

# Teacher Language Awareness and the Professional Knowledge Base of the L2 Teacher

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This paper provides an introduction to teacher language awareness (TLA) and a personal reconceptualisation of the relationship between TLA and other dimensions of teacher knowledge, revisiting issues discussed in Andrews (2001). In the first part of the paper, knowledge of subject matter is identified as the core of TLA. Given the increased recognition in education that subject-matter knowledge is a key element of teacher professionalism, it is argued that TLA should be seen as equally important for the teacher of language subjects. The middle part of the paper outlines a personal view of the nature and scope of TLA, focusing particularly on the link between knowledge about language (subject-matter knowledge) and knowledge of language (language proficiency), on the metacognitive nature of TLA, and on TLA as encompassing an awareness of language from the learner perspective. The latter part of the paper explores the link between TLA and the professional knowledge of the L2 teacher, drawing on two recent models of teacher knowledge (Tsui, 2003; Turner-Bisset, 2001), and examines the impact of TLA on pedagogical practice. Finally, the paper argues that TLA research and discussion could enhance our understanding of 'what makes our teaching *language teaching*' (Freeman & Johnson, 1998: 413).

## Keywords:

Teacher knowledge, Teacher professionalism, Teacher language awareness

## Introduction

The object of the paper is twofold. First, it aims to provide an introduction to teacher language awareness (TLA), and thus a context for the other papers in this Special Issue. Second, it outlines a personal conceptualisation of TLA, revisiting earlier discussions of the relationship between TLA and other dimensions of teacher knowledge (see e.g. Andrews, 2001). The paper is written from the perspective of the teacher of foreign/second languages (the L2 teacher); however, many of the arguments and observations may apply equally to teachers of English as mother tongue.

## TLA, Subject-matter Knowledge and Teacher Professionalism

'Teacher language awareness is an area of perennial concern to language teacher educators' (Andrews, 2001: 88). In retrospect, this was perhaps an overstatement, one that reflected my own sentiments as a teacher educator and the views of a substantial minority of those in the profession. A more considered reflection might have begun by identifying that minority more clearly: the group initially most vocal in expressing such concerns were EFL teacher educators working with native speakers (NS), particularly those trainers involved in initial

preparation courses with whom I worked closely in the late 1980s during my years at the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES).

The specific focus of concerns among this group was subject-matter knowledge. Knowledge of subject matter is widely seen as being the core of a teacher's language awareness, and definitions of TLA typically centre on the teacher's knowledge of the language systems (see e.g. Thornbury, 1997: x). Items focusing on the language systems (especially grammar) form part of the admissions (screening) tests administered by many of the institutions running initial TEFL courses, and a subject-matter component under the title 'Language Awareness' (or 'Language Analysis' or just LA) can be found in the timetable of most such courses. The term 'Language Awareness' has been used with this meaning for at least 20 years (see, for example, the sub-title of Bolitho and Tomlinson's *Discover English – A Language Awareness Workbook*, the first edition of which was published in 1980).

By the late 1980s, there was clear evidence that concerns among the trainers about NS trainees' subject-matter knowledge (i.e. their language awareness) were widespread. In 1988, for example, Bolitho noted 'More and more initial trainees are arriving on courses without even a basic working knowledge of the systems of their own language and are uncomfortably surprised to find, in early classroom encounters, that some adult learners, after years of formal language study at school, know more about grammar than they do!' (Bolitho, 1988: 74). The trainers I surveyed in 1991 appeared to share Bolitho's view of those embarking on initial TEFL courses: more than 50% of such trainees were perceived '... as having inadequate grammatical knowledge/awareness' (Andrews, 1994: 74).

Outside this particular sector of the TEFL profession, however, and especially among L2 teacher educators working with non-native speaking (NNS) trainees, it is probably fair to say that such concerns have generally been less apparent, with teacher preparation courses until fairly recently devoting more attention to aspects of methodology and class management than to language *per se*, although in the late 1980s innovative teacher educators such as Wright were already focusing on the issue of language awareness in teacher education programmes for non-native speakers (see, for example, Wright, 1991). Indeed, if the prospective NNS teacher is a graduate in the language being taught, then subject-matter knowledge has often tended to be taken for granted in any postgraduate initial teacher education, even more so when the would-be teacher is also the product of a school system in which the approach to L2 teaching is typically form-focused. This is not to say that teachers' language knowledge in these contexts has not been seen as a cause for concern, but such concerns have generally tended to focus on the language proficiency of teachers (i.e. their knowledge of language) rather than their subject-matter knowledge (or knowledge about language).

In recent years, however, concerns about the subject-matter knowledge of L2 teachers, both NS and NNS, have grown, especially in relation to the teaching of English. This has arisen in part because the burgeoning demand for English worldwide has led to a demand for teachers that can be met in the short term only by employing in that role significant numbers of people who lack the appropriate qualifications. In Hong Kong, for instance, a survey as long ago as 1991 revealed that just 27% of graduate secondary school English teachers were subject-trained (Tsui *et al.*, 1994). A Hong Kong Government report subsequently noted that

many teachers in local schools ' . . . lack depth of knowledge in the subject, or skills in teaching it as a subject, or both' (Education Commission, 1995: 49).

Another indicator of concern in different parts of the world about the quality of L2 teachers, especially as regards their subject-matter knowledge, is the development of so-called 'benchmark' tests, i.e. tests to establish a minimum standard, for language teachers. Coniam and Falvey (2002) speak of the emergence of these benchmark tests in a number of countries, noting that ' . . . the focus of such tests has been essentially on the subject content knowledge of English or other languages . . . rather than language ability *per se* . . . [that is] on knowledge about language rather than knowledge of and use of language' (Coniam & Falvey, 2002: 16).

This increased attention to the subject-matter knowledge of L2 teachers should also be seen in the context of wider trends, both within language education and also in general education, linked to the establishment and maintenance of professional standards: the various moves in recent years towards the professionalisation of ELT (such as the establishment of BIELT, the British Institute of English Language Teaching, with the goals of establishing a framework of professional qualifications and a professional code of practice), the attempts to set professional standards for teachers of all subjects in various parts of the world (as with the frameworks developed by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards in the US), and the growth of interest in the education literature in the generic notion of the teacher as professional (see, for example, the various papers in Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999). In his introduction to the Darling-Hammond and Sykes collection, Shulman (1999) argues that subject-matter knowledge is an essential part of teacher professionalism. In his view, teachers are professionals because they need to take thoughtful, grounded actions under conditions which are inherently uncertain and complex. Shulman asserts that for such actions to be effective, they need to be based upon a deep knowledge of subject matter. Such arguments are, of course, as applicable to L2 teaching as they are to the teaching of any other subject, and will be explored further in the second half of the paper.

## TLA, Teachers' Language Proficiency and Pedagogical Practice

The previous section has focused on the close connection between TLA and subject-matter knowledge, linking this in turn with the increased recognition within education generally that subject-matter knowledge is a key element of teacher professionalism. However, as noted above, knowledge of subject matter (knowledge about language) is only one type of language knowledge required of the L2 teacher: language proficiency (knowledge of language) is also crucial. This certainly seems to be the perception of education policy-makers if the Hong Kong experience is in any way typical. Hong Kong's first language 'benchmark' qualifications (introduced in 2000, and resulting from the recommendations of the 1995 report referred to above) focused specifically on English teachers' language proficiency, as reflected in the name of the test: the Language Proficiency Assessment Test (LPAT). The nature of the relationship between these two types of knowledge (knowledge about language and knowledge of language), and the connections between a teacher's language proficiency and his/her language awareness are explored below.

The consultancy study commissioned by Hong Kong's Advisory Committee on Teacher Education Qualifications (ACTEQ) to investigate the feasibility of establishing language 'benchmarks' originally proposed as benchmarks for four competencies: language ability (proficiency), pedagogical content knowledge (entailing '... an element known as "language awareness"'), subject knowledge and teaching ability (Coniam & Falvey, 1996: 6). The development of LPAT focused on the first of these competencies, the aim being to design a battery of tests measuring the language ability specific to the L2 teacher. However, Coniam and Falvey's report emphasised the closeness of the relationship between these competencies, with the interaction between the first three being realised through the fourth.

The interconnected nature of these competencies, as noted by Coniam and Falvey, has indeed become apparent in the attempts to design LPAT tasks measuring competencies which fall wholly within the domain of the L2 teacher's language ability. As Andrews (2002), for instance, has observed, there are a number of LPAT tasks which measure more than just language proficiency, with at least one, an error explanation task, seeming to test TLA rather than language proficiency (Andrews, 2002: 46). Elder (2001), describing the development of language tests for teachers in Australia, has also raised this issue of 'blurred boundaries' between supposedly distinct domains of L2 teacher competence. The challenge (some might say impossibility) of confining assessment solely to a teacher's language proficiency was an issue which also became apparent in the development of the Cambridge Examinations in English for Language Teachers (CEELT), the innovative battery of tests introduced by UCLES in 1987 upon which the LPAT drew for a number of its tasks (see Falvey & Andrews, 1994 for discussion of the development of CEELT).

The close connection between a teacher's knowledge about language (i.e. subject-matter knowledge), knowledge of language (i.e. proficiency) and pedagogical practice has been discussed by a number of writers on L2 teacher education (see e.g. Andrews, 1999a, 2001; Wright & Bolitho, 1993, 1997). Wright and Bolitho (1993), for instance, propose a methodological framework for Language Awareness activities for teachers which draws on Edge's (1988) outline of the three roles that the NNS TEFL trainee has to learn to take on: the role of language user (which requires an adequate level of language proficiency), language analyst (which is dependent on possession of a sound knowledge of the language systems), and language teacher (which demands an ability to create and handle opportunities for language learning in the classroom). Wright and Bolitho's framework emphasises the interconnected nature of these three roles.

Wright and Bolitho (1997) explore these links further when they propose what they describe as '... an expanded view of language awareness for teachers' (Wright & Bolitho, 1997: 162), which focuses on the interaction in the classroom context between awareness (as conventionally, and more narrowly, conceived, i.e. knowledge about language) and proficiency (knowledge of language), and the demands placed upon both. Wright and Bolitho's (1997) model of classroom language content and use, in which awareness and proficiency interlink, covers a spectrum from the most predictable pedagogical events (where the teacher language can be prepared in advance) to the entirely unpredictable, where the teacher(?) '... needs to be able to operate in a fluid discourse world which is

created by the interaction of teacher, students and materials' (Wright & Bolitho, 1997: 163–4). This expanded view of language awareness for teachers has much in common with the ideas I have myself expressed (see e.g. Andrews, 1997, 1999, 2001). In the following section, these ideas are explored in more detail.

## What is TLA? A Personal Conceptualisation

My own interest in research focusing on the language awareness of L2 teachers began in 1990. My previous experience at UCLES had raised various questions in my mind, particularly concerning the knowledge base(s) required by the L2 teacher. I was also intrigued by the use of the term language 'awareness' in relation to such teachers, the phrase having been frequently employed by trainers to describe what they saw to be an essential quality of the L2 (in this case EFL) teacher.

My earliest work in this area (Andrews, 1994, which reported on research conducted in 1991) sought to find out among other things what trainers actually meant by the term 'awareness', with particular reference to grammar. That paper used the phrase 'grammatical knowledge/awareness', an awkward formulation which, in addition to being clumsy, left unanswered questions about the relationship (and difference, if any) between 'knowledge' and 'awareness'.

Since then, much of my research activity has focused on trying to understand more about the nature of and relationship between the different components of Wright and Bolitho's expanded view of language awareness for teachers (see e.g. Andrews, 1997, 1999a, b, c, 2001). The subjects of these studies have in the main been NNS teachers of English as L2, because the vast majority of the teachers with whom I have worked in recent years fall into that category. Many of the same issues still remain to be explored both with NS teachers of English as L2 and with teachers of languages other than English, although (I would suggest) they are equally relevant to all L2 teachers, and may indeed be of relevance to the teacher of L1.

The starting-point of my research has been the subject-matter knowledge of the L2 teacher, its relationship with other aspects of teacher knowledge, and its impact on the teacher's pedagogical practice. To be precise, the focus has been on the subject-matter cognitions of the L2 teacher, since knowledge is very hard to separate from other aspects of teacher thinking, especially beliefs (see e.g. Andrews, forthcoming; Borg, 2003, this issue; Kagan, 1990; Pajares, 1992; Woods, 1996). Tsui (2003), acknowledging the overlap between beliefs and knowledge, speaks of the powerful influence on pedagogical practice of 'conceptions of teaching and learning' (Tsui, 2003: 61), under which heading she subsumes teachers' metaphors, images, beliefs, assumptions and values. One might wish to incorporate within that heading conceptions of subject-matter itself, since teacher cognitions relevant to TLA concern beliefs and assumptions about the language itself (for example, whether the 'present progressive' is regarded as a tense or as a combination of tense and aspect), as well as how it is taught/learned.

Based on the data from the various studies referred to above, I have argued (see e.g. Andrews, 2001) that the language awareness of teachers has a number of defining characteristics:

- (1) Central to any teacher's language awareness is the closeness of the relationship (noted earlier) between knowledge about language (subject-matter

knowledge) and knowledge of language (language proficiency). This relationship exists at a number of levels, with, for example, any planning of the language content of teaching drawing on reflections on both types of knowledge, and with the former being mediated by the latter whenever the L2 is being used as the medium of instruction.

- (2) Teachers' language awareness is metacognitive in nature. It involves an extra cognitive dimension of reflections upon both knowledge of subject matter and language proficiency, which provides a basis for the tasks of planning and teaching. This is what distinguishes the knowledge base of the teacher from that of the learner, as noted by Leech (1994) when he differentiates between 'Teachers' Grammar' and 'Grammar for learners', saying of the former that it entails '... a higher degree of grammar consciousness than most direct learners are likely to need or want' (Leech, 1994: 18). Brumfit (1997) also notes this metacognitive dimension of language teaching when he refers to '... the central role of teachers as educational linguists (i.e. as conscious analysts of linguistic processes, both their own and others')' (Brumfit, 1997: 163). Because of the metacognitive nature of teachers' language awareness, I have in the past referred to TLA as 'Teacher Metalinguistic Awareness' (see e.g. Andrews, 1997, 1999a, b). More recently, I have reverted to the more familiar term TLA, partly because of the potential ambiguity of the phrase 'metalinguistic awareness' (awareness that is metalinguistic, or awareness of metalanguage<sup>1</sup>) and partly in belated acknowledgement of the dangers of 'terminological proliferation' (see Borg, this issue). TLA is indeed metacognitive, but these metacognitions are reflections on knowledge of and about language. It therefore seems appropriate to employ the term teacher language awareness.
- (3) Teachers' language awareness encompasses an awareness of language from the learner's perspective, an awareness of the learner's developing interlanguage, and an awareness of the extent to which the language content of materials/lessons poses difficulties for students. As Wright (2002) observes: 'A linguistically aware teacher not only understands how language works, but understands the student's struggle with language and is sensitive to errors and other interlanguage features' (Wright, 2002: 115).

## TLA and the Professional Knowledge of the L2 Teacher

Earlier in the paper, reference was made to Shulman's comments on the links between subject-matter knowledge and teacher professionalism. This section of the paper explores the relationship between TLA and the professional knowledge of the L2 teacher, drawing in particular on two recent reconceptualisations of teacher knowledge: one from the general education literature (Turner-Bisset, 1999, 2001) and the other from the applied linguistics literature (Tsui, 2003).

The focus on teaching as a profession was most notably proposed in a series of Shulman's articles that appeared in the mid-1980s (see e.g. Shulman 1986a, b, 1987). Shulman proposed an approach to educational reform that labelled teaching a profession, and at the same time promoted a paradigm shift in educational research. Shulman spoke of what he described as the 'missing paradigm' in research in education: the study of '... teachers' cognitive understanding of

subject matter content and the relationships between such understanding and the instruction teachers provide for students' (Shulman, 1986a: 25). The paradigm shift that Shulman called for in educational research was intended to produce a 'knowledge base for teaching' (Shulman, 1987).

In this series of papers, Shulman identified certain minimal categories of that knowledge base. The precise formulation varied slightly between papers, but at the heart was Shulman's conviction of the importance of subject-matter content. Shulman was particularly interested in the relationship between knowledge of content and knowledge of pedagogy, leading him to coin the term pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) to describe '... that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding' (Shulman, 1987: 8). Although Shulman labelled content knowledge and knowledge of learners and their characteristics as separate categories, PCK was seen as having close connections with both: '[PCK] represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction' (Shulman, 1987: 8). Shulman went on to emphasise the central importance of the relationship between content and pedagogy in understanding the knowledge base of teaching: '... the key to distinguishing the knowledge base of teaching lies at the intersection of content and pedagogy, in the capacity of a teacher to transform the content knowledge he or she possesses into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by the students' (Shulman, 1987: 15). Given the characteristics of TLA noted earlier, its connections with PCK are clear.

In another 1987 paper, written with two associates, Shulman presented a model showing the various components of the professional knowledge base of teaching as 'boxes floating on a page' (Wilson *et al.*, 1987: 113), saying that the relationship between these different kinds of knowledge remains a mystery, and something to be investigated. Since then, PCK has become a commonly accepted and widely discussed construct in education. Shulman's model has been a point of departure for heated debate about the composition of and relationships among the domains of teacher knowledge, and in recent years different, expanded views of PCK have been proposed (see, for example, the papers in Gess-Newsome and Lederman, 1999).

Turner-Bisset (1999, 2001), in part in reaction to the UK Government's promotion of a competence-based paradigm of teaching (see e.g. DfEE, 1998), has presented a model of teaching as a knowledge-based profession, a model that offers a reconceptualisation of PCK. Turner-Bisset describes 11 knowledge bases that underpin acts of teaching. These knowledge bases link together to form sets: with PCK as the 'overarching knowledge base' comprising all the others (Turner-Bisset, 1999: 47). Some of the knowledge bases are more closely interrelated than others: substantive knowledge, syntactic knowledge (see Schwab, 1978) and beliefs about the subject are all seen as aspects of subject-matter knowledge (Turner-Bisset, 1999: 43). Turner-Bisset argues that all of the 11 knowledge bases are essential for expert teaching, '... which demonstrates PCK in its most comprehensive form', i.e. as a complete amalgam (Turner-Bisset, 2001: 19). Turner-Bisset describes this amalgam of knowledge bases as the nine-tenths of

the iceberg below the waterline: the observable aspects of teaching are the visible one-tenth of the iceberg (Turner-Bisset, 2001: 144).

For teachers who have not yet attained a level of expertise, Turner-Bisset (2001: 17–18) suggests that only some of the 11 knowledge bases may combine. To illustrate, let us consider two novice teachers of English as L2 embarking on a career after initial training: a NNS graduate with a first degree in English and no teaching experience, and a NS former primary school teacher with no specialist study of English or any other language. The first of these might have very good subject-matter knowledge (knowledge about language), but her knowledge of learners is likely to be underdeveloped, and she may have very limited general pedagogical knowledge. In addition, her models of teaching and learning may be largely confined to the transmissive model of teaching she experienced herself as a learner. The second example teacher may, by contrast, have very limited subject-matter knowledge, but a much better knowledge of learners and general pedagogical knowledge, and a broader range of models of teaching and learning. Over the course of a career, Turner-Bisset argues (2001: 125), those knowledge bases which are only partial or non-existent in the two example teachers would have the potential to grow and become fully developed as part of the amalgam that is each teacher's PCK.

Tsui (2003) also presents a reconceptualisation of teacher knowledge, which, like Turner-Bisset's, is grounded in the data gathered from case studies. The case studies in Tsui (2003) were of four teachers of English as L2, all of them working in a secondary school in Hong Kong. Turner-Bisset's case studies, by contrast, were of primary school teachers in the UK.

Tsui's (2003) research emphasises four aspects of teacher knowledge:

- (1) Its integrated nature. According to Tsui, teacher knowledge as manifested in practice '... is often an integrated whole that cannot be separated into distinct knowledge domains' (Tsui, 2003: 65).
- (2) The importance of teachers' personal conceptions of teaching and learning (see above) in their management of teaching and learning.
- (3) Teacher knowledge as embodied in the act of teaching, i.e. PCK, can be perceived as '... two intertwined dimensions, the management of teaching and learning and the enactment of the curriculum in the classroom' (Tsui, 2003: 66).
- (4) The 'situated' nature of teacher knowledge. Tsui notes what she calls the 'dialectical relation between teachers' knowledge and their world of practice' (Tsui, 2003: 66), in which teachers' reflections on their practices and their context of work inform their understanding of teaching and learning, while their enhanced understandings become part of the context in which they work.

Tsui speaks of PCK as an integrated coherent whole (Tsui, 2003: 59), and when describing the grammar teaching of an expert L2 teacher, she refers to the 'rich and integrated knowledge' embedded in that teacher's handling of grammar (Tsui, 2003: 200). Four dimensions of knowledge emerge from the study of that particular teacher's pedagogical practice in relation to grammar: knowledge of the English language, language teaching and language learning; knowledge of

how learning should be organised; knowledge of other curricula; and knowledge of students' interests (Tsui, 2003: 200–201).

The integration of knowledge bases in the enactment of expert teaching is also remarked upon by Turner-Bisset (2001). At the same time, Turner-Bisset emphasises how the knowledge bases mesh together in different combinations (Turner-Bisset, 2001: 164). TLA can be seen as the meshing together of one particular combination: knowledge/beliefs about subject matter (i.e. language) and knowledge about learners (particularly cognitive knowledge of learners as it relates to subject matter). Also, as noted above, knowledge and beliefs about subject matter (i.e. subject-matter cognitions) are closely related to knowledge of language, giving this combination of PCK components a dimension unique to the L2 teacher.

Freeman (2002), reviewing research on teacher knowledge and learning to teach, discusses PCK, and points out that PCK as linked to the formulation of '... appropriate and provocative representations of the content to be learned' (Grossman, 1990: 8, cited by Freeman, 2002) is a highly linguistic undertaking in any subject: 'The teacher engages her students, and the students engage one another, with the content of the lesson through language' (Freeman 2002: 6). He then goes on to suggest that when PCK is applied to language as subject matter, it '... becomes a messy and possibly unworkable concept' (Freeman, 2002: 6). According to Freeman, in pedagogical practice, the teacher's knowledge of subject matter would probably be defined in linguistic terms, while students' prior knowledge and conceptions of language would most likely be based on their L1. The meeting of teacher and student conceptions in the L2 classroom will take place in a mixture of L1 and L2, setting up, in Freeman's words '... at least three, potentially conflicting, levels of representation: the teacher's linguistic knowledge, the students' first language background, and the classroom language interactions' (Freeman, 2002: 6). As Tsui (personal communication) points out, the situation outlined by Freeman certainly illustrates the complexity of the L2 teacher's PCK, which necessarily involves knowledge about students' conceptions and misconceptions of both L2 and L1. However, this complexity does not seem to be grounds for describing PCK as messy and unworkable when applied to language teaching. Indeed I would argue that it is precisely at the interface Freeman describes that the teacher's language awareness comes into play, with the language-aware teacher being equipped to resolve what Freeman regards as potential conflicts. Issues of the sort mentioned by Freeman, rather than representing arguments against the applicability of PCK to language teaching, would seem instead to provide support for the inclusion of TLA as an additional component of PCK specific to the language teacher.

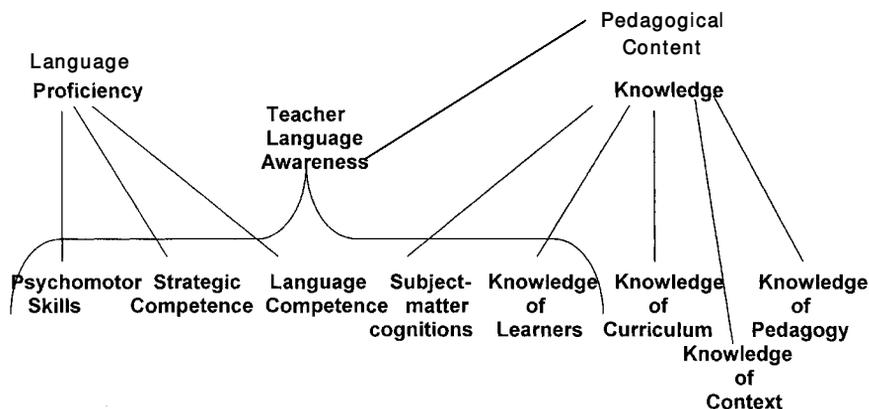
## What is the Impact of TLA on Pedagogical Practice?

Andrews (2001) discussed the impact of TLA on the teacher's professional practice both inside and outside the classroom. Drawing on data from an in-depth study of 17 teachers, the paper summarised the range of ways in which TLA might affect classroom practice. The argument put forward in that paper was that each teacher's language awareness could potentially have a significant impact on how that teacher handled language, i.e. the content of learning. Occur-

rences of the target language were 'input for learning', and the teacher's role as mediator of that input was seen as crucial.

The starting-point in the thinking in that paper about the role of TLA in pedagogical practice was the goal of that practice, i.e. learning. The learning of L2 is dependent on input: the L2 learner, whether in the classroom or immersion setting, learns the target language from the samples of that language to which he/she is exposed, either deliberately or incidentally. When the L2 learner is studying language formally, learning may still take place outside the classroom, depending on the extent to which the learner has the opportunity and motivation to become involved in any L2 immersion. For many L2 learners, however, the classroom and any related activities taking place outside the classroom setting present their major opportunities for exposure to L2 input. Although they may encounter L2 input direct from sources such as the textbook (if they study any of it by themselves) and other students (if, for example, they take part in any unmonitored classroom exchanges involving the L2), much of the input learners are exposed to involves the teacher. The teacher may be the producer of such input: with the specific intention to induce learning, as in, for example, the presentation of new language; or less deliberately, through any communicative use the teacher makes of L2 in the classroom, such as for classroom management. The teacher may also 'shape' the input from the other major sources. In making use of the textbook, for instance, the teacher might modify (however slightly) the textbook's presentation or practice of a grammar point, or draw learners' attention to the occurrence and significance of a particular grammatical structure within a reading comprehension text. When encountering language produced by the learners, orally or in writing, the teacher has a range of options for handling that output, but very often teacher feedback will provide an additional source of input for learning (for the class or for the individual learner) as the student's original output is modified by the teacher.

The precise relationship between teaching and learning is, of course, a controversial issue: it is possible that our efforts and decisions as teachers have little impact on learner development. However, the large numbers of learners worldwide who voluntarily enrol for L2 classes, and indeed most teachers and students involved in formal L2 instruction have some expectation that teaching will have some impact upon what is learnt. If that is the case, then given the extent of the teacher's role in the formal L2 study setting in making input for learning available to learners, it seems reasonable to hypothesise that the competence with which the teacher plays that role might be a major variable affecting the learning which takes place. For instance, one would assume that if that output is accurate (i.e. the form itself, and any information provided about that form), and if it is also tailored to the learner's language level and learning needs, then these factors might be expected to facilitate learning rather than inhibit it. If one accepts these assumptions, then the teacher's ability to perform this role effectively would seem to be dependent on certain knowledge bases in particular: subject-matter cognitions (with knowledge about language at their core), language proficiency (knowledge of language), and knowledge of learners (specifically, as noted earlier, cognitive knowledge of learners as it relates to subject matter). It is the interaction of this particular sub-set of knowledge bases that I would describe as TLA. It is, of course, a sub-set of knowledge bases that



**Figure 1** Teacher language awareness (TLA), language proficiency, and pedagogical content knowledge (amended from Andrews, 2001: 79)

interrelates with the other knowledge bases: particularly, knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of the curriculum, and knowledge of the context. In an act of expert teaching, these various knowledge bases would, as Turner-Bisset (2001) and Tsui (2003) suggest, be fully integrated. It is, however, a sub-set of knowledge bases that is of particular significance in relation to decisions the teacher makes about the content of learning, i.e. the handling of the language input referred to above. Figure 1 (amended from Andrews, 2001) is intended to represent these relationships.<sup>2</sup> The categories into which teacher cognitions are divided in any such model are, as Tsui (2003) has pointed out, more analytic than real (Tsui, 2003: 137). The model is nevertheless included here in an attempt to focus attention on those aspects of the L2 teacher's professional knowledge base which seem to intermesh particularly closely whenever pedagogical practice is specifically engaged with the content of learning, i.e. the language itself.

As noted in the previous section, Tsui (2003) suggests that teacher knowledge as embodied in the act of teaching can be seen as two intertwined dimensions: the management of learning and the enactment of the curriculum (Tsui, 2003: 65–66). In acknowledging the significance of TLA as a component of the L2 teacher's professional knowledge, there is recognition of the central importance of engagement with the content of learning in any teacher's enactment of the curriculum. Figure 2 illustrates some of the aspects of enactment of the curriculum that may be affected by the nature of the teacher's engagement with the content of learning.

## Conclusion

As stated at the beginning, one of the aims of the present paper was to offer a personal conceptualisation of the language awareness of the L2 teacher. This I have endeavoured to do by expanding upon and updating ideas explored in a number of earlier papers. The ideas outlined above are offered simply as a contribution to an ongoing debate. Others with an interest in this area (including the other contributors to this Special Issue) may prefer to analyse teacher cognitions

1. Planning how to deal with language content
  - a. Priority given to language issues in planning  
[What is the teacher's major focus in planning – methodology?/classroom organisation?/language?  
Does the teacher give attention to language issues in, e.g. skills lessons?]
  - b. Strategies for dealing with challenges to subject-matter knowledge  
[Does the teacher engage with such challenges, or seek to avoid them?  
How does the teacher fill gaps in his/her own subject-matter knowledge?]
  - c. Pre-lesson thinking about language content  
[How does the teacher approach focusing on the language content of the lesson?  
How far do the teacher's approaches take account of the learners?]
  - d. Post-lesson thinking about language content  
[Do any of the teacher's post-lesson reflections focus on language content?  
Do such reflections feed back into the subsequent handling of similar/related content?]
2. Dealing with 'input for learning' in the classroom
  - a. Teacher-produced input  
[Does the teacher control his/her own language?  
What use does the teacher make of metalanguage?  
What explanations does the teacher provide?  
How does the teacher respond to students' questions about language?]
  - b. Learner-produced input  
[How does the teacher handle learner error?]

**Figure 2** Engagement with the content of learning and enactment of the curriculum

and the professional knowledge base of the L2 teacher differently, and may indeed find TLA itself an unhelpful label. Whether or not the label TLA is applied to activity in this area, however, there is undoubtedly an increase of interest in analysing and researching the cognitions and the professional knowledge base of the L2 teacher.

Freeman and Johnson (1998), for instance, argue for a reconceptualisation of the knowledge base of ESOL teacher education. They suggest that the articulation of that knowledge base must begin with the activity of teaching and learning, but they also remind us that '... insofar as teaching and what is taught are inseparable, we must also understand what makes our teaching *language teaching*' (Freeman & Johnson, 1998: 413, emphasis in original). Research and discussion focusing on TLA has the potential to make a major contribution to the enhancement of that understanding. The three papers that follow in this Special Issue should certainly, in their different ways, make such a contribution.

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### Notes

1. In order to reduce such ambiguity, the adjective 'metalingual' has been used by, for example, Ellis (1994) and Berry (2002) to mean 'of metalanguage'.

2. The categories on the left-hand side of the model are based on Bachman's (1990) model of 'communicative language ability' (CLA). In making use of those categories, I have adopted the more traditional term 'language proficiency' in preference to 'communicative language ability', because of its greater familiarity. Bachman's CLA framework comprises the three components included under language proficiency in the present model. Bachman (1990: 84) defines 'language competence' as '... a set of specific knowledge components that are utilized in communication via language' and 'strategic competence' as '... the mental capacity for implementing the components of language competence in contextualized communicative use'. The third component of Bachman's CLA framework is the psychophysiological mechanisms involved in language use. These '... characterise the channel (auditory, visual) and mode (receptive, productive) in which competence is implemented' (Bachman, 1990: 108). Although language competence (subsuming grammatical, textual, illocutionary and sociolinguistic competence) is the component most centrally related to TLA, the other two components are included in the model for the sake of completeness.

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