enlighten our understanding of language teachers' mental lives and how they conceive their classroom teaching.

An overview of the volume

In planning this book, we invited the contributors to provide research-based accounts of the phenomenon of teacher education, focusing on the process from the viewpoint of the teacher or student teacher rather than that of the teacher educator. We asked for chapters which captured, in as much detail as possible, the thinking processes, learning, problem solving, and theorizing in which people engage as they learn to teach, and which we believe are at the heart of the process of teacher education. In so doing, the contributors have provided multiple perspectives on the process of becoming second language teachers using a variety of data sources and approaches to data gathering and analysis (see Chapter 16). Teacher development is studied in a variety of contexts and locations—both pre-service and in-service and in second language as well as foreign language settings—and at different levels, using

teachers' written or verbal accounts of their thinking, interviews, stimulated-recall, autobiographies, narratives, case studies, and observational data.

The chapters are grouped into three sections. In Section I, five chapters describe the beginning stages of teacher learning. In the first chapter, Kathleen Bailey and her colleagues describe their use of language learning autobiographies as a medium for examining their own professional development. They show how writing about past experiences of teaching and learning can serve as a powerful stimulus for further learning, revealing implicit assumptions and beliefs about the nature of teaching. In the second chapter, Karen Johnson examines the experience of a student teacher during a teaching practicum, and shows how this experience shapes the teacher's understanding of herself as a teacher, of second language teaching, and of the practicum itself. The gap between her vision of teaching and the practical realities of the classroom create a tension which interferes with her perception of what her students were learning. Gloria Gutiérrez Almarza, in Chapter 3, focuses on the relationship between student teachers' background knowledge and the knowledge they receive in teacher education courses, and explores how these sources of knowledge interact during teaching practice. Anné Knezevic and Mary Scholl describe their experience of collaborative teaching in a graduate Spanish course, and show how collaborative learning, teaching, and reflection shaped their understanding both of themselves and of teaching. In the last chapter in Section I, Amy Tsui provides a case study of how a teacher tried to introduce a process-based approach to the teaching of writing in her secondary school class. Tsui describes the problems created for the teacher and the decisions she made to resolve them, and shows how the teacher's understanding of the writing process itself changed as she took her students through a process-writing curriculum.

In Section II we focus on the practice of teaching itself, and on the cognitive processes that teachers engage in as they develop expertise in teaching. Patrick Moran examines the role that models of teaching can play in a self-directed process of learning to teach, and suggests that they serve as temporary learning strategies as teachers create their own personal teaching paradigms. Anne Burns examines six experienced Australian teachers who were confronted with a new teaching situation: teaching beginning adult learners. She examines how their preexisting beliefs affected their classroom practices and how subsequent changes in their beliefs occurred. She describes the interactions among institutionally derived beliefs, personal beliefs and thinking, and the process of instruction itself, and shows how top-down and bottom-up processes interact in a process she refers to as "intercontextuality." The third chapter in Section II, by Polly Ulichny, examines a segment of a lesson

to clarify the contribution of context and personal interpretation in the teacher's resolution of a teaching incident. Her chapter shows how analysis of the discourse of teaching can provide insight into the teacher's cognitive processes. In the final chapter in this section, Deborah Binnie Smith examines a group of secondary ESL teachers in Canada, the instructional decisions they make, and the factors that influence those decisions, showing that teacher decisions are not isolated or arbitrary but part of a complex, interrelated process which is informed by beliefs, perceptions, experience, and context.

The chapters in the third section of the book examine the relationships between teacher education and teacher learning. In Chapter 10, Donald Freeman describes how a group of teachers in an in-service master's program integrate new ideas into their thinking about classroom practices. His analysis traces the ways in which the teachers reconstruct their classroom practice, using professional discourse to rename their experiences and thus to assign new or different meanings to their actions. In Chapter 11, Jack Richards, Belinda Ho, and Karen Giblin describe a group of teachers in an initial training course, and show how their individual conceptions of teaching lead to different concerns within lessons as well as to different perceptions of what makes those lessons more or less successful. They also demonstrate that what trainees learn from a program is not simply a mirror image of the program's content. In Chapter 12, Francis Bailey describes a collaborative approach to the methods class in a graduate teacher education program. He analyzes discourse sequences from interactions within small group discussions, which reveal how the instructor capitalizes on the heterogeneity of the group to achieve shared dialog among the participants. In the next chapter Michael Wallace examines the role of the professional project within teacher education and, by following the use of such projects in a B.Ed. program, raises questions concerning the nature of action research and its appropriateness within certain types of teacher education programs. Ora Kwo, in Chapter 14, describes how student teachers reflect on their learning in a methods course, and how they develop as teachers during their teaching practice. She attributes differences in the teachers' responses to the program to differences in cognitive styles. In the final chapter of this section, Martha Pennington describes a collaborative action research project for secondary school teachers, and focuses on how they respond to innovation in the teaching of writing, documenting the different responses of individual teachers to the program and exploring barriers to the acceptance of innovation.

In the closing chapter of the book, Donald Freeman reviews the field of teacher cognition and teacher learning within which the research in learning to teach second languages is emerging. He places this work in the context of general educational research, tracing its antecedents both

in current educational research and in research in second language teaching. He then examines the central conceptual issues facing such work and the kinds of research methodologies exemplified in the studies reported in this book. The chapter provides both a review of the issues explored in the individual chapters as well as a framework for this new area of research.

Next steps

The chapters in this book thus represent a variety of perspectives on second and foreign language teacher development and education, and reflect different theoretical assumptions and research methodologies. However, they share a common point of view, namely, that understanding teachers' conceptualizations of teaching, their beliefs, thinking, and decision making can help us better understand the nature of language teacher education and hence better prepare us for our roles as teacher educators. Further, this collection contributes to a small but expanding research base in second language teacher learning, education, and professional development. The contributions exemplify not only the range of issues but also the useful variety of approaches to data collection in such research.

Seen as a whole, then, this book shows how second language teachers incorporate and make use of the theoretical ideas and theories as well as the pedagogical principles they acquire during professional education. This process of reconstruction, access, and use is not haphazard but is shaped by experience, previous knowledge, personal beliefs, and responses to both macro- and micro-level contextual factors in their classrooms, schools, and communities. Among the conclusions which emerge from material presented here are the following:

- In order to understand the nature of second language teacher education, we need to work with teachers to understand how they conceptualize and make use of their experiences, both in formal professional education and in their classrooms.
- The models of teaching and teaching methods we provide to teachers may be useful as heuristics, but they can serve only as temporary guideposts as teachers evolve their own goals and self-awareness.
- The professional discourse of second language teaching provides particular schemata and metaphors which influence how teachers describe and interpret their teaching experiences. This, in turn, shapes what they do.
- Learning to teach involves the development of theories and interpretive skills which enable teachers to resolve specific teaching incidents, creating their own working theories of teaching in the process.

- Teachers' previous learning, knowledge, and beliefs about teaching serve as a powerful determinant of teachers' perceptions and practices, and are often resistant to change.
- Individual teachers follow particular routes in the development of their pedagogical knowledge and skills, depending on their individual views of language, teaching, learning, and their changing understanding of themselves, their learners, their subject matter, and the nature of second language instructional tasks.

The research reported in this book marks a departure from the norm of uncritical stories. It provides a means by which to think more carefully and insightfully about language teaching and language teachers by taking the first steps to establish a research base for language teaching and language teacher education. As this research progresses, undoubtedly some of the conventions and stories that we live by in language teaching will be confirmed, while others will be challenged and some may be dethroned. Regardless, the new critical stance that is brought to bear by research that generates inquiry-derived understandings of teacher learning in language teaching will serve to strengthen both teaching and professional education in our field. It therefore stands to reason that teachers, and most importantly classroom language teachers, will ultimately benefit.

References

Freeman, D. 1989. Teacher training, development, and decision making: A model of teaching and related strategies for language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly* 23(1): 27–45.

1994. Educational linguistics and the education of second language teachers. In J. Alatis (ed.), *Proceedings of the 1994 Georgetown University Roundtable on Languages and Linguistics*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, pp. 180–196.

Freeman, D., and J. C. Richards. 1993. Conceptions of teaching and the education of second language teachers. *TESOL Quarterly* 17(2): 193–216.

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Section I Beginnings: Starting out in language teaching

The five chapters in this first section examine the beginning stages of teacher learning. Grouped under the rubric "starting out in teaching," these studies probe various dimensions of the initial experience of language teaching: how background and experience, teaching context, social relationships, and teaching methods all shape what and how teachers learn. The first three chapters address issues of pre-service teachers directly, while the last two examine experienced teachers who are starting out in new ways of teaching. Each chapter is about a beginning of some kind, and how that particular beginning contributes to shaping what and how teachers learn to teach languages.

The chapter by Kathleen Bailey and her colleagues looks at Dan Lortie's concept of the "apprenticeship of observation" and how the 13,000 hours spent as a student from grades 1 to 12 can influence new teachers' perceptions of teaching (Lortie 1975). In a collaborative research project that grew out of course work at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, Bailey and her students, who were starting out as language teachers, investigated how their apprenticeships of observation as language learners might contribute in shaping their ideas about classroom language teaching and learning. In view of the findings in general teacher education which Bailey cites in her introduction, that "teachers acquire seemingly indelible imprints of teaching from their own experiences as students and these imprints are tremendously difficult to shake" (Kennedy 1991: 7), Bailey's work is very important, both from a research standpoint and as a potential intervention in teacher education.

Karen Johnson's chapter reports on a study of a beginning teacher in her in-school practicum. Through Maja we can see the specific contextual demands and tensions faced by one teacher who is entering the classroom and school as a professional workplace. As Johnson observes, given the emphasis that is placed on teaching practice in schools as a key part of professional preparation, such closely textured examinations from the new teacher's perspective of what is learned – and unlearned – are crucial. The next chapter, by Gloria Gutiérrez Almarza, offers an excellent companion piece to Johnson's study. Gutiérrez Almarza reports on research she did with four novice teachers who were preparing to teach secondary school Spanish in London. Many similar

themes emerge in both studies as these new teachers encounter the complex socio-cognitive demands of context: of managing students, creating pedagogy, putting subject matter into action, and participating in the life of their schools. Together these studies show us the raw interpretive nature of teachers' knowledge, as the initial intensity of context looms large in these first experiences of new teachers. Even as language teacher education puts its faith in the practicum to convey the "realities" of the classroom, we realize how little we know about the actual understandings that new teachers glean from such first experiences in front of the class.

In the chapter by Knezevic and Scholl, we see teachers' knowledge in action from a different perspective, that of the collaborative social relationship of team teaching. As graduate students with some previous teaching experience, Anné Knezevic and Mary Scholl chose to co-teach an adult conversational Spanish class. Their collaboration in effect forced them to make public to one another their individual thinking and experiences teaching the class. As they planned together, taught together, and evaluated their work together, and subsequently as they wrote about the process, they were pushed to articulate their own perceptions at every step along the way. It is relatively rare to find such a candid account of collaborative work, one which sheds light on the thinking and learning of the participants and thus highlights, by contrast, the extremes of isolation and autonomy in which most teachers work.

In the last chapter in this section, Amy Tsui writes about a study she did of one teacher's experience in introducing the new pedagogy of process writing to her secondary school classroom in Hong Kong. Tsui's research takes us into the complexities of initiating change in classroom practice. We see that any change in teaching must fit within an already crowded and complex web of meanings and values in a given classroom and school setting. Through the experience of the teacher, Julie, we revisit many of the issues raised in the preceding chapters in this section: how experience as a student, the demands of schools as social contexts, and the relative lack of support for new ventures complicate starting out in teaching.

Together the five chapters in the section lay out many of the key parameters in starting out in teaching. Issues of how expectations of content shape the initial experience of schools as social-cognitive contexts, the presence or absence of sustained interaction with like-minded colleagues, and the relative "fit" of teaching methods each contribute to shaping teacher learning.

Suggestions for further reading

The following books and articles are suggested as further reading on the key topics in this section.

On the apprenticeship of observation

Kennedy, M. 1991. *An Agenda for Research on Teacher Learning*. East Lansing, Mich.: National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.

Lortie, D. 1975. *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

National Center for Research on Teacher Learning [NCRTL]. 1992. *Findings on Learning to Teach*. East Lansing, Mich.: NCRTL.

On the teaching practicum

Britzman, D. 1991. *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*. New York: The Press of the State University of New York.

On schools as contexts for teacher learning

Kleinsasser, R., and S. Sauvignon. 1992. Linguistics, language pedagogy, and teachers' technical cultures. In J. Alatis (ed)., *Linguistics and Language Pedagogy: The State of the Art*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, pp. 289–301.

Rosenholtz, S. 1989. *Teachers' Workplace: The Social Organization of Schools*. New York: Longman.

On teachers learning from one another

Feiman-Nemser, S., and M. Parker. 1992. Mentoring in context: a comparison of two U.S. programs for beginning teachers. East Lansing, Mich.: National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.

Levine, S. 1990. *Promoting Adult Growth in Schools*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

On teaching methodology and change

Richardson, V. 1994. *A Theory of Teacher Change and Practice of Staff Development*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Sarason, S. 1982. *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change*, 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

1 The language learner's autobiography: Examining the "apprenticeship of observation"

Kathleen M. Bailey, Bret Bergthold, Belinda Braunstein, Natasha Jagodzinski Fleischman, Matthew P. Holbrook, Jennifer Tuman, Ximena Waissbluth, and Leslie J. Zambo

Introduction

If it is true that "we teach as we have been taught," rather than as we have been trained to teach, then it would appear that we are bound to perpetuate the models we have learned in our own teaching. How can we go about breaking that cycle? One way to begin is to bring our past experience to the level of conscious awareness.

Many teacher educators have commented on the power exerted by the implicit models in a future teacher's own lifelong education. Lortie (1975) has referred to this phenomenon as the "13,000-hour apprenticeship of observation." This lengthy history consists of the many thousands of hours we have spent watching teachers since primary school. During this period, we internalized many of our own teachers' behaviors. As Kennedy (1990: 17) puts it: "Teachers acquire seemingly indelible imprints from their own experiences as students and these imprints are tremendously difficult to shake." She further notes (1990: 4):

> By the time we receive our bachelor's degree, we have observed teachers and participated in their work for up to 3,060 days. In contrast, teacher preparation programs usually require (about) 75 days of classroom experience. What could possibly happen during these 75 days to significantly alter the practices learned during the preceding 3,060 days?

In terms of language teacher preparation, Freeman reports on a longitudinal study in which teachers recalled their own language learning experiences. He concludes that "the memories of instruction gained through their 'apprenticeship of observation' function as de facto guides for teachers as they approach what they do in the classroom" (1992: 3). Freeman further notes that "the urge to change and the pull to do what is familiar create a central tension in teachers' thinking about their practice" (1992: 4).