2 TLA and the teaching of language

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a brief overview of the history of interest in Teacher Language Awareness (TLA), in the context of the renewed attention given since the late 1970s to issues relating to 'Language Awareness' / 'Knowledge About Language', and in particular to the role of explicit language knowledge in language learning. The aim of the present chapter is to examine the language awareness of the teacher more closely, and to consider the nature of the role it plays in the context of language teaching and learning. The focus of the chapter is on L2 teaching and learning, with particular reference to TLA as it relates to grammar. However, many of the issues raised may be equally relevant to L1 teaching, and, as I have already noted, the TLA construct is seen as applying in principle to the full range of a teacher's language knowledge and awareness, not just to grammar.

The chapter begins by asking **What is Teacher Language Awareness?** The complex nature of TLA is explored, including its relationship with language proficiency and with the generic construct **pedagogical content knowledge**. The chapter then goes on to ask whether TLA is important for all L2 teachers and why, by examining the relevance of TLA within different approaches to L2 pedagogy. This is followed by discussion of how TLA can affect teacher behaviour, particularly through its impact on the ways in which target language **input** is made available to learners in the L2 classroom. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the factors that can affect the application of TLA in pedagogical practice, and of the potential impact of TLA on the teacher's handling of language-related issues both before the lesson and in the classroom.

2.2 What is Teacher Language Awareness?

Let us begin our examination of the nature of TLA by looking again at Thornbury's (1997:x) definition, quoted in the Introduction, which describes TLA as 'the knowledge that teachers have of the underlying systems of the language that enables them to teach effectively'.

According to such a view, TLA is essentially concerned with subject-matter knowledge and its impact upon teaching. In other words, it relates to the L2 teacher's need to be able to function effectively as an *analyst* of the language, with the ability 'to talk about the language itself, to analyse it, to understand how it works and to make judgements about acceptability in doubtful cases' (Edge, 1988:10). Hales's (1997:217) definition shows a similar focus on subject-matter knowledge: 'Language awareness could be glossed as a sensitivity to grammatical, lexical, or phonological features, and the effect on meaning brought about by the use of different forms.'

Snapshot 3 provides a clear illustration of the central role of subject-matter knowledge in any teacher's language awareness. It also highlights the sorts of problems that can arise when teacher subject-matter knowledge is lacking.

In the classroom episode that Rose describes, she and her students apparently have no problems dealing with mechanical exercises transforming active sentences to passive and vice versa. However, once attention switches to the meaning of passive voice, and the reasons for selecting active or passive, i.e. what Hales (1997:217) refers to as 'the effect on meaning brought about by the use of different forms', Rose admits that she is unable to resolve her students' difficulties, because she lacks the relevant knowledge of the underlying systems of the language. From Rose's comments, it appears that she is not alone: other English teachers in her school find her query equally challenging.

From Rose's comments, subject-matter knowledge is evidently an important, indeed necessary, part of TLA, a point we noted in the Prologue. However, when we look at examples of how teachers handle grammar-related issues in the classroom itself, it becomes apparent that the relationship between subject-matter knowledge and classroom teaching is very complex, and that subject-matter knowledge alone is not sufficient to ensure the effective application of TLA in pedagogical practice, as Snapshot 4 confirms.

From the learners' perspective, there seem to be a number of potential problems with Karen's explanation in Snapshot 4 (see p. 26). However, the inadequacies of Karen's explanation are much less obviously the result of a gap in subject-matter knowledge than are the problems reported by Rose in Snapshot 3. Indeed, Karen, over a series of observed lessons, revealed no major weaknesses in subject-matter knowledge per se. There were, though, a number of similar instances in those lessons where Karen's output in the classroom seemed to be inadequately monitored, where she tended to say too much about grammar-related issues with arguably insufficient reflection upon the intelligibility or usefulness of what she was saying. In other words, it appeared that Karen was not really

Snapshot 3: Rose

Rose teaches English in a very academic Catholic secondary school for girls in Kowloon. Rose has received all her education in Hong Kong, almost all of it through the medium of English, both at secondary school and at university, where she majored in English Literature. As a result of her background, she is a very fluent and confident communicator in English. However, she finds the handling of grammar in her teaching extremely challenging. She attributes this to her experience as a learner, an experience she describes as 'self-learning' and which seems to have involved little or no explicit teaching of grammar.

Perhaps because of her own uncertainties about grammar, Rose claims to be wholeheartedly committed to the school's 'traditional' approach, in which the textbook is supplemented by deductive form-focused teaching of discrete grammar points, using 'standardised exercises for the whole form prepared by the teacher' with set answers.

Rose has just been observed giving a lesson during which the entire 35 minutes were spent on a set of 'standardised grammar exercises'. During the post-lesson interview, she reflects on the challenges she faces whenever she deals with grammar. As an illustration, she recounts the difficulties she experienced in a recent lesson teaching passive voice:

> It's easy if you ask them to rewrite the sentences, because they find it easy to follow. However . . . they just don't know when we are supposed to use passive voice and when we are supposed to use active voice. And one of the students even asked me, 'Miss Wong, why do we have to use passive voice in our daily life?' and I find this question difficult to answer, ha, and I said, 'Oh, I'll tell you next time' . . . and then I asked my colleagues, 'Why do we use and teach passive voice?' and no one can give me the correct answer. And then I go home and think about it. But even now I really don't know how to handle that student's questions. I finish the worksheets with them and they know how to rewrite the sentences. But I don't know how to explain to them.

Snapshot 4: Karen

Karen has been teaching English for three years. She is currently in her second school, a co-educational secondary school in the New Territories. She is happy and less stressed than in her previous job: although the students in her present school are rather passive, they are generally well intentioned and pleasant.

Karen teaches three classes of English this year. One of them is a Secondary 4 (Year 10) class: a group of forty-two 15-year-olds who will be taking the HKCEE public examination towards the end of the following school year. Karen enjoys teaching this class. As she says of them herself: 'Most of them are very nice . . . and I really want to help them.'

One Thursday morning, Karen and her Secondary 4 students are spending the whole of a 40-minute lesson revising the formation of questions in English. The students have just been focusing on the order of the words in the question *Will you come at 8 am?* Karen feels that her students may not be learning much from their analysis of such a sentence, given that the simple subject–verb inversion is of the type they learned in primary school. She therefore attempts to extend their opportunities for learning by explaining some of the complexities of meaning associated with the modal auxiliary **will**, as used in the question *Will you come at 8 am?* In doing so, Karen gives her students the following explanation:

> For this word *will* we have two kinds of meaning. Number 1 you can say that it's about future tense . . . maybe it's now 4 am, and then *Will you come at 8 am?* Future tense . . . Or another one maybe . . . Do you know that traditionally if I say *I shall go / I will go*, they are different? Can you remember? *I shall go* is about future, *I shall go* future tense. And then *I will go* – maybe the underlying meaning is like this: *I must go / I have to go*. And then for this one again it's the same, *Will you come at 8 am?* Maybe it's about the future and secondly you can say that *Do you have to come?* Or *Will you really come? Because I hope that you can come.* And then *Yes, I will come, I must come, I will come . . .* something like that.

thinking about the language content from the viewpoint of the learners, taking into account their potential difficulties. Analysing language from the learner/learning perspective is clearly an important aspect of TLA, as we saw in the Prologue. Karen's problems in this regard offer confirmation of the point made earlier, that the successful application of TLA in practice is dependent not only on a sound language systems knowledge base.

The extract from Karen's lesson in Snapshot 4 suggests that there are a number of elements that contribute to the complexity of TLA. Of particular significance is the relationship between teachers' subject-matter knowledge and their language proficiency, or 'communicative language ability' (CLA) in Bachman's terms. Bachman's model of CLA consists of 'both knowledge, or competence, and the capacity for implementing, or executing, that competence in appropriate, contextualised communicative language use' (Bachman, 1990:84). A major part of CLA is what Bachman calls language competence. This includes organisational competence (covering grammatical and textual competences) and pragmatic competence (illocutionary and sociolinguistic competences). The second major part of CLA is strategic competence, which refers to the higher-order processes that enable the language user to determine communicative goals, assess communicative resources, plan communication and execute that plan. The third part of Bachman's model of CLA is what he refers to as psychophysiological mechanisms: the auditory, articulatory and neurological processes that are part of human communication. The problems with Karen's explanation in Snapshot 4 appear to be linked, at least in part, to her strategic competence, and the extent to which she is able to draw on her communicative resources and convey her intended message effectively.

The closeness and pervasiveness of the interconnections between subject-matter knowledge and language proficiency become clear if we stop to consider the nature of teachers' content-related activity both pre-lesson and in-lesson. In preparing for lessons with a grammar focus, for example, language-aware teachers' reflections on lesson content (their **metacognitions**) are likely to encompass both their explicit knowledge of the relevant grammar rules and their own communicative use of the grammar item. Then, once teachers are in the classroom, anything they say about grammar during the lesson not only will draw on their subject-matter knowledge, but will also be mediated through their language proficiency, assuming that the medium of instruction is the L2. From this, then, it seems reasonable to argue that much of the complexity of TLA derives from the uniqueness of the situation in language teaching (as compared with the teaching of other subjects), where content and medium of instruction (MOI) are inextricably intertwined. Even in L2 teaching contexts where there is considerable classroom use of the L1,

this observation still applies to those parts of the lesson in which the L2 is the MOI.

A second element contributing to the complexity of TLA, as noted above, is the need for teachers to be aware of the learners, to be aware (to the extent that such awareness is possible) of the learners' present level of language development (their **interlanguage**), and to tailor their handling of grammar-related input to that level. As Wright (2002:115) 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.' Given that any class of learners will contain as many interlanguages as there are learners, all at different stages of development, this presents the teacher with particular challenges.

Based on all the above, it would seem that any model of TLA would need to take account of the following:

- The language knowledge/awareness of the teacher embraces both knowledge of subject matter and language proficiency, since it involves reflections on both and entails the mediation of the former through the latter.
- The language knowledge/awareness required by the teacher of a language is qualitatively different from that of the educated user of that language. As I have argued elsewhere (see, e.g., Andrews, 1999a), teachers of a language, like any educated users of that language, undoubtedly need sufficiently high levels of implicit and explicit knowledge of grammar to facilitate effective communication. In the case of teachers, their effectiveness as communicators is directly linked to their adequacy as models for their students. At the same time, however: 'effective L2 teaching requires of the teacher more than just the possession of such knowledge and the ability to draw upon it for communicative purposes. The L2 teacher also needs to reflect upon that knowledge and ability, and upon her [sic] knowledge of the underlying systems of the language, in order to ensure that her students receive maximally useful input for learning' (Andrews, 1999a:163).
- The language knowledge/awareness of the teacher is therefore '**metacognitive**', i.e. it involves 'cognition about cognition' (Flavell, 1981, quoted by Gombert, 1992:7). In other words, TLA is not just knowledge of subject matter mediated through a teacher's language proficiency, but rather, as suggested above, it also 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. (See, e.g., Andrews, 1997, and 1999a, where

the term 'teacher **meta**linguistic awareness' is used to emphasise the importance of this metacognitive dimension.)

- The language knowledge/awareness of the teacher also encompasses an awareness of language from the learner's perspective, incorporating awareness of the learner's developing interlanguage. Such awareness would include an appreciation of the current state of each learner's interlanguage and of its likely developmental path, as well as an awareness of the processes of interlingual development. Awareness of the learner and the learner's perspective also includes an awareness of the extent to which the language content of the materials/lessons poses difficulties for learners.

2.3 TLA and pedagogical content knowledge

There are clearly close connections between this conception of TLA and the more generic construct **pedagogical content knowledge**, or PCK (see, e.g., Shulman, 1987; Brophy, 1991; Gess-Newsome and Lederman, 1999; and Turner-Bisset, 1999 and 2001). Brophy (1991:xii) describes PCK as 'a special form of professional understanding that is unique to teachers and combines knowledge of the content to be taught with knowledge of what students know or think they know about this content and knowledge of how this content can be represented to the students through examples, analogies, etc. in ways that are most likely to be effective in helping them to attain the intended outcomes of instruction'.

Shulman developed the original conceptualisation of PCK in a series of papers (e.g., Shulman, 1986a; 1986b; 1987) in which he focused on the need for educational researchers to engage in 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). Shulman (1987:15) identified a number of possible categories of a knowledge base for teaching, but he saw the relationship between content and pedagogy as centrally important: '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'.

More recent attempts to describe teacher knowledge have used the term PCK slightly differently. Turner-Bisset (2001), for example, uses PCK as an overarching term to describe all the knowledge bases that underpin effective teaching. This use of the term acknowledges the central importance of the content–pedagogy relationship and, as the quote from

Shulman (1987) suggests, its close interrelationship with other categories of the knowledge base of teaching, such as knowledge of the learners. Turner-Bisset identifies several knowledge bases (e.g., subject knowledge, beliefs about the subject, curriculum knowledge, beliefs about teaching and learning, knowledge of learners, knowledge of self, and contextual knowledge) and speaks of them as interacting sets: at times only some work together, but in acts of expert teaching they blend together.

Freeman (2002) has described PCK as a messy, even unworkable concept to apply to language as subject matter. Freeman argues that in L2 teaching, 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 these teacher and student conceptions in the L2 classroom would therefore take place in a mixture of L1 and L2, creating, as Freeman (2002:6) put it, 'at least three, potentially conflicting, levels of representation: the teacher's linguistic knowledge, the students' first language background, and the classroom language interactions'. The situation pointed out by Freeman does indeed (as Tsui has pointed out in a personal communication) illustrate the complexity of the L2 teacher's PCK, which necessarily involves knowledge about students' conceptions and misconceptions about both the L2 and the L1. However, rather than taking such arguments as grounds for rejecting PCK as an unworkable concept in L2 teaching, I would argue that it is precisely at the interface Freeman describes that TLA comes into play, with the language-aware teacher being equipped to resolve what Freeman sees as potential conflicts. As a result, I have preferred to interpret issues of the sort mentioned by Freeman as lending support to the arguments outlined here and elsewhere (see, e.g., Andrews, 2001; 2003) for a modified model of PCK incorporating the TLA construct. As such, PCK is seen as the overarching knowledge base, and TLA is seen as one subset of the teacher's knowledge bases (a knowledge base subset that is unique to the L2 teacher), which interacts with others and blends with them in acts of expert L2 teaching.

The model below (Figure 1) reflects the characteristics of TLA outlined in 2.2 above, by representing TLA as forming a bridge between language proficiency and knowledge of subject matter. This enables TLA to be seen both as a pedagogically related reflective dimension of language proficiency, and also as a sub-component of the L2 teacher's PCK, which interacts with the other sub-components. Figure 1 is a modified version of the model in Andrews, 1999b and 2001. The present model differs from the earlier versions in a number of ways, but primarily in that knowledge of the learners has been incorporated as an integral component of TLA, and knowledge of subject matter has been replaced with the broader heading 'subject-matter **cognitions**' in order to reflect the close interrelationship
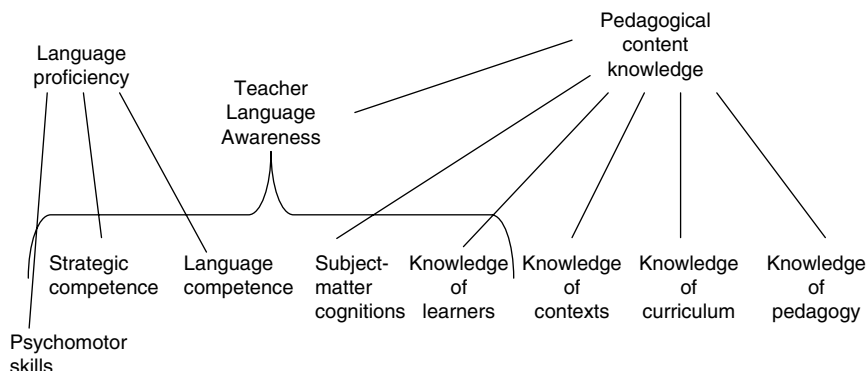
Figure 1: Teacher Language Awareness, language proficiency and pedagogical content knowledge (modified from Andrews, 1999b; 2001)

of knowledge and beliefs (see, e.g., Woods, 1996). The categories into which teacher cognitions are divided in any such model are, as Tsui (2003:137) has pointed out, more analytic than real. 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. Chapter 4 contains further discussion of TLA and teachers' subject-matter cognitions.

One other point that needs to be emphasised in any discussion of the nature of TLA is the use of the word 'awareness' in preference to 'knowledge'. This underlines both the dynamism of the construct, and also the important difference between the possession of knowledge and the use made of such knowledge: i.e. the declarative and procedural dimensions. I would argue that TLA incorporates a procedural as well as a declarative dimension, with knowledge of subject matter (i.e. the language systems knowledge base) at the core of the declarative dimension. If I began using the word 'awareness' in part for historical reasons (since the term 'language awareness' has been extensively used in discussions of L2 teacher development, especially in relation to TEFL/TESL, for a number of years), it was retained deliberately, in order to emphasise the difference between the possession of subject-matter knowledge and 'knowledge-in-action' (i.e. awareness). Knowledge and awareness are, of course, interlinked. As Duff (1988) has observed, the L2 teacher needs a deep and wide-ranging knowledge of the language being taught, since this knowledge informs the teacher's awareness. Duff (1988:72) suggests that an awareness 'that is not sustained by knowledge is inadequate'. I would concur with Duff's position, since subject-matter knowledge forms the core of the conception of TLA as set out in this chapter. At the same time, however, I would argue

31

that, for the L2 teacher, knowledge without an accompanying awareness may be equally inadequate, leading, for example, to the type of lesson in which the teacher seems to be intent upon displaying his/her own knowledge about language rather than drawing upon that knowledge selectively in order to facilitate the learners' acquisition of language.

2.4 Is TLA important, and if so, why?

In the previous chapter (section 1.6), the changing perceptions of the importance of grammar in L2 teaching were briefly outlined. Although an explicit focus on grammar seems to form part of much L2 teaching around the world, there are still lingering uncertainties (at the theoretical level at least) about the importance and role of grammar teaching within L2 pedagogy. We therefore need to look closely at any assertion that TLA is important for the L2 teacher and consider the supporting arguments with care. Wright and Bolitho (1993:292), for example, may claim (as noted in Chapter 1) that 'the more aware a teacher is of language and how it works, the better', but what are the justifications for such a claim?

In attempting to examine those justifications, it may be helpful to consider the relevance of TLA to each of the three options in language teaching outlined by Long and Robinson (1998) – '**focus on formS**', '**focus on form**' and '**focus on meaning**' – options which are linked to different teaching/learning foci. The first option, '**focus on formS**', is the label applied by Long and Robinson to 'synthetic' approaches to language teaching (Wilkins, 1976), i.e. those which focus on the teaching of discrete points of language in accordance with what Rutherford (1987:4) describes as the 'accumulated entities' view of language learning. These 'synthetic' approaches have predominated throughout most of the history of L2 education.

Long and Robinson call the second of their options '**focus on form**'. As Ellis (2005) points out, there are a number of possible interpretations of the term 'focus on form' (including the interpretation which Long and Robinson label 'focus on formS'). However, Long (1991:45–6) specifically defines 'focus on form' as an approach which 'overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication'. In other words, 'focus on form' refers to approaches where the students' primary engagement is with meaning-focused activity, as in 'strong' versions of a task-based approach. Within such approaches, 'focus on form' occurs as attention switches to language when the need/opportunity arises in the course of communication, and not as part of a predetermined plan to teach specific language features.

The final option, '**focus on meaning**', refers to the range of approaches which Long and Robinson (1998:18) call 'non-interventionist'. These approaches (often referred to as 'natural', and associated in more recent years with, e.g., Newmark, 1966; Krashen, 1985; and Prabhu, 1987) advocate abandoning a focus on language formS. Instead, they seek to replicate the processes of L1 development in the belief that 'classroom language learning will proceed more effectively if language learners are allowed to construct their interlanguages "naturally", in the same way as they would if they were learning grammar through the process of learning to communicate' (Ellis, 1994:652).

If we take the first of these options, it should be clear from the preceding discussion that Teacher Language Awareness can potentially play a crucial role in determining the success of any 'focus-on-formS' approach designed to help develop learners' explicit knowledge. Whatever the nature of the focus-on-formS approach adopted – whether it is based upon the traditional P-P-P (Presentation-Practice-Production) teaching sequence, or on a less production-focused approach such as 'consciousness-raising' (Rutherford and Sharwood Smith, 1985) or 'input enhancement' (Sharwood Smith, 1991) – if the syllabus is broadly linguistic, then TLA will necessarily be a significant factor at each stage from lesson preparation through to the provision of corrective feedback.

The type of demand which might be exerted on TLA within teaching that corresponds to the second of these options, 'focus on form', would vary according to the precise nature of the approach adopted. The approach most commonly identified with 'focus on form' is Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT). However, as Skehan (1996; 2003) has pointed out, there are strong and weak forms of TBLT, a distinction reflecting that made by Howatt (1984) in relation to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (see Chapter 3). Skehan's strong form of TBLT (which corresponds more closely to Long and Robinson's 'focus on form') sees the task as the basic unit of teaching, in which acquisition of form takes care of itself with relatively little intervention by the teacher. A weak form of TBLT would still have tasks at its core, but these may be preceded and/or followed by focused instruction, the post-task instruction usually depending on the quality of the students' performance of the task.

Whichever type of 'focus-on-form' approach is adopted, however, it seems that 'focus on form' in fact poses no less of a challenge to a teacher's language awareness than 'focus on formS'. For example, even the strong form of TBLT would entail the selection of suitable learning tasks, which would involve considering such factors as the potential linguistic demands of the task and the linguistic capacity of the learners to cope with those demands. In addition, and perhaps most significantly, a strong 'focus-on-form' approach might actually increase the

demands on a teacher's language awareness, because of the emphasis on language-related activity arising spontaneously out of the tasks rather than being determined in advance. TLA would significantly affect both the teacher's judgement of whether and when to intervene, and also the ability to intervene in ways likely to promote learning. With the weaker form of TBLT, the demands on TLA are that much more apparent, as the teacher is confronted with the need to make decisions about whether and how to address grammar issues before, during, and after the task (for further discussion, see Richards, 2002, and Nunan, 2004).

It is with the third option, 'focus on meaning', that the importance of TLA is perhaps the least obvious. After all, if the emphasis is on non-intervention, then it might be assumed that the demands on a teacher's language awareness would be greatly reduced, if not entirely eliminated. However, even within those approaches which are the least sympathetic to form-focused instruction (such as those inspired by the work of Krashen), one could argue that TLA plays a significant part in the effectiveness or otherwise of what takes place in the classroom. Krashen's 'input hypothesis' (1981; 1985), for example, proposes that comprehensible input is a major causative factor in L2 acquisition. If a teacher wanted the classroom to be a major source of comprehensible input and therefore an 'acquisition-rich' environment, then he/she would presumably need to make decisions about the current stage of development of the students' 'acquired systems', and

(a) select texts providing comprehensible input;
(b) devise tasks entailing an appropriate level of linguistic challenge; and
(c) control his/her own language to a level a little beyond the students' current level of competence.

All of these tasks would pose considerable challenges to the teacher's language awareness.

From this it would appear that although TLA is of particular importance where teachers are employing 'focus-on-formS' or 'focus-on-form' approaches, it can also impact upon a teacher's effectiveness even within the most extreme of meaning-focused approaches. It therefore seems reasonable to argue that TLA is an essential part of any language teacher's knowledge/skills base.

2.5 How does TLA affect teacher behaviour?

In recent years, there have been various attempts to characterise how Teacher Language Awareness affects teacher behaviour. Thornbury

(1997), for example, lists a number of potential consequences of weakness in the area of language awareness:

- a failure on the part of the teacher to anticipate learners' learning problems and a consequent inability to plan lessons that are pitched at the right level;
- an inability to interpret coursebook syllabuses and materials and to adapt these to the specific needs of the learners;
- an inability to deal satisfactorily with errors, or to field learners' queries; and
- a general failure to earn the confidence of the learners due to a lack of basic terminology and ability to present new language clearly and efficiently

(Thornbury, 1997:xii)

Wright and Bolitho (1993) identify a number of pedagogic tasks where TLA may have a significant positive impact, including preparing lessons; evaluating, adapting and writing materials; understanding, interpreting and designing syllabuses; and assessing learners' performance. They suggest that a lack of awareness most typically shows itself at the classroom level: 'for example when a teacher is unable to identify and compensate for shortcomings in a coursebook, or is "caught out" by a learner's question on the language' (Wright and Bolitho, 1993:292). They emphasise that these points about TLA apply equally to NS and NNS teachers, a point we shall discuss further in Chapter 7.

In an early investigation of TLA (Andrews, 1994), I asked trainers of English native-speaker teachers of EFL to characterise the grammatical knowledge and awareness required of teachers. The list below gives an indication of the range of aspects mentioned by the trainers and represents one view of how TLA might ideally manifest itself in teacher behaviour.

1) Knowledge of grammatical terminology
2) Understanding of the concepts associated with terms
3) Awareness of meaning/language in communication
4) Ability to reflect on language and analyse language forms
5) Ability to select/grade language and break down grammar points for teaching purposes
6) Ability to analyse grammar from learners' perspective
7) Ability to anticipate learners' grammatical difficulties
8) Ability to deal confidently with spontaneous grammar questions
9) Ability to think on one's feet in dealing with grammar problems
10) Ability to explain grammar to students without complex metalanguage
11) Awareness of 'correctness' and ability to justify an opinion about what is acceptable usage and what is not
12) Sensitivity to language/awareness of how language works

(Andrews, 1994:75)

It is interesting to note how many of the ideal characteristics listed mirror the deficiencies mentioned by Thornbury, and by Wright and Bolitho.

A comparable list of qualities, taken from Leech (1994), and forming part of his discussion of the 'mature communicative knowledge' of grammar required by the teacher, is set out below.

A 'model' teacher of languages should:

a) be capable of putting across a sense of how grammar interacts with the lexicon as a communicative system;
b) be able to analyse the grammatical problems that learners encounter;
c) have the ability and confidence to evaluate the use of grammar, especially by learners, against criteria of accuracy, appropriateness and expressiveness;
d) be aware of the contrastive relations between native language and foreign language;
e) understand and implement the processes of simplification by which overt knowledge of grammar can best be presented to learners at different stages of learning.   (Leech, 1994:18)

The lists from Andrews (1994) and Leech (1994) have their limitations. The former raises as many questions as it answers. We might ask, for example, what precisely is meant by 'complex metalanguage' (point 10). Presumably the point at issue is whether the metalanguage actually means something to the learners, rather than any inherent complexity in the terminology employed. With the Leech list, too, we might wish to suggest certain modifications and make explicit certain ideas which are perhaps implicit. For instance, in relation to (a), one would want to emphasise that this interaction of the grammar and the lexicon should relate not only to such interaction within the sentence – Leech (1994:19) refers to 'words, phrases, sentences, and their categories and structures' – but also to the interaction of form and meaning in longer stretches of text. With reference to (b), we might wish to add the qualifying comment 'from the learners' perspective', while with (e) one would want to highlight Leech's further comment, 'whatever the level of learning, the degree of explicit explanation needs to be reduced to the simplest level consistent with its pedagogical purpose' (1994:21), and also to add another aspect of simplification, that teachers should control their own use of language. We might also want to argue that the scope of the knowledge characterised in both lists should be broadened to include an awareness of the

distinctive features of spoken grammar (see, e.g., Carter and McCarthy, 1997; 2006). Whatever minor adjustments one might feel inclined to make to both these lists, however, they provide a useful inventory of facets of teacher behaviour to look out for when observing instances of Teacher Language Awareness in the context of grammar-related pedagogical activity.

Both of the lists above are concerned with the knowledge, awareness and ability the teacher brings to the task of dealing with issues relating to 'input' – 'the target language samples to which the learner is exposed' (Ellis, 1990:96). Although there are different views among researchers into second language acquisition as to how languages are learned or acquired (see Chapter 3 for discussion of some of the research relating to form-focused instruction), one thing that is clear is that it is a precondition for learning that learners should be exposed to input. The L2 learner, whether in the instructed learning or the immersion setting, learns the target language from the samples of that language to which he/she is exposed, either deliberately or incidentally. The sixth of Ellis's (2005) ten principles of instructed language learning, offered as 'provisional specifications' for a learning-centred language pedagogy, states that '[s]uccessful instructed language learning requires extensive L2 input' (p. 217). The significance of Teacher Language Awareness is therefore likely to come primarily from its impact upon the ways in which input is made available to learners in the classroom setting.

In relating TLA to input, however, it should not be assumed that TLA as a construct has a place only within a cognitive, information-processing view of L2 learning. On the contrary, I would argue that the significance of TLA is equally obvious within a sociocultural view of L2 learning, which sees such learning as socially constructed through both interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions (see, e.g., Lantolf, 2000). For instance, TLA clearly has the potential to influence both the decisions the teacher makes about whether to withhold or provide **scaffolding** (i.e. interactional support) to assist in the co-construction with the learner(s) of new knowledge, and also the strategies and the language used by the teacher in providing and then gradually withdrawing that scaffolding. The mediating role of the teacher in relation both to the provision of input (or **affordances**[1]) and to the processes that might promote the assimilation of new information into the learner's interlanguage is therefore potentially crucial when viewed from either perspective.

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[1] Sociocultural theory would use the term affordances in preference to input. Affordances are those 'language learning opportunities that exist in the learner's linguistic "environment"' (Thornbury, 2006:9).

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 worldwide, however, their major opportunities for exposure to L2 input occur within the classroom and as a result of any related activities that may take place outside the classroom setting. In the context of any L2 classroom, the three main sources of target language input for learners are materials, other learners and the teacher him-/herself. The model in Figure 2 below (adapted from Andrews, 1999a) is intended to show how a teacher's language awareness can interact with the language output from all three sources, operating as a kind of 'filter' affecting the way in which each source of input is made available to the learner.

As Figure 2 suggests, learners may encounter L2 input direct (i.e. unfiltered) from sources such as the textbook (if they study any of it by themselves) and other students (if, e.g., they take part in any unmonitored classroom exchanges involving the L2), but their exposure to output from these sources may also be mediated, or 'shaped', by the teacher (via the TLA 'filter'). 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 the feedback provided by the teacher will constitute 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.

As Figure 2 illustrates, the teacher is also the producer of target language input. This may occur 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 the L2 in the classroom, such as for classroom management. Awareness of the potential of self-produced language as input for learning may lead the teacher to pay careful attention to the structuring of his/her utterances (which may, in other words, be 'filtered' through the teacher's language awareness). In the same lesson, however, there will almost certainly be many teacher utterances which are less consciously monitored, and which are not intended by the teacher to lead to learning, but which are nevertheless potentially available to the learner as 'unfiltered' input.

The point being made here is that the TLA 'filter' inevitably influences the decisions and choices the teacher makes in mediating, or 'shaping', the language input that is made available to learners in the classroom:
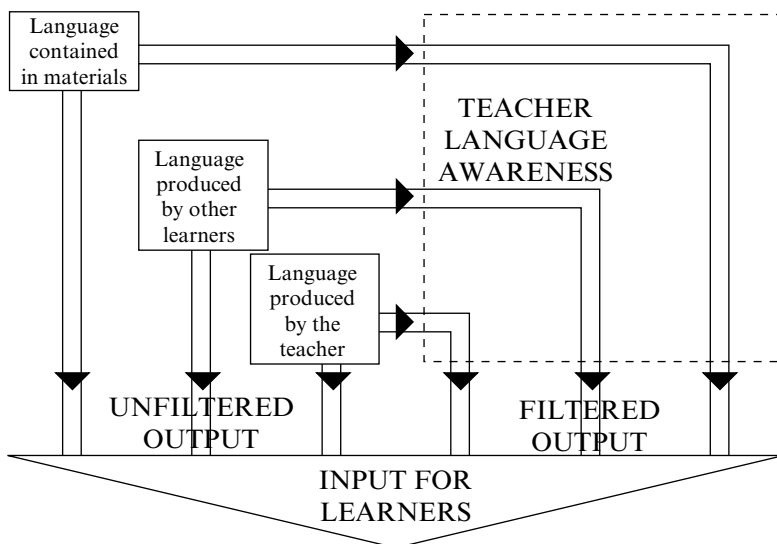
Figure 2: The role of TLA in structuring input for learners (adapted from Andrews, 1999a:166)

the language contained in materials, the language produced by other learners and the language produced by the teacher. With hindsight, the 'filter' metaphor is not ideal, because it may be misconceived as placing undue emphasis on TLA's defensive, 'risk limitation' role, and the ability of the language-aware teacher to spot and then filter out problems, errors and potential sources of misunderstanding. That role may indeed be important, but the TLA 'filter' is actually concerned at least as much with the more positive goal of sifting through input (potential or actual) in order to spot opportunities for learning. Such opportunities may, of course, occur because of a problem (for instance, a communication breakdown in a meaning-focused oral activity) or a student's misunderstanding or error. But they may also arise as a result of the teacher's openness to teaching/learning potential. As Wright (2002:115) notes: 'The linguistically aware teacher can spot opportunities to generate discussion and exploration of language, for example by noticing features of texts which suggest a particular language activity.'

2.6 The impact of TLA on pedagogical practice

It is evident from the preceding discussion that there are two factors specific to language that are seen as central to the operation of the TLA 'filter'

described above. The first of these is subject-matter knowledge. As Thornbury suggests, this is crucial to the successful application of TLA in pedagogical practice: it is effectively the declarative dimension of TLA. In relation to grammar teaching, for instance, the quality of a teacher's thinking, actions and reactions at all stages – in preparation, teaching and post-lesson reflection – is clearly dependent on a sound underlying language systems knowledge base. It is equally evident, however, that explicit knowledge of grammar, while a necessary part of a teacher's language awareness, is not sufficient by itself to ensure that any teacher will deal with grammar-related issues in ways which are most conducive to learning.

The second language-specific factor that plays a vital role in the application of TLA in pedagogical practice is language proficiency. This not only affects the quality of the teacher's reflections about language. It also has a direct effect upon the structural accuracy and functional appropriateness of the teacher's mediation of all three potential sources of language input.

These two language-related factors undoubtedly have a major influence on the quality of teacher-produced input and the effectiveness of the teacher's mediation of other potential input sources. As noted in 2.2 above, a third crucial factor is the teacher's awareness of the learner, and of the learner's developing interlanguage. These three factors may for our present purposes be subsumed under the heading of 'professional factors', together with, for instance, the teacher's beliefs about grammar and his/her previous experience of grammar teaching.

However, there are other factors – other cognitions, relating to attitude and to context – which interact with professional factors (including subject-matter knowledge) to exert a powerful influence upon the application of TLA in pedagogical practice. One key attitudinal factor is the teacher's self-confidence, or lack of confidence, about grammar. Another concerns the relative importance that the teacher (for whatever reason) accords to content issues rather than questions of methodology, classroom organisation and student responsiveness. As well as being influenced by professional factors, these attitudinal factors may also be influenced by the teacher's perceptions of and responses to contextual factors in the particular work situation, such as pressure of time and the need to follow a prescribed syllabus. These issues are explored further in Chapters 4 and 5.

Together these various influences have a substantial effect upon the teacher's willingness to engage with language-related issues, and upon the capacity for 'reflection-on-action' and 'reflection-in-action' (Schon, 1983), as well as on the feasibility of each teacher's personal engagement with and reflection on language-related issues in their teaching. Figure 3 illustrates the major interacting influences on TLA in pedagogical practice: the procedural dimension of TLA. It should be noted, however, that
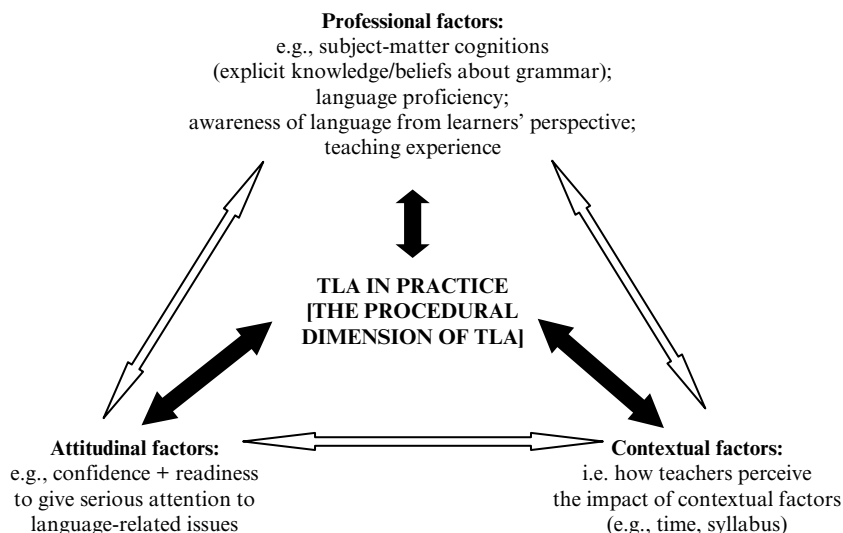
Professional factors:
e.g., subject-matter cognitions
(explicit knowledge/beliefs about grammar);
language proficiency;
awareness of language from learners' perspective;
teaching experience

**TLA IN PRACTICE
[THE PROCEDURAL
DIMENSION OF TLA]**

Attitudinal factors:
e.g., confidence + readiness
to give serious attention to
language-related issues

Contextual factors:
i.e. how teachers perceive
the impact of contextual factors
(e.g., time, syllabus)

Figure 3: Key influences on the operation of TLA (modified from Andrews, 1999b; 2001)

within each individual teacher, these factors will interact in a variety of ways, with differing consequences. Just as the precise combination of factors may vary from individual to individual, so one should not expect the interaction of the factors to be stable and constant for each teacher on every occasion. Attitudinal and contextual factors may well differ from day to day, and even from class to class. Even the impact of professional factors such as explicit knowledge of grammar may vary to a certain extent, depending on the particular grammatical structure.

To analyse the impact of TLA on pedagogical practice, the simplest way is to itemise the range of grammar-related tasks that the teacher might perform with the intention of facilitating learning, since each of these tasks is potentially affected by the quality of that teacher's language awareness. The major pre-lesson task in which TLA plays a part involves analysing the grammatical area from the learner and learning perspectives. TLA affects the teacher's ability to identify the key features of the grammar area for learning and to make them salient within the prepared input. It also affects the teacher's ability to specify the most appropriate learning objectives, and to select materials and tasks which are most likely to serve those objectives, ensuring that they are appropriate in terms of the learners' age, previous learning and present stage of interlingual development, and that they serve the desired learning outcomes.

Table 1 (adapted from Andrews, 1999b) summarises the influences exerted by a number of different factors, singly or in combination, on

Table 1: The impact of TLA on lesson preparation – influential factors

	Influences upon the impact of TLA on lesson preparation	
Influential factors	Positive ⟵————————————⟶ Negative	
Contextual factors (e.g. time/ syllabus)	Teacher feels he/she has, e.g., sufficient time for lesson preparation, and sufficient freedom/ control over content of teaching to engage fully with language-related issues of lesson before entering classroom. Teacher views students as co-operative/responsive.	Teacher feels he/she has limited chances to engage with language-related issues before lesson because of, e.g., lack of time and/or lack of personal control over content of lesson. Teacher views students as unco-operative and/ or unresponsive.
Attitudinal factors (e.g. interest/ confidence)	Teacher is interested in language-related issues and considers it important to engage with them personally and directly. Teacher has confidence in own explicit grammar knowledge, and communicative language ability. Teacher is also confident about assuming responsibility for shaping the language-related content of the lesson.	Teacher finds language-related issues uninteresting and perceives no need to engage with them personally and directly. Teacher lacks confidence in own explicit grammar knowledge and communicative language ability and may be frightened by grammar. As a result, teacher may adopt avoidance strategies, such as abdicating language content responsibility to textbooks.
Professional factors (e.g. knowledge/ experience)	Teacher has good explicit grammar knowledge, good communicative language ability and is aware of the importance of the learner perspective on language-related issues. Teacher also has	Teacher has limited explicit grammar know-ledge, and/or weak-nesses in communica-tive language ability. Teacher has limited awareness of language from the learner perspective, and limited

Influential factors	Influences upon the impact of TLA on lesson preparation	
	Positive ←	→ **Negative**
	positive previous experiences of grammar teaching. These factors combine to inform pre-lesson reflections about language-related issues, and therefore to influence language-related aspects of preparation, e.g.	and/or negative previous experiences of grammar teaching. Any one or more of these can have a potentially negative impact on pre-lesson reflections and language-related aspects of preparation, e.g.
	1 Identifying key features for learning	*1* Identifying key features for learning
	2 Making them salient in prepared input	*2* Making them salient in prepared input
	3 Matching practice tasks to learners' level and lesson objectives	*3* Matching practice tasks to learners' level and lesson objectives

the potential impact of TLA on the preparation of lessons. The table distinguishes between the positive and negative impacts of each influential factor. However, as the arrows indicate, the influence of each factor is a matter of degree, with the descriptors outlining the opposite extremes.

Within the classroom, as suggested in 2.4 and 2.5 above, TLA has the potential to exert a profound influence upon the teacher's performance of a range of tasks. These tasks include (i) mediating what is made available to learners as input; (ii) making salient the key grammatical features within that input; (iii) providing exemplification, clarification and feedback, as appropriate; (iv) monitoring students' output; (v) monitoring one's own output; (vi) helping the students to make useful generalisations based upon the input; and (vii) limiting the potential sources of learner confusion in the input; while all the time (viii) reflecting on the potential impact of all such mediation on the learners' understanding.

   Careful preparation can, to some extent, help the teacher to meet these challenges. However, in the classroom, many of these tasks need to be performed spontaneously and in 'real time'. This means that effective operation of the procedural dimension of TLA involves a variety of personal qualities: vision, perception, sensitivity and reflectiveness. It also demands alertness and quick thinking, ease of access to the subject-matter knowledge base, a good level of communicative language ability and constant awareness of the learner. The experiences of both Karen and Rose (discussed in 2.2 above) illustrate the difficulties experienced by many teachers confronted with such demands. Although Karen and Rose are non-native-speaker (NNS) teachers of English, the challenges of TLA apply to NS (native-speaker) as well as NNS teachers, as discussed further in Chapter 7.

Table 2: The impact of TLA in the classroom

Impact of TLA in the classroom	
Positive ⟵	⟶ **Negative**
Teacher acts as a bridge between the language content of the materials and the learners, making salient the key features of the grammar area.	Teacher does little or nothing to act as a bridge / make salient the key features of the grammar area (e.g. doesn't go beyond the language content as presented in the materials).
Teacher 'filters' the content of published materials and notices/avoids potential pitfalls.	Teacher is unwilling/unable to 'filter' content. As a result, teacher may overlook or accept misconceptions and/or inaccuracies in materials.
Teacher 'filters' own classroom output (spoken and written) to ensure that it is	Teacher does not appear to 'filter' own classroom output (spoken and/or written). As a result, teacher's output may be
1 structurally accurate *2* functionally appropriate *3* clearly expressed *4* pitched at the learners' level	*1* structurally inaccurate *2* functionally inappropriate *3* confusingly expressed *4* pitched at an inappropriate level for the learners
5 an adequate basis for learner generalisations	*5* an inadequate basis for learner generalisations
Teacher 'filters' learner output (as appropriate in the context	Teacher's mediation of learner output in form-focused activity

Table 2: (cont.)

Impact of TLA in the classroom	
Positive ⟵————————————————⟶ **Negative**	
of form-focused activity). Mediation takes the learners' perspective into account and is	is inadequate. As a result, incorrect learner output may be ignored, the learners' perspective may not be taken into account and teacher mediation may be
⟸⟹	
1 correct, precise and intelligible	1 incorrect, imprecise and/or unintelligible
2 structurally accurate	2 structurally inaccurate
3 functionally appropriate	3 functionally inappropriate
4 pitched at the learners' level	4 pitched at an inappropriate level for the learners
5 an adequate basis for learner generalisations	5 an inadequate basis for learner generalisations
Teacher is able to operate 'filter' in 'real time', reacting spontaneously and constructively ⟸⟹ to issues of language content as they arise in class.	Teacher has difficulty in operating 'filter' in 'real time', and in reacting spontaneously and constructively to issues of language content as they araise in class.
Teacher is able to employ metalanguage to support learning correctly and appropriately ⟸⟹	Teacher's use of metalanguage to support learning is incorrect and/or inappropriate (e.g. excessive, or at a level beyond the learners' comprehension).

Table 2 (from Andrews, 2001) summarises the potential impact of TLA, positive and negative, upon pedagogical practice. As in Table 1, the descriptors outline the opposite extremes, when each potential impact is in fact a matter of degree.

2.7 Conclusion

Teacher Language Awareness is an area of growing concern to language educators and to those attempting to set professional standards for L2

teachers. However, when concerns are expressed about L2 teachers' knowledge of/about language and reference is made to their language awareness, it seems to be assumed that there is a clear and shared understanding of what the term means. The view underlying the present chapter, however, is that TLA is often discussed in ways that overlook its complexity. In this chapter, therefore, an attempt has been made to analyse what TLA is, and to examine its impact on pedagogical practice. During the discussion, the following points have been noted:

- the central importance of subject-matter knowledge in any teacher's language awareness;
- the complexity of TLA, and its association with the close interrelationship between any teacher's subject-matter knowledge and language proficiency, particularly when the L2 is both the content and medium of instruction;
- the importance within TLA of the teacher's awareness of language from the learner's perspective;
- the relationship between TLA and the broader, more generic construct 'pedagogical content knowledge', of which TLA may be seen as a subcomponent;
- the importance of the declarative and procedural dimensions of TLA (i.e. the possession of subject-matter knowledge and the use the teacher makes of that knowledge);
- the relevance of TLA to all three options in language teaching discussed by Long and Robinson (1998): 'focus on formS', 'focus on form' and 'focus on meaning', with TLA viewed as being especially important when either of the first two options are employed, but also having the potential to impact on a teacher's effectiveness even when the 'focus-on-meaning' option has been selected;
- the positive and negative ways in which TLA may affect teacher behaviour;
- the influential role of TLA in the teacher's mediation of language input that is made available to learners in the classroom: the language contained in materials, the language produced by other learners and the language produced by the teacher;
- the factors that affect the application of TLA in pedagogical practice: language-related factors (the quality of a teacher's subject-matter knowledge and language proficiency); awareness of the learner; other 'professional' factors such as the teacher's beliefs about grammar and experience of teaching grammar; 'attitudinal' factors (for instance, self-confidence or lack of confidence about grammar, and readiness to engage seriously with content-related issues); and the teacher's perception of and response to 'contextual' factors in the work situation;

- how these factors might affect the impact of TLA on lesson preparation;
- the potential impact of TLA upon pedagogical practice.

The impact of TLA on pedagogical practice will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 5. In the meantime, the next chapter revisits a topic discussed briefly in chapter 1: the relationship between TLA, the centuries-old debate about the role and usefulness of explicit grammar teaching, and the more recent debate about the scope and nature of grammar.

Questions for discussion and reflection

1) How does a teacher's language awareness differ from his/her language proficiency? How are they interconnected in L2 teaching?
2) How far is it feasible to be aware of learner language development when you are dealing with a whole class? In your own teaching, can you think of a recent example when your (lack of) awareness of learner language development affected your handling of grammar?
3) What is the difference between the declarative and the procedural dimensions of Teacher Language Awareness? Why is the difference important?
4) Which of Long and Robinson's three 'options in language teaching' best describes the approach to L2 pedagogy that you are most familiar with? To what extent do you think TLA plays a role in the effective implementation of that approach?
5) Can you think of any examples from your recent teaching where your language awareness led you to make specific decisions about
   - your handling of language content in materials?
   - your treatment of language produced by learners?
   - the structuring of your own classroom utterances?

   With hindsight, do you think you made appropriate decisions? If not, why not?
6) How might contextual factors affect the application of the individual teacher's language awareness in pedagogical practice? In your own teaching situation, which contextual factors are most important, and what is their impact on TLA in practice?