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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, United Kingdom  
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

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First published 1990  
Seventh printing 1997

Typeset in Sabon

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Second language teacher education / edited by Jack C. Richards and  
David Nunan.  
p. cm.-(The Cambridge language teaching library).  
ISBN 0-521-38384-6. (hardcover) - ISBN 0-521-38779-5 (paperback)  
1. Language teachers - Training of. I. Richards, Jack C.  
II. Nunan, David. III. Series.  
P53.85.S43 1990  
418'.0071'1-dc20 89-37286  
CIP

*British Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Second language teacher education. -  
(Cambridge language teaching library).  
1. Modern language teachers. Professional education  
1. Richards, J.C. (Jack Croft) II. Nunan, David  
418'.007

ISBN 0-521-38384-6 hardback  
ISBN 0-521-38779-5 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2002

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## Preface

This book is an examination of major issues and practices in second language teacher education. It is designed as a state-of-the-art account of current approaches to second language teacher education, as well as a source book for those designing programs and activities in classroom observation, supervision, teacher self-evaluation, teaching practice, and related components of either preservice or inservice teacher education programs.

The field of teacher education is a relatively underexplored one in both second and foreign language teaching. The literature on teacher education in language teaching is slight compared with the literature on issues such as methods and techniques for classroom teaching. Few of the articles published in the last twenty years are data-based, and most consist of anecdotal wish lists of what is best for the teacher. “Minimal attention is paid to the development of teachers in second languages either conceptually or research-wise” (in Lange, this volume, p. 252). Little data have been gathered on the kinds of programs that work and don’t work, and there has been a reluctance to subject assumptions behind current approaches and practices to critical scrutiny.

As we move from a period of “teacher training,” characterized by approaches that view teacher preparation as familiarizing student teachers with techniques and skills to apply in the classroom, to “teacher education,” characterized by approaches that involve teachers in developing theories of teaching, understanding the nature of teacher decision making, and strategies for critical self-awareness and self-evaluation, teacher educators need to reassess their current positions and practices and examine afresh the assumptions underlying their own programs and practices. This book is designed to provide the data for this kind of self-reflection and examination. Its specific goals are:

- to help define the conceptual base upon which the design of teacher education programs in language teaching is based;
- to report on significant and innovative practices in teacher education;
- to describe research issues and research findings in second language teacher education and to identify areas for further research;
- to provide a source of information for teacher educators to use in designing teacher education programs;

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- to serve as a text for use in courses on second language teacher education.

The need for such a comprehensive overview of issues in teacher education in second language teaching is prompted by the fact that the field of second and foreign language teaching is constantly being renewed both by different claims as to what teachers need to know, as well as by different approaches to the process of developing this knowledge base in future teachers. In planning this book, we therefore invited a representative group of teacher educators from around the world to address major issues in second language teacher education, in order to provide a focused exploration of issues of both content and process in teacher education. Although the contributors were invited to address a range of diverse issues and practices, including the areas of observation, supervision, practice teaching, and self-observation, and to document successful practices in many different kinds of teacher education programs, a number of themes nevertheless recur throughout the collection:

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

The teacher education program and the teacher educator are seen to be sources of knowledge, experience, and resources for student teachers to use in exploring and developing their own approach to teaching. Such a program needs to be firmly grounded in both theory and practice, informed on the one hand by an understanding of what we know about the nature of classroom second language teaching and learning, and on the other by a scrutiny of classroom data, either in the form of direct or indirect teaching experiences.