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Edited by Donald Freeman and Jack C. Richards  
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Contents

Contributors	ii
Preface	ix
Prologue A look at uncritical stories	1
<i>Donald Freeman and Jack C. Richards</i>	
Section I Beginnings: Starting out in language teaching	7
1 The language learner’s autobiography: Examining the “apprenticeship of observation”	11
<i>Kathleen M. Bailey, Bret Bergthold, Belinda Braunstein, Natasha Jagodzinski Fleischman, Matthew P. Holbrook, Jennifer Tuman, Ximena Waissbluth, and Leslie J. Zambo</i>	
2 The vision versus the reality: The tensions of the TESOL practicum	30
<i>Karen E. Johnson</i>	
3 Student foreign language teacher’s knowledge growth	50
<i>Gloria Gutiérrez Almarza</i>	
4 Learning to teach together: Teaching to learn together	79
<i>Anné Knezevic and Mary Scholl</i>	
5 Learning how to teach ESL writing	97
<i>Amy B. M. Tsui</i>	
Section II Transitions: Learning in the practice of teaching	121
6 “I’m not typical”: Stories of becoming a Spanish teacher	125
<i>Patrick R. Moran</i>	
7 Starting all over again: From teaching adults to teaching beginners	154
<i>Anne Burns</i>	

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 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

## Contents

- 8 What's in a methodology? 178  
*Polly Ulichny*
- 9 Teacher decision making in the adult ESL classroom 197  
*Deborah Binnie Smith*

## Section III Learning to teach: The role of language teacher education 217

- 10 Renaming experience/reconstructing practice: Developing new understandings of teaching 221  
*Donald Freeman*
- 11 Learning how to teach in the RSA Cert 242  
*Jack C. Richards, Belinda Ho, and Karen Giblin*
- 12 The role of collaborative dialogue in teacher education 260  
*Francis Bailey*
- 13 Structured reflection: The role of the professional project in training ESL teachers 281  
*Michael Wallace*
- 14 Learning to teach English in Hong Kong classrooms: Patterns of reflections 295  
*Ora Kwo*
- 15 When input becomes intake: Tracing the sources of teachers' attitude change 320  
*Martha C. Pennington*

## Section IV Epilogue 349

- 16 The "unstudied problem": Research on teacher learning in language teaching 351  
*Donald Freeman*
- Author index 379
- Subject index 381
- Research index 387

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## Preface

This book began as a conversation by the fireplace in the game room of the Ca D'Oro Hotel in São Paulo. It was July 1991 – midwinter in Brazil – and we were both speaking at the biannual convention of Brazil-TESOL. In our conversation, we recognized that the field of language teacher education had begun to change in important and dramatic ways. A shift was taking place in its rationale, as well as in the sources of theory, understanding, and justification on which the various practices of language teacher training and teacher development are based. People were beginning to ask questions about what language teachers know in order to do their work. How is language teaching learned? And what is the basis in experience and knowledge from which language teaching proceeds?

To a certain extent, these questions were – and are – the professional equivalent of asking about the emperor's new clothes. As we discuss in the Prologue, language teacher education is outgrowing the “unexamined stories” that have been the basis of its operation. It has been based either on plain assertion – “This works, believe me!” – or on disciplinary knowledge from beyond the realm of language teaching itself. In fact, as we talked, we began to identify a small and emerging community of researchers and practitioners who were working to understand teacher learning in language teaching as a phenomenon in its own right.

Thus this book came about. It is the first formal collection of research on teacher learning in the field of language teaching. The work of colleagues in Hong Kong, Australia, Canada, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States assembled here – all of it original research – establishes an initial knowledge base for this endeavor. Drawing from the broad traditions of qualitative, hermeneutic research, and the past three decades of work in teacher cognition, this volume is meant to start a conversation. We believe that the field of language teaching will be considerably enriched by deeper and closer examinations of how language teachers come to know what they know and do what they do in their work. The research in this book is an important and worthwhile step toward that end.

We would like to thank our fellow researchers from around the world who contributed to this effort, as well as our colleagues and graduate



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## *Preface*

students at our respective institutions – the School for International Training and the City University of Hong Kong – for their support in bringing this project to fruition. The editorial staff at Cambridge University Press, in particular Mary Vaughn and Olive Collen, played an integral part in the project, and we thank them for their professionalism and support.

However, the real measure of a project like this one is the degree to which it fosters further inquiry, debate, and discussions, like the one at the Hotel Ca D'Oro that launched it. We trust that this book will provide a point of departure for interaction and dialogue among practitioners, researchers, and teacher educators around the world who share an interest in and a concern for the issues of teacher learning in language teaching and the need to better understand how language teachers do their work.

Donald Freeman  
Jack C. Richards