Current Challenges in Language Teacher Education

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Edited by

Christiane Dalton-Puffer,
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Helen Heaney
and Julia Huettner

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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Those who can, do.
Those who understand, teach. (Shulman, 1986, p. 14)

Language teacher education prepares novice teachers and students for a crucial profession in modern society, albeit one which suffers from its positioning in public discourse as an easy career option for all individuals with a natural liking for children. Public debates on how much and what kind of knowledge teachers actually need resurface in new guises at regular intervals; witness the current European context where many school authorities are facing a shortfall of teachers. The necessity for a solid knowledge base is often downplayed, as seen in fast-track routes into teaching that minimalize the requirements for teacher preparation in terms of subject matter and pedagogical knowledge alike and that are underpinned by the assumption that most of the knowledge needed to teach will be informally learned from colleagues at school in an apprentice-style model (Wallace, 1991). Such public views are at odds with the inherent complexity of the teaching profession and the rich evidence base showing that, for teaching to be successful, teachers' knowledge, both of subject matter and the 'how' of teaching, crucially matter (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005); better educated teachers are more likely to engender competence and confidence in their learners.

The complexity of the teaching profession is also shown in the challenges that are faced in classrooms. Some of these challenges are shared by teachers of all subjects, such as the need to address a range of age groups and the concomitant broad sociocognitive variation in learners; what is also

shared is the complexity of stakeholder requirements in public education, linked to curricular and legal frameworks but also to more general societal changes and resultant pressures on schools to play a positive role in preparing future generations for an ever more multifaceted world. Other issues concern mostly or only second language teachers, including the need to straddle the combination of the foreign language as the subject *and* means of learning and teaching, requiring teachers to develop and continuously hone their own language competence and to respond to ongoing developments in language practices outside school, for instance, the ever-increasing presence of foreign languages, especially English, in virtual environments. This is in addition to the key teacher competences of planning and carrying out foreign language teaching activities that prepare learners for likely uses of the L2 as well as being able to evaluate learners' foreign language proficiency.

These glimpses indicate that a conceptualization of the professional knowledge base of second language teachers needs to be sensitive to a whole range of elements and is thus an inherently complex construct. The ways in which individual teachers develop such a professional knowledge base and, with it, the related expertise in teaching are the core domain of language teacher education. Both such a knowledge base and teacher education are at the heart of this volume, which is why we will briefly position our thinking on these here.

Professional knowledge base

One of the most influential thinkers on the knowledge base of teachers is Shulman (1986), who identified seven *areas* of teacher knowledge:

- Content knowledge
- General pedagogical knowledge
- Curriculum knowledge
- Pedagogical content knowledge
- Knowledge of learners
- Knowledge of educational contexts
- Knowledge of educational aims, purposes and values

For our purposes here, content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986, p. 9) are most relevant. Content knowledge defines the mastery of the subject matter itself, which, in the case of foreign languages, includes the teacher's own language proficiency, their competence in linguistic analysis and metalinguistic awareness, their knowledge of

relevant cultural artefacts (literature, film, music, etc.) and the methods of analysing both the foreign language itself and its cultural realizations in order to make them accessible to learners in the most profitable ways. This is the aspect of knowledge that is shared with other experts in the subject, for instance, graduates of a BA in English Studies or Romance Studies.

The second form of content-related knowledge introduced, i.e., pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), is arguably even more important for teachers and, indeed, is considered the core of teacher expertise, residing as it does at the intersection of pedagogical and content knowledge, making it "uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding" (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). It encompasses the knowledge of how to make the subject understandable to learners, including an awareness of which areas are easy and hard to learn (and why) and which methods are needed to foster learner understanding. Thus, pre-service teachers need to gain knowledge of representations and explanations of the subject for specific curricular aims, of the students' (mis-)conceptions of key subject matter and of instructional strategies to create effective learning affordances/experiences. For PCK, as for the other forms of teacher knowledge, Shulman (1986) proposes three *types* of knowledge, namely propositional knowledge, case knowledge and strategic knowledge (p. 10). The first one, propositional knowledge, encompasses research-based principles of teaching, maxims reflecting the accumulated wisdom of practice and, finally, norms of teaching, which represent the deeply held beliefs of individual teachers, for instance, a commitment to inclusivity or fairness. Such propositional knowledge is complemented by case knowledge, where teachers make sense of specific events by conceptualizing them as realizations of more abstract propositional knowledge. Finally, teacher knowledge takes the form of strategic knowledge, showing awareness of the possibilities of applying diverse principles in specific circumstances. This becomes crucially important when teachers face situations where conflicting principles come into play and context-sensitive decisions need to be taken.

The concept of PCK has proved the most influential aspect of Shulman's work, leading to further developments (cf. Cochran et al., 1993; Van Driel & Berry, 2012) and additions to the model to encompass new areas of teacher expertise such as technological pedagogical content knowledge (Koehler et al., 2014; Voogt et al., 2013). The consistently large number of individual research studies on PCK over the last four decades shows that for pre-service teachers, high levels of subject-specific content knowledge are vital for good levels of PCK, underpinning teacher education programmes that include a sound content knowledge provision. Some PCK studies

(Kulgemeyer & Riese, 2018; Park et al., 2020) in the natural sciences have empirically established a link between PCK and the quality of instruction, but it is worth noting that the crucial role assumed for PCK in teaching quality has rarely been investigated. Berry et al. (2016) present an overview of PCK in pre-service teachers and outline some of the criticisms raised, which include the unclear boundaries to other knowledge areas, especially subject matter knowledge, and the rather static view of PCK with little conceptualization of how this interacts with actual classroom practice (see also Depaepe et al., 2013; Marks, 1990; Settlage, 2014).

However, already Cochran et al. (1993, pp. 264–5) state that "PCK develops over time as a result of experience in many classroom settings with many students", thus bringing the important aspect of experiential knowledge into play. The issue of interaction with classroom practice has been taken up in formalizing the influence of experience on propositional knowledge and, more generally, of teachers' biographies on their professional knowledge base. This results in practice-oriented knowledge (German: *Handlungswissen*, Neuweg, 2011), which has been formalized, for instance, by Wipperfürth (2015) suggesting a model of action-oriented teacher knowledge, outlining how practice-based episodes of experience and their identification as potential 'problems' interact with existing knowledge.

In a further move away from a narrow view of knowledge, Borg (2009, 2015[3]) suggested the construct of language teacher cognition, which brings together the diverse aspects of teachers' inner lives, in other words, what teachers know, believe and think (Borg, 2003). Such a broad view blurs the conceptual differences between knowledge and belief but represents a more realistic and practicable means of addressing the "unobservable, cognitive dimension of teaching" from a holistic perspective. A large body of research has emerged specifically within language teacher cognition, with many studies addressing the complex relationships between cognition and practice as well as the various factors affecting teacher cognition, noticeably formal teacher education programmes, on the one hand, and school-based practice, on the other (Barnard & Burns, 2012; Burns et al., 2015; Li, 2013).

Language teacher education

The development of teachers' professional knowledge base takes place in different contexts and frameworks, both formal and informal, pre-service and in-service and at diverse sites of learning (universities, teacher training colleges, schools). Freeman (1989, 2016) views teacher education as "link[ing] what is learned in the field with what is done in the classroom" (Freeman, 2016, p. 8) and positions it as a very broad cover term. Following

Widdowson (1990, p. 63), we embrace a more systematic distinction between teacher education, which we consider a process of guiding teachers towards an understanding of underlying theoretical concepts relevant to teaching and thus towards a principled, flexible mediation of such knowledge to their own teaching practice, and teacher training, which is understood as a cover term for more concrete interventions that help teachers deal with routine issues without integrating formal knowledge areas. In addition to teacher education and training, especially in-service teachers participate in teacher or professional development, which is best glossed as "all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of […] benefit to the individual [teacher][…] or school, which contribute […] to the quality of education in the classroom" (Day, 1999, p. 4).

Thus, the routes through which individuals become language teachers vary, and the following visualization helps give an overview.

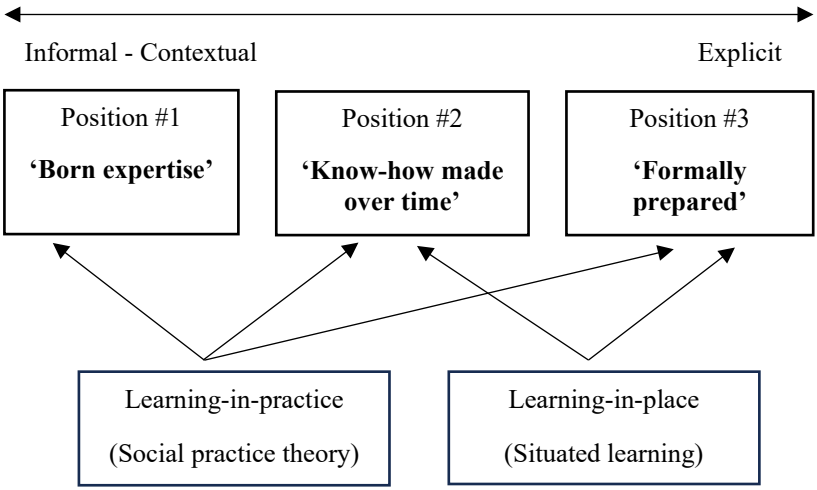

Fig.1.1: How people become teachers: a rough continuum (Freeman, 2016, p. 41)

The first position is essentially without support in terms of research evidence but is (unfortunately) still lived practice in contexts where mostly native speakers of the target language are employed if they are considered to have good teacher qualities, often identified as being engaging and vivacious. Positions two and three are not mutually exclusive, and – in fact – do co-exist in most teacher education programmes in the form of university-based teaching and school-based practicum placements. Frequently, however,

specific areas of knowledge are addressed only in one of the learning contexts (in-practice or in-place) and a considerable degree of mediation or transfer of knowledge from one context to the other is required under the guidance of mentors for novice teachers. Interesting perspectives have also been offered in addressing the learning of teaching as a sociocultural process (Johnson, 2009), allowing for a deeper understanding of the interwoven processes of learning-in-practice.

Adopting a view of teacher education as in the second and third positions above also implies an endorsement of reflective practice (e.g., Farrell, 2022; Mann & Walsh, 2017) as a crucial means of integrating theory in classroom practice in a meaningful and sustainable manner. Here, too, the role of partners in dialogues, mostly fellow teachers, is vital to maintain a trajectory of teachers' professional growth.

These brief comments aim to position the array of contributions in this volume. A cluster of papers addresses the professional knowledge base of teachers, considering its historical development (Klippel) and specific sub-areas, such as assessment literacy (Savukova & Richter; Vogt & Tsagari) or English as a lingua franca (Lopriore & Sperti). The context of learning-in-place, mostly at universities, is addressed in contributions on pre-service teacher education focusing on digital elements of language teaching (Kemsies & Strasser), multimodal analyses of children's books (Prusse) or the introduction of video clubs (Thaler). In-service teacher education is the focus of papers addressing the ways in which current changes around atypical groups of learners are responded to. A group of papers deals with the large area of multilingualism and interculturality as well as the changes that migration patterns bring to student populations (Aladrović Slovaček & Rimac Jurinović; Niesen & Viebrock) while Della Putta presents an intervention for volunteer teachers of refugees in Italy and so addresses an increasing and much needed area of second language teaching. Finally, two chapters focus on how content teachers can increase their professional knowledge base regarding language: Reitbrecht, Schramm and Weger explore teachers' support for novice academic writing and Azparren Legarre delves into the area of teacher beliefs and identity in the context of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) teachers in Spain.

A brief overview of the individual chapters is given below, following their sequence in the table of contents:

Current issues in language teacher education do not stand in isolation but have evolved from a rich history of language teaching and learning. **Klippel** takes a bird's eye view of language teacher education, spanning from ruminations on the ideal language teacher in the early 18th century via the achievements of the Reform Movement in the 19th century to

contemporary debates on language teacher education. She compares the discourses on language teachers and language teacher education in the early 1900s and today, thus providing a critical lens for interpreting current developments and allowing us to make well-grounded decisions about the future of language teacher education.

Thaler explores the professional development context of video clubs at the pre-service stage of teacher education in English as a foreign language (EFL). Drawing on a small case study from a Bavarian university, she demonstrates how video clubs can be employed to facilitate knowledge-based reasoning of classroom discourse in pre-service teachers while also allowing teacher educators to visualize the current knowledge base of these pre-service teachers. The effectiveness of this teacher training measure highlights the value that digital instructional settings like video clubs can add to language teacher education.

The contribution by **Niesen** and **Viebrock** reports on a professional development intervention designed to enhance language teachers' professional competences in the areas of multilingualism and cultural sensitivity. The authors' reflection on their design of this online course focuses especially on the use of classroom videos and the communication formats associated with them. Suggestions are made as to how classroom videos may unfold their full potential in digitally supported professional learning communities.

In their practice report, **Kemsies** and **Strasser** open the doors to an online course for pre-service English teachers on the topic of technology-enhanced language learning. Following the underlying principle of self-similarity, they apply instructional design principles (following the Attention, Relevance, Confidence and Satisfaction (ARCS) model) to their own course design, in order to teach participants to design language learning activities that follow those very design principles. The course design aims to foster future teachers' digital competences for incorporating learner collaboration, a range of educational apps and multichannel digital artefacts into their lesson designs for EFL.

Although testing and assessment play an important role in language classrooms in many educational settings, it is only comparatively recently that the necessary abilities, knowledge and understanding have started to be explicitly addressed in pre-service teacher education programmes under the label of language assessment literacy (LAL). **Vogt** and **Tsagari** explore opportunities for professional development in LAL, particularly against the backdrop of experience and context, also for in-service language teachers. Alongside institutional courses and specialist literature, online resources provide increasing opportunities for self-guided learning within both local and international communities of practice. Open questions relate particularly

to the effectiveness of LAL professional development in terms of its actual impact on teachers' everyday practice in the language classroom.

The contribution by **Richter** and **Savukova** targets a sub-concept of assessment literacy, namely feedback literacy. Their study is distinctive in two ways: firstly, it focuses on the oral mode in contrast with most research on peer feedback with its focus on writing, and secondly, it takes a dual perspective of the participants as language learners and future language teachers. This chapter then describes how the dual feedback literacy of MEd students of English was built over the course of a semester and explores students' experiences and reflections by means of an end-of-semester survey.

Prusse addresses the competences required when teaching children's picture books and so touches upon a well-established, but often neglected, role of multimodality in teaching languages. He presents Browne's *Voices in the Park* as a case in point, showing how student teachers' own visual literacy needs to be fostered in order for them to be able to integrate picture books successfully into foreign language teaching practices. Practical examples from a Swiss teacher education programme for English language teaching underline the points made with data from students' uptake and reactions to the programme.

Lopriore and **Sperti**'s chapter topicalizes the consequences of growing global mobility for foreign language teaching, specifically the teaching of English. The global role of English as a lingua franca (ELF) and increasingly multilingual school populations are seen as necessitating a degree of reorientation in the formation of English teachers. The authors introduce a teacher professional development course designed to inspire teachers to shift perspectives on the knowledge and expectations invested in classroom English teaching. The potential of ELF-aware pedagogy is evaluated and discussed.

Reitbrecht, **Schramm** and **Weger** report on a professional development intervention designed to prepare content-subject teachers for teaching preparatory academic writing to upper secondary school learners. In an interesting twist on this volume's topic, this chapter deals with the issue of developing language teaching competences in non-language teachers. Reflective interviews with participants unveil which knowledge facets, such as diagnostic knowledge, knowledge about task design and explanatory competence, were experienced as having developed through the intervention.

Della Putta provides interesting insights into a marginalized, but growing, area of L2 teaching, namely that of language teaching programmes for newly arrived migrants. The programme discussed is run by volunteer teachers, who engaged with the challenge of improving their teaching

competences through a socioculturally oriented training course running over 14 months. Detailed examples from the teacher development processes engaged with by these volunteers highlight the efficacy, satisfaction with and challenges of this training intervention aimed at ultimately improving this crucially important offer of language learning.

Current geopolitical upheavals are casting languages into new roles, as has happened to Croatian in recent years. The Croatian education system has accommodated many newcomers to the country but has tended to leave classroom teachers to their own devices when dealing with second language learners in their classrooms. In their chapter, **Aladrović Slovaček** and **Rimac Jurinović** examine teachers' experiences, practices and needs in relation to their professional capacity to work with young students who need to learn Croatian as a foreign or second language. Implications for pre-service and in-service teacher education are also discussed.

Finally, **Azparren Legarre** demonstrates how closely successful teaching practice is linked to favourable teacher beliefs. The focus of her chapter is a CLIL training course aimed at in-service content teachers in Spain, which framed the goal of positively impacting the teachers' beliefs about their CLIL practice as a vital step in empowering the teachers to improve their teaching practice. The success of this course not only highlights the central role of teacher beliefs in language teaching but also underlines the importance of continuing professional development measures for in-service teachers.

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CHAPTER 2

EDUCATING LANGUAGE TEACHERS - SHIFTING GOALS, CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES

FRIEDERIKE KLIPPEL

1. Looking back

Both languages and language teaching have been in existence for millennia and have been practised around the globe. People have learnt and taught other languages probably from the moment that mutually unintelligible languages existed and communication between tribes and settlements became desirable or necessary. Thus, learning other languages probably happened long before formal schooling was introduced, and people who knew something of the language to be learnt acted as impromptu teachers. How they went about this task in early times we do not know, because there are no sources for the very early phases of foreign language learning and teaching, partly because the learning of other vernaculars took place in a wide variety of contexts and was in existence before writing systems developed. Hüllen (2005, p.11) suggests that both informal language tutoring and formal language education have existed side by side throughout history.

By looking back, we are able to uncover the roots of current theories, to discover forgotten ideas and practices, and we may begin to realise that some questions have remained constant throughout the centuries. Not everything claimed as innovative today is really new; sometimes only the wording has changed with the times; not everything old is irrelevant for today, because intelligent and observant men and women have been thinking about language learning and language instruction for a very long time. And yet, the past does not deliver ready-made solutions for the challenges of today, nor does it mirror present-day questions or situations exactly. But it can help us recognize some of the fundamental issues concerning language learning and teaching.