
CHAPTER 8

Assessment in Second Language Teacher Education

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INTRODUCTION

THE ARC OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment, like many aspects of second language teacher education, is changing. Several factors are driving the change, among them how we understand the work of teaching generally, language teaching in particular, and more fundamentally the role of teachers' knowledge in teaching. There are also issues of identity and practice: who teachers are and what they are expected to teach in the face of changing student demographics, all of which are redefining theoretical frameworks for assessing knowledge-in-action. Thus, what might, at one point, have seemed like a straightforward notion – documenting what teachers know as language teachers – is becoming increasingly complex. When that knowledge was seen as unitary – knowing about language, its grammar, form, and uses – then assessing it could be equally straightforward: it was simply a matter of testing teachers' knowledge of content.

However, this formula – that content could equal competence – belied the messy complexity of language teaching itself. The challenge with language teaching is that teachers *use language to teach language*, so knowledge in language teaching is actually a dual phenomenon: It must relate (or blend) content and process in and through language. Language is the basis of the lesson – *what* the teacher is teaching – and it is the means of teaching it – *how* the teacher teaches that lesson. Added to this complexity is the more general challenge of assessing teaching as an activity: whether to document its processes (what the teacher is doing), its outcomes (what the students appear to have learned), or some combination of the two¹. There are also key choices to be made in assembling such documentation: whether the records are grounded externally in visible practices or combine, or indeed are based in, the teacher's self-assessment of their work.

The confluence all of these challenges and issues make the question of assessment in second language teacher education a rich, complex, and shifting enterprise. We gather these

complexities under what we call the arc of assessment, to capture the way these concerns, and indeed the central question of how best to document what language teachers know and do in relation to their own and their students' learning, are shifting over time.

SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

LOCATING THE FOCUS AND MANNER OF ASSESSMENT

This chapter addresses three questions: What is the focus of assessment in second language teacher education? How has that focus changed and why? And how have the ways of assessing this evolving focus changed and evolved? Together these questions frame the changing parameters of assessment in this field in terms of its *focus*, what is to be assessed, and the *manner*, or how, it is to be assessed. We suggest that these parameters of what and how are, at least to some extent, mutually defining since the profession has tended to assess *what* we could figure out *how* to assess. However, as the arc of assessment extends into complex questions of knowledge-in-use or -in-action, the focus has broadened and the processes have been reoriented so that the synergy between focus and manner is moving in new directions.

All of which calls for a broader definition of assessment. Increasingly critics recognize the interrelation of information gathered through tests and how that information is interpreted and used as part of the assessment process. Moss, Girard, and Haniford (2006) locate assessment in an ascending set of practices that include testing, assessment, and assessment practices. They follow the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* to connect “tests” and “assessments,” as follows:

... tests [are] an evaluative device or procedure in which a sample of an examinee's behavior in a specified domain is obtained and subsequently evaluated and scored using a standardized process. (AERA, APA, NCME, 1999: p. 3)

Assessment is a broader term for “. . . a process that integrates test information with information from other sources (e.g., information from the individual's social, educational, employment, or psychological history)” (AERA et al. 1999, p. 3). Combining these two terms, Moss et al. redefine *assessment practices* as “. . . a process of inquiry that integrates multiple sources of evidence, whether test-based or not, to support an interpretation, decision, or action.” (Moss et al. 2006: 152).

This widening perspective goes beyond test scores alone to put information and how it is used at the center of the assessment process. Moss (2008) argues that assessment involves

... questions or problems being addressed and the kinds of evidence needed / used to address them. . . . [F]urther that use of evidence to address questions or problems – to support interpretations, decisions, and actions – is an ongoing aspect of the interaction (whether formally designated as “assessment” or not). (p. 227)

These broader interactions, or “assessment practices,” she contends, “. . . do far more than provide information; they shape people's understanding of what is important to learn, what learning is, and who learners are” (p. 254). Including these so-called political judgments locates the specific information from tests in the contexts, or assessment practices, of its uses, which is key in understanding assessment in second language teacher education.

In second language teacher education, we include in this arc of assessment preservice teacher preparation and training, in-service professional development, and also judgments that are made through licensure and certification about entry into the profession. These latter functions are generally vested in policies and regulations at the national, regional, and perhaps local levels. They are part of state licensure regulations in the United States (e.g., Freeman and Riley 2005); in national qualification frameworks in countries like Australia, England, and South Africa for example; and in national regulatory structures in other countries (e.g., Korea, Mexico, Spain, etc). In addition, in the case of English language teaching, there are well-developed teacher assessment schemes, which are internationally portable, at least at the entry level (www.cambridgeesol.org/teach/). These preemployment assessments often lead to certification judgments, whereas assessments done during employment, such as formal and informal teacher supervision (Bailey 2006), can impact relicensure, promotion, and ongoing employment.

Our discussion traces three broad phases in the development of the *focus* of assessment in second language teacher education. We start from what we call the *conventional* view in which testing knowledge about language as content provides a proxy for teaching knowledge. This conventional view has developed into an increasingly *elaborated* view of language as content, which distinguishes proficiency in the language as a medium of instruction from knowledge about that language as content. Recently, we argue that there has been an *emerging* view that acknowledges that language functions as both the medium and the content of lessons through pedagogy. This emerging view considers as central the wider frame that Moss (2008) refers to above as “assessment practices”: “. . . people’s understanding of what is important to learn, what learning is, and who learners are” (p. 254). These three phases – the conventional, the elaborated, and the emerging – reorient the *manner* in which teacher knowledge in second language teaching has been assessed. By *manner*, we refer to the choices made about how to document what language teachers know and do, either directly, as through observation for example, or indirectly, as with self-assessment, portfolio, or a paper-and-pencil test.

OVERVIEW

THE DILEMMA OF LANGUAGE AS CONTENT

We have argued that assessment, then, interrelates a focus (*what*) with a manner (*how*); we want to turn now to the person: *who* is being assessed. In fact, assessment practices categorize people according to *what* knowledge is being documented and evaluated through the assessment. Defining who is being assessed is usually relatively straightforward, although as we will see in language teaching, those definitions depend on context. This may be because in second language teaching, the content, or what teachers know, is circumscribed and defined by the context. We call this complex interplay between the *who* and the *what* in assessing second language teachers, the dilemma of language as content.

WHO IS BEING ASSESSED

In second language teacher education, it is important to position the discussion of the individual teachers who are being assessed in context, since those judgments are, at least in part, a function of the individual teacher’s position within the broader social setting and workforce. From this perspective, we differentiate among three key sectors in this teaching force since assessment is generally approached differently depending on the aims and resources available in each sector.

The first, so-called public, sector refers to teachers in national or regional employment. The aim in this sector is to qualify and license teachers according to national or regional (e.g., state-level in the United States) determinations of pedagogical and subject matter competence (see Katz and Snow, Chapter 7). Most assessments in this public sector depend on a combination of the candidate's educational record (transcripts, course evaluations, and the like) and paper-and-pencil tests that are nationally or regionally administered. In certain situations, they can be complemented by self-assessment measures and representations of practice, as in paper or electronic portfolios, which assemble samples of the candidate's work accompanied by analytic and reflective statements. In all instances though, the assessment process, which is entirely *ex situ*, is separated from the candidate's actual teaching performance.

Within this first public sector, there is a further distinction in second language teaching between what are called "foreign," or "world," language teachers, who teach languages other than the national language, and "second," or "additional," language teachers, who teach students the language of instruction / schooling². Thus, in an English-speaking national context like the United States or Australia, "world foreign language," or LOTE, teachers may be teaching Mandarin Chinese, French, or Spanish, whereas "second," or "additional language," teachers are teaching English to children or adults who are speakers of other languages. In another national language context, such as Italy for example, "foreign language" teachers may be teaching English or German, whereas "second," or "additional language" teachers, if they are so licensed, would be teaching Italian to immigrant children. In these diverse cases, assessments of candidates usually combine review of their educational records, as documented by degrees, with certain *ex situ* written assessments, which are, at times, reflective self-assessments.

In addition, in this first sector, "foreign," or "world language," teachers can often be expected to teach the literature(s) and culture(s) of those languages (Hawkins 1981, McFerren 1988). So a foreign language teacher of French may be expected to teach the writings of Camus or Baudelaire, whereas an English as a foreign language teacher in certain state-school settings may be expected to teach Shakespeare or cultural information about living in New York City or London. However, these same teachers, if they are working in "second or additional language" settings – perhaps teaching French to immigrants in Quebec or English to children who are new to U.S. schools – would not be expected to be knowledgeable in those literatures, and the cultural information, although central, would be treated differently. This distinction between "foreign" and "second" language teachers complicates the task of mapping assessments of what these groups of teachers should know, especially since in some circumstances, the knowledge needed may shift when one is teaching a language as a foreign language in one context or teaching the same language as a second / additional language in another.

This complex interplay between content as language proficiency and as literary or cultural knowledge is often highlighted in the debate of the role of the native-speaking teacher. In contrast to other areas of education, the public sector in second language teaching is perhaps unique among subject matters in also having a second, "private," sector. This sector, which is made up largely of private, non- and for-profit institutions and schools, is generally un- or perhaps semi-regulated; in it, language teachers are hired based on their proficiency and social / cultural background³. These teachers are referred to as "native-speakers," usually because they were born in communities that used, and were educated in, the language they are teaching. This simplistic social / cultural qualification that equates being a native-speaker with being competent to teach has diminished a great deal in the last two decades. However, in some national and regional contexts, such judgments, which are completely unassessed, do persist, usually as a function of the market for the languages being taught (e.g., the demand for English in countries in east Asia, or recently for Mandarin

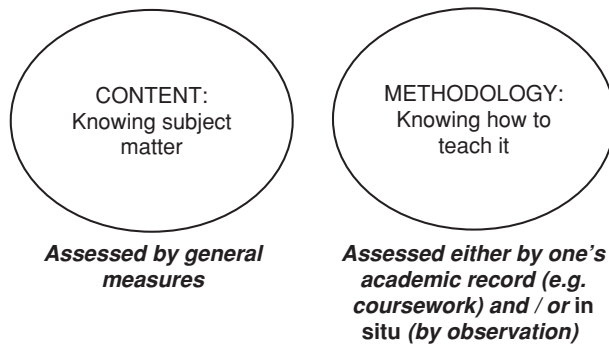


Figure 1 The conventional frame

Chinese in many communities in the United States). Pasternak and Bailey (2004) provide a useful way of charting this interrelation between teachers' language proficiency and their professional preparation (see Kamhi-Stein, Chapter 9, for more discussion).

There is a third sector, which is in many ways entirely unique to the teaching of English as a foreign language: the transnational entry-level teaching credentials offered by independent assessment authorities (e.g., the University of Cambridge ESOL Assessment's Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults [CELTA]). These credentials, which date from the 1970s, are well-established (Poulter 2007) and are undergirded by assessments that support, at least in theory, a globally portable credential. Assessments in this third sector are generally *in situ*, operating through the training design itself. Candidates are judged qualified by the trainers' ongoing judgments of their work, participation, and practice teaching in the course itself. These judgments are then corroborated through an external system of moderation. Usually an assessor, who is qualified in the curriculum but outside the particular running of the course, visits the site, meets the trainees, and assesses their work. In this way, these global qualification schemes provide checks and balances, which blend emic, or insider, judgments of the trainer with the etic, or outsider, corroboration of the assessor.

Although these three sectors share a common overall purpose in assessing what teachers know – to determine competence however described – they differ in the *focus* of assessment and in how content, or what is being assessed, is defined, which we discuss in the following section.

WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED

The question of what is being assessed has become increasingly complicated. Until the mid-1980s, knowledge-for-teaching tended to be defined almost exclusively as content knowledge. Pedagogical knowledge, usually based in teaching methodology, although it was recognized as part of what teachers might know to teach, was rarely focused on in general assessments. Knowledge-for-teaching was equated to knowing the subject matter – mathematics, chemistry, history, and so on.

This basic formulation (Figure 1: The conventional frame) obeyed a certain common-sense logic: If teachers did not know their content, they could not be qualified to teach it. Thus, given the manner of such assessments, which tended to be paper-and-pencil and often multiple-choice tests of basic content knowledge, testing content was a common surrogate for assessing knowledge-for-teaching.

During the 1980s, the logic of this conventional frame was challenged on several fronts. The question of whether subject-matter knowledge in itself was most important in teaching came under fire. In mathematics, for example, the work of scholars in the National

Center for Research on Teacher Learning (NCRTL) (e.g., Ball 1988; McDiarmid, Ball, and Anderson 1989) examined the premise that preservice teachers with university degrees in mathematics might be better prepared to teach than preservice teachers with specific preparation in mathematics education. For the former group of subject-matter / mathematics majors, the researchers found that “. . . their additional studies do not seem to afford them substantial advantage in explaining and connecting underlying concepts, principles, and meanings” (Ball 1988: 24).

The argument that subject-matter knowledge alone was not adequate to teach effectively brought to the fore students as learners. How, in the words of Stevick (1976), could a teacher claim to have taught, if students had not learned? This basic riddle formed the basis of Shulman’s now-broadly embraced construct of pedagogical content knowledge. Writing in 1986, Shulman described this new construct as “the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others” (p. 9). Placing subject matter in relation to learners, he argued that

pedagogical content knowledge also includes an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult: the conceptions and preconceptions that students of different ages and backgrounds bring with them to the learning of those most frequently taught topics and lessons. (Shulman 1986: 9)

Shulman’s proposal for a different knowledge construct was driven in part by the policy proposal in the United States to establish a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), which would “define what teachers should know and be able to do” and “support the creation of rigorous, valid assessments to see that certified teachers do meet those standards” (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986, as cited in NBPTS, 2007). The intent, as Katz and Snow (Chapter 7) argue, has been that standards – as putative exemplars of effective teachers’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes or dispositions – change the focus of teaching assessments from an evaluation of the end product to an “illumination” of the teaching process. Clearly teachers’ self-assessment is central in this process. Katz and Snow (Chapter 7) suggest that portfolios, such as those used in National Board Certification, are useful means of representing teacher learning and skills in this process.

CURRENT APPROACHES AND PRACTICES

While pedagogical content knowledge introduced an argument for making more complex judgments about teachers’ knowledge, it proved a difficult construct to enact both in teacher education and in undertaking assessments of classroom practice. Questions of how this emergent, contextual knowledge of teachers’ practices could be documented – let alone scored – raised both psychometric and hermeneutic issues. The teacher’s emic knowledge of practice called for a new theory of assessment (Moss 2008). Clearly the manner of such assessments also had to change, moving from simple written documentation to include video and/or observations, so that *ex situ* and *in situ* judgments could somehow be combined through elaborated portfolios and other means of documentation.

A key approach to addressing these hermeneutic issues has been to base assessment in a teacher’s own interpretation of his or her practice. Such assessments might be performed as a mark of “independent professionalism,” as Leung (Chapter 5) suggests. If teachers use only the “handed-down requirements” of sponsored “collective professionalism” in assessments of their work, the assessments may not generate continued professional learning. Such reflective examination of the process of teaching is often found in portfolios,

which can be mandated in relation to standards such as those posed by the United States NBPTS. There are also independent resources, such as the Web-based portfolios teachers can create with organizational support, such as the University of Cambridge ESOL Examination's online Teacher Portfolio (University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, 2006). In both cases as Katz and Snow (Chapter 7) argue, these self-assessment processes can serve to build a "common language" to discuss and improve the processes of teaching and learning.

Beyond these major challenges of implementation however, there is an even more fundamental one: The construct of pedagogical content knowledge may not work when it is applied in language teaching. Conceived to document the teaching of conventional school subjects (e.g., Grossman 1990), the construct may not function in the case of language. Simply put, although there may be one subject matter, there are two contents in language teaching: *Content*¹ is the language itself; and *content*² is knowledge about the language and its use (see Bartels, Chapter 12) as diagrammed here:

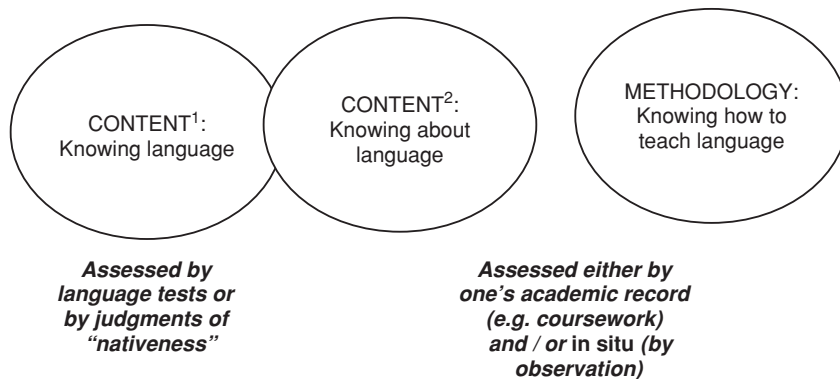


Figure 2 The elaborated frame (the conventional frame applied to language)

These two contents are in dynamic relation to each other. For example, a "foreign language" teacher who is teaching English in Brazil can teach English (*content*²) in / through English (*content*¹), but she or he can also teach English (*content*²) in / through Portuguese (*content*¹). Here the *content*², English, is the same; but it is framed and delivered in two different versions of *content*¹ – English or Portuguese. This raises the real question since both are languages: What is the content of the lesson? Although the ideology of modern language instruction, in contrast to grammar-translation teaching, may privilege teaching the language in the language (e.g., Rivers 1981), thus making *content*¹ synonymous with *content*², in fact, much foreign language instruction around the world generally presents the target language content (*content*²) via the medium of the home or national language, which becomes *content*¹.

This distinction between the two contents has become a central feature of assessing teachers' knowledge in second language teaching. Generally speaking, knowledge of and fluency in the target language (*content*¹) is taken as a proxy for knowledge about the language (*content*²) (Upshur 1971), although the reverse is not the case. Thus, in many settings, when English fluency can be referenced to birth and / or education, which happens in the concept of native speaker (Cook 1999; Davies 1996), a teacher candidate who is native is viewed a qualified to teach that language. However, other candidates, who may have in-depth grammatical and meta-linguistic knowledge, but who have not spoken or used the language from birth or perhaps in daily interactions, are seen as less qualified.

In this way, language creates a dilemma in the content, in measuring the mastery of subject-matter. By the late 1980s in the United States, requirements existed for either full

certification or endorsements in teaching most “foreign” languages. These assessments included tests in the target language, methodology, and cultural knowledge (McFerren 1988). Over the last 20 years, similar requirements have been developed for ESOL teachers, although these requirements have often been localized at state, or even district, levels. Presently, standardized tests such as the ETS *Praxis* battery, test language knowledge, metalinguistic knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge. Though these exams do not include an oral proficiency component for the examinee, they purport to test student language production, linguistic theory, pedagogical methods, assessment techniques and cultural issues, and professional issues (Educational Testing Service, 2005). Though not nationally required, the *Praxis* is frequently a state requirement in the United States for teacher certification in ESOL and foreign languages.

The dilemma of language as content has been played out in transnational or global assessment schemes as well. In 2005, the University of Cambridge ESOL Assessments developed the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT), which is now offered in 21 countries. Similar in some ways to the *Praxis* battery, the TKT has three independent modules that address language and background to language learning and teaching, planning lessons and use of resources for language teaching, and managing the teaching and learning process (University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, 2008; also Spratt, Pulverness, and Williams 2005). While both the TKT and the *Praxis* batteries appear to assess knowledge that could only be acquired through professional training in language teaching, they also include knowledge that an individual might acquire simply via an “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie 1975) of being a student in a language classroom and in school more generally.

The demand for national and transnational assessments of teaching knowledge in language teaching has been fueled in part by continuing policy moves to setting standards for teacher quality. Most major national systems in the Anglophone countries, with the notable exception of the United States, vest these quality standards for teachers generally in their national qualifications frameworks (e.g., Australia, England, New Zealand, and South Africa). However, the specifics are often murky, and there is usually no national curriculum for educating ESOL teachers, perhaps because it is a second / additional language in these settings.

The challenge of establishing national standards for language teaching as a basis for assessment is exceedingly complex because of the nature of language as content. When it was defined primarily in terms of its grammar, language was a relatively stable construct. However, as these definitions have evolved to account for the speakers’ potential purposes in using language, such as those outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference in the countries of the European Union for example (Council of Europe, 2001), the construct of language itself has become blurred (Larsen-Freeman and Freeman 2008). There is no longer one standard against which language can be assessed; rather there can be multiple standards that hinge on the speaker’s purpose and use.

ISSUES AND DIRECTIONS

The evolving construct of language has further blurred the distinction between knowledge of methodology and knowledge of content. The latter, knowledge of content, has depended as we said on a relation between language as medium, which we have called content¹, and language as subject matter, content². This distinction is played out both in theory – what does it mean to know the language *versus* to know about the language – to determine qualifications, and in how teachers teach in classrooms. When the relationship conflated

notions of linguistic fluency or proficiency with language knowledge, then knowledge of content seemed relatively straightforward to assess. Knowledge of methodology, although it was usually treated separately, was seen as assessable through paper-and-pencil tests given *ex situ*, outside the classroom. However, recent work on knowledge for / in teaching has clarified that these distinctions between content and methodology are not viable in assessing the work of teaching. Research in teaching mathematics in elementary schools, for example, has found that parsing assessments into teacher's knowledge of methodology and knowledge of content as separate phenomena does not capture what teachers seem to know in order to teach (Ball, Hill, and Bass 2005). This research has, in a sense, extended and deepened Shulman's (1986) construct of pedagogical content knowledge, by focusing on assessments that can document the relationship between content and methodology in the act of teaching.

The problem is that, as we mentioned previously, language teaching presents a doubly complicated version of this relationship. Because methodology is delivered in language, if the language of delivery is the language that the students are learning, then methodology becomes content and vice versa. This is the interrelationship between we have called content¹ (or medium of instruction) and content² (or subject matter). As understanding of knowledge of content moves beyond a focus on teachers' linguistic or metalinguistic knowledge, work is starting to focus on knowledge of language in and for teaching. Addressing the issue of content², Larsen-Freeman and Freeman (2008) argue that when language becomes a subject in school, the definitions and relationships between methodology and knowledge change. They call this phenomenon "subject-languages." These are

... languages that are designated as subject matter within the school curriculum but are not the medium of instruction in those settings . . . As subject matter they have certain teaching practices and learning expectations associated with them. (p. 175)

Because language now moves fluidly within and between local and global contexts (via technology and other means), Larsen-Freeman and Freeman point out that when language "goes to school," the institution of school shapes the way language works even as the outer sociopolitical frames are also redefining its values and uses. Thus subject-language, which exists itself as a sort of "normative fiction" (Larsen-Freeman and Freeman 2008), is increasingly challenged as an assessable construct because it is global and local simultaneously. So, for example, in the case of lexis, whose usage is considered correct? Which word choice or vocabulary?

These complexities in teachers' understanding and use of subject-language, and the ways in which language teachers must combine content, medium, and pedagogy, are yet not captured in current assessments. Further, an uneven patchwork of teacher education programs and regulatory groups at national and local levels exacerbate these problems in defining "professional" knowledge as a basis for assessments. In most national contexts, training for elementary and secondary teachers, as Barduhn and Johnson (Chapter 6) write, occurs in two different institutional arenas (in many countries, teacher training colleges are responsible for the former whereas universities are in charge of the latter). These groups of teachers are prepared differently, and often have with different degrees of exposure to and training in the knowledge and practices they need to teach effectively. In discussing the varying ways that teachers are deemed qualified internationally, Barduhn and Johnson call for "fairer and more rigorous assessments." Further, they note that, in comparison to the standardized assessments of teaching as observable

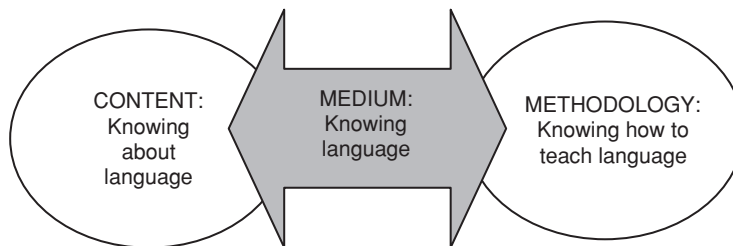


Figure 3 Emergent view – Language knowledge for / in teaching

behavior used conventionally, portfolios and other reflective documents may be “fairer” in documenting the contextual and idiosyncratic aspects that make teaching practice effective.

Further, what it means to know and to use language is being understood as increasingly complex. Through the lens of emergentist views, language is seen as a dynamic system, which changes and adapts in use (Ellis and Larsen-Freeman 2006). In contrast to conventional grammar-based views, when language is seen as an emerging system, there is no inherent progression or sequential movement toward a target proficiency. Instead, these thinkers argue that as users, learners assemble resources in the moment to act on a particular task and achieve a particular outcome. This view of the unstable and nonstatic nature of language has clear implications for assessment of language competence, and of language as subject matter. How teachers engage in the moment of interaction through the medium of language and use of their pedagogical understandings—how they play the language game in class—is connected to three inextricably linked domains we have discussed: knowing about language as content; using the language as *medium* in teaching; and knowing how to teach it, or *methodology*.

Figure 3 suggests a subtly different framework of language knowledge for / in teaching, one that combines knowledge of content and medium as these are enacted in and through processes of methodology. We call the third framework *emerging* because it represents how language as content emerges in the processes of classroom teaching and learning. Because those processes are locally shaped and nonsystematic, emergent knowledge-for-teaching will, like the construct of pedagogical content knowledge that preceded it, emphasize the teaching in context (Lampert 2003). Perhaps the clearest example of this emerging framework would be work on content-and-language-integrated-learning, or CLIL. This reform, which is prevalent in Europe, is similar to what is known as content-based instruction in North America (e.g., Brinton, Weshe, and Snow 2003). It proposes that language can be taught through other school subjects, or contents, such that students are learning both the content and the language simultaneously (Mehisto, Frigols, and Marsh 2008). In one sense, these reforms are seeking to expedite learning by integrated language and content in the teaching process; in another sense, they seem to hinge on the idea, which is key in this third framework, that language is not itself actually content, but rather a medium, or means, of delivering instruction, or providing learning opportunities in content. So a high school geometry lesson taught in English to Dutch-speaking students in the Netherlands integrates their learning of mathematics and language.

This emergent framework also offers a new and useful lens for conceptualizing assessment in second language teacher education. In this view, knowing a language is a medium that interacts with both the content of knowing about the language and with methodology, or knowing how to teach it. And methodology is a dynamic process of interacting with what students know and do. Since the relationships among these three domains is neither

sequential nor cumulative, they cannot be logically separated for the purposes of assessment, as is done currently, and for that matter in teacher education. Rather, assessment of language knowledge for/in teaching is likely to become an increasingly messy and emergent process, particularly as the stakes of such judgments are increasing.

How can we know the dancer from the dance?

—W. B. Yeats

All of this repositions the challenge of assessment in second language teacher education from one of testing what teachers know in and about language, to assessing the activity of what they are able to do in teaching language. But in activity, we cannot separate the content of language from the processes of how it is being taught and hopefully learned. In the often quoted last stanza of his poem, “Among School Children,” W. B. Yeats writes about this challenge of teasing apart elements of an activity that are fundamentally inseparable:

Labour is blossoming or dancing where
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul . . .
. . .
O chestnut-tree, great rooted-blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

We have argued that the arc of assessment in second language teacher education has reached a point that it must attend to the complex intersections between the teacher and teaching, between the dancer and the dance. Teaching is not simply combining content with process, but classroom processes create content in language teaching. Developing new and more comprehensive theories that locate testing with the broader assessment practices of how information is gathering, interpreted, measured, and used, as well as new forms and formats of assessment that can account for this complexity is the major challenge for second language teacher education.

As teacher education in other subject areas grapples more and more with the language-related challenges in assessment, such as how to describe and analyze teaching in language and how to evaluate those descriptions (Moss 2008), second language teacher educators are uniquely well positioned to offer insights into the complexities of these interaction of language and teaching. This poses the central question: How do we use understanding of language to inform these challenges of documenting and assessing classroom practices across multiple forms of teacher education?

Some possible moves in response to this question will include: challenging forms of testing and assessment – both individually or institutionally – that rely on simplistic models of teacher knowledge; developing assessments that truly integrate multiple sources of evidence to gauge teacher preparation and effectiveness; and developing assessments that account for language as both medium and content. These issues, and others like them, will increasingly occupy our thinking as English as a global lingua franca changes our views of what language is and how it works. All of which brings us back to the person of the teacher and how she represents language as content in the act of teaching. It is the challenge of complex assessments to judge the activity of teaching through the person who does it, or in Yeats’s words “. . . to know the dancer from the dance.”

Suggestions for further reading

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Notes

- ¹ Some teacher quality schemes simply equate teaching and performance to student learning outcomes as measured on standardised tests. Pay-for-performance schemes are based on this simplistic formulation that teaching causes learning (see Freeman and Johnson 2004).
- ² Also referred to as teachers of languages-other-than-English (LOTE) in Australia.
- ³ The ARELS (Association of Registered English Language Services) organization in Britain, and the ELICOS sector in Australia are two exceptions, in which institutions have come together to monitor quality among members and thus to be self-regulated.