

Language Teacher Education: World Stage Patterns

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This manuscript developed from a keynote address focusing on patterns in language teacher education. Participants individually and collectively were challenged to consider their role(s) on the world stage of language education through three patterns: context, content, and professional development. They were further encouraged to consider the relationships within and among the three patterns and invited to further sense-make and make meaning during the conference with their presentations and interactions. The keynote was delivered 17 May 2019 at the 36th International Conference on English Teaching and Learning by Taiwan's English Teaching and Research Association (ETRA) held on the campus of Tunghai University, Taichung, Taiwan.

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INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare's "As you like it" (Act 2, Scene 7) gives one of an oft quoted text that has been chosen as this year's conference's theme. Jacques describes to Duke Senior:

All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances, And one man [women] in his [her] time plays many parts, His [Her] acts being seven ages.

Shakespeare then goes on describing the seven ages (infant, schoolboy, lover, soldier, etc.). Huberman (1989), not unlike Shakespeare, uses a life cycle lens to consider a teacher's conception, growth, development, decline, and/or withdrawal that captures Shakespeare's "Ages" for teachers. Capturing a "World Stage" for (language) teacher education and (language) teacher educators appears to be much murkier; ages and stages, at least normed ones, are slowly attended to and emerging. This isn't to say that they exist or not; it is to share that there is much less evidence than one anticipates when perusing and interrogating the literature, experiences, and realities of (language) teacher educators.

First, though, I want to make a small caveat. I want to thank Professor Chi-Chang Tsai for selecting this year's theme. As I learned about this conference theme's selection and started thinking about today's talk, I was reminded of one Savignon's (1983) elements of a communicative curriculum: "You'll Be, I'll be: Theatre Arts." It isn't lost on Professor Savignon as she explains her rationale for this component: "On this stage we play many roles in our daily lives, roles for which we improvise scripts from the models we observe around us. Parent, child, sister, brother, teacher, student, employer, employee, friend, and foe—all are roles that imply certain prescribed ways of behaving and speaking" (p. 206). I harkened back to my experiences with theatre and second languages. I played the lead in Gunther Grass' "Onkel, Onkel" during a summer school semester in Oregon during my undergraduate studies. I learned lines, we presented the play, it was videotaped; I got to share it with students that I eventually taught. I wonder how many things from that role and that experience still influence my second language skills and my ideas as a teacher educator?! A second experience was watching my 10th Grade English class in Germany present in English, Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest." Perhaps that is where I first encountered the sociolinguistics and socio-cultural norms of an "English" English; by a group of German students presenting an English play in English. The third experience is one I read about where early childhood students were putting on the opera "Siegfried" at their elementary school in Washington state. The narrator, Robert Fulghum, described the exciting hub-bub of putting on a show and how the children talked about learning their lines. As one child with a major role said, I say the line, I say it to myself, I think about, and then I repeat the line. It works like that. The genuine enthusiasm Mr Fulghum shared encouraged me to want to make sure that I had my students participate in a play of some kind. What were your experiences with "Theatre Arts" in your second language acquisition history? What are the experiences you are giving for your students' history in the "Theatre Arts" communicative curriculum component?

Pattern One: Context

Learning and education environments abound. Teacher educators, particularly find themselves at least dealing with universities, schools, and education agencies. Contexts matter (e.g., Johnson, 2019) and working in various contexts alerts one to the various sociolinguistics and socio-cultures in which various stakeholders involve themselves. The patterns within the context afford and constrain teaching, learning, thinking, and knowledge (building). The patterns nurture

possibilities and challenges while people practice learning by themselves, with each other, with book authors, with content, with internet resources applications, and other sundries.

More recently the profession's fine-tuning awareness of national, regional (e.g., state), and local (e.g., school district) education offices attends to policies, regulations, and rules. Professional organizations, government, non-government, and international organizations provide grist for educational content standards and guidelines. The numerous threads among various entities weave patterns within contexts where students, teachers, and teacher educators daily participate. Such patterns provide insights about educational contexts as social organisms that continue to shape practices and studies about and in learning environments (e.g., Johnson, 2019, Lortie, 1985; Rosenholtz, 1989; Waller, 1932).

Teachers and teacher educators, in particular work in tandem to develop and train teaching workforces in at least university and school environments (e.g., Southgate et al., 2013). Teachers and teacher educators' roles (e.g., characters) are providing interesting conundrums to clarify who is a teacher educator and the work of teacher educators (e.g., Caspersen, 2013; Mayer et al., 2011). As Kleinsasser (2017) notes about teachers and teacher educators' scholarship:

Teacher research and teacher educator research are two separate areas of scholarship, yet are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The professional literature continues to grapple with how to discuss and write about these two areas; nonetheless, the converging, diverging, and inconsistent traits and issues among them require further weaving and – perhaps – untangling. (pp. 1044-1045)

This first pattern of context portends numerous stages in the world where language education is practiced. There are local, regional, national, and international casts playing their parts in an assortment of teaching and learning theatres.

Pattern Two: Content Skills

A second pattern concerns how languages are perceived and categorized. When one looks over the more recent scholarship or even checks titles of presentations at this conference, it is clear there remains a focus on the four skills of language—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. When I first started studying language teacher education at the master's level I read Rivers' (1981) lengthy chapters of her theoretical and practical insights concerning the four skills. These four skills are represented through various lenses that continue promoting a focus on vocabulary and grammar. Nonetheless, as Paulston (1970; 1971; 1974) shared so many years ago in her classification of structural drills, one can develop these skills through mechanical, meaningful, and communicative patterns demonstrating a bridge between structural mechanisms and potential communicative language use.

Communicative Competence

Languages have been further described through ideas of communicative competence. Over the years there have been various models that describe communicative competence including grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic competences (Canale & Swain, 1980). These four competences have then been further developed and parsed.

For instance, a pedagogically motivated model included linguistic, actional, discourse, sociocultural, and strategic competences along with taxonomies that assist with examples and possibilities (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). Hall (2001) developed her ideas of communicative development and focused on communication standards including the modes of interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. To be sure there are others. Teachers' perceptions and ideas of communicative competence add even more variation to theoretical and practical discussions surrounding what language teaching and learning are, what they can be, and their learning environment applications (e.g., Savignon, 2002a; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). Students and teachers' development of communicative competence and their perceptions of communicative language teaching and learning expand language experiences.

Curricula, Pedagogies, and Assessments

Schubert (1986) suggests curriculum can be divided into three main paradigms that include perennial analytic (e.g., Tyler's rationale), practical inquiry, and critical praxis. All three differently address what Schubert offers as the three basic curriculum questions, "What knowledge is most worthwhile? Why is it worthwhile? How is it acquired or created?" (p. 1). I often return to Schubert's paradigms regularly to take stock of what is happening in teacher education generally, and language teacher education specifically. I relate a perennial analytic paradigm to language curriculum that focuses on the perennial aspects of language skills--listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The issues are persistently attended to yearly in quite a few classrooms around the globe. I relate a practical inquiry paradigm to Savignon's (1983; 1997) communicative curriculum components that include language analysis, language for a purpose, my language is me, theatre arts, and beyond the classroom. Teachers and students focus on active language learning that does not disregard grammar but includes additional communicative events that promote interactions and language use. I relate a critical praxis to ideas about critical language pedagogy (e.g., Kumaravadivelu, 2001; 2003, among others) and learning opportunities described by the New London Group (1996) as situated practice, overt practice, transformed practice, and critical framing. Hall (2001) nicely applies these theoretical ideas into potential practical language classroom activities and pedagogy. Hall astutely applies these opportunities of learning to potential daily practices. For instance, she describes situated practice as giving "students the chance to learn on their own, to figure out what they need to do and know as they attempt to accomplish something, and to assess their success and make changes or at least recognize where changes are needed" (p. 52). She characterizes overt instruction as engaging "learners in intentional, systematic practice of the skills and knowledge needed for competent participation in their communicative activities" (p. 52). She promotes critical framing as helping "learners stand apart from and understand their activities in terms of their historical, social, cultural, political, and ideological contexts. (p. 54). Hall adroitly melds theory and practice, offering not only examples, but also opening spaces for teachers and students to involve themselves in potential learning opportunities that all create and transform.

The more occasions they have to play with language and through language, to indulge in explorations of language use, to discover and try out different voices and invent new means and goals for self-expression and connecting with others, the richer and more complex their communicative development in the target language will be. (p. 55)

These (brief) examples share affordances and constraints concerning curriculum and pedagogies. They illustrate an abundance of possibilities and alert challenging aspects for connecting curriculum with language assessments and tests.

Savignon (2002b) has already carefully noted that “Time and again, assessment appears to be the driving force behind curricular innovations. In many settings, demands for accountability along with a positivistic stance that one cannot teach that which cannot be described and measured by a common yardstick continue to influence program content and goals” (p. 211). Earl (2013) echoes these and additional concerns when she articulates for a wider education profession her ideas about assessment as learning (developing and supporting metacognition for students), assessment for learning (summative to formative assessment, creating descriptions in the service of learning), and assessment of learning (grading and reporting). Earl crafts a complexity that involves teachers and students to consider testing and assessments attending to curriculums and pedagogies. She finds feedback central to assessment *for* learning that can be formal, informal, individual, collective, descriptive, and/or formal. Others also highlight the significance of feedback, yet signal the need for additional research and practices (e.g., Lipnevich & Smith, 2018).

Curricula, pedagogies, and assessments along with skills and communicative competence provide a formidable pattern for a world stage. How students experience language content through skills, communication, curricula, pedagogies, and assessments influences what they perceive constitutes language and language learning. How students and teachers interact provide for various performances that make up the dramaturgy of potential content pattern(s).

Pattern Three: Professional Development

Professional development offers a third pattern with literature describing how language teachers and language teacher educators keep up with current (and past) trends. Avalos’ (2011) oft cited work remains suitable now and gives a valuable synopsis of the need to discuss and study the professional development of teachers (and teacher educators) that include “the history and traditions of groups of teachers, the educational needs for their student populations, the expectations of their education systems, teachers’ working conditions, and the opportunities to learn that are open to them” (p. 10). Professional development continues to receive attention as workforces grow, develop, and change within and outside educational environs (e.g., Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Kyndt, 2016; Ping et al., 2018). The topics for professional development, include among other things, current topics being published and discussed. For instance there is continued interest and growing scholarship in the area of technology and online language learning and teaching, etc. (e.g., Dukuzumuremyi, & Siklander, 2018; Galvador, & McGarr, 2019; Jonker et al., 2018; Khlaif, et al., 2019; Kleinsasser, 2018; Lantz-Andersson et al., 2018). The research on teacher and teacher educator identity continues to multiply (e.g., Assenet al., 2018; Avidov-Ungar & Forkosh-Baruch, 2018; Brown & Heck, 2018; Hayik, & Weiner-Levy, 2019; Siuty, 2019; van der Wal et al., 2019; Yuan & Mak, 2018). Self-efficacy also breeds various insights (e.g., Erin, & Yeşilbursa, 2019; Harper et al., 2018; Kleinsasser, 2014; Malo-Juvera et al., 2018; Yada et al., 2018; Yada et al., 2019), while increasing structural equation modeling (SEM) (Yin & Huang, 2021) receives attention to its focus and methods.

Assessment literacy is sprouting valuable concerns and possibilities for the wider education arena (e.g., Box et al., 2015; Deneen et al., 2019; Heitnik et al., 2016; Kippers et al., 2018; Klug et al., 2018; Pastore & Andrade, 2019), while assessment for learning receives attention especially for second language arenas (e.g., Davison, 2013; Lam 2015).

To be sure, professional development will need to attend to both teachers and teacher educators as they deal with the topical and salient features being studied theoretically and practically. Attention will need to be given to what ideas and materials between teachers and teacher educators overlap and what ones do not. It will be interesting to see how tangling and untangling various features among teachers and teacher educators gives rise to both areas of professional development and scholarship. Additionally, it is important to highlight how second language education can add to the debate and concerns of various general education issues; tangling and untangling discipline areas could also garner salient findings from the numerous theatres where motifs and themes are practiced, theorized, acted upon, and professionally developed by casts of millions across the global stages of second language teaching and learning.

Relationships

The three patterns of context, content, and professional development will thrive on types of relationships among stakeholders within each and between all three. Casts will be joined by producers, directors, and communities, among others, to develop relationships that afford or constrain educational environments and language learning and teaching. For instance, Kennedy (2016) suggests that “We need pedagogies that engage students in reasoning about practice, rather than merely telling them about bodies of knowledge or prescribing a set of practices for them to adopt” (p. 10). The same could be said for teachers and teacher educators. Discussing the relevance of narrative inquiry and the task of narrative inquirers, Clandinin et al. (2018) discuss active relationships among persons. “Narrative inquirers are studying our experiences in relation with the experiences of participants” (p. 16). There needs to be expanding attention also in practices where the profession studies the various cast members experiences among each other to attend to and document the landscapes in which people interested in language teaching and learning find themselves. There is ample space to participate in narrative inquiry practices to help understand, document, and develop questions about relationships while being involved in the education of languages at various levels, in various countries, with various people (e.g., Kleinsasser, 2013). The more I participate in teaching, learning, and research, the more central relationships become in understanding what challenges, constraints, and affordances persons (e.g., cast members) encounter; in short, what works and why? There remains much to do on the world stage, but local theatres can enhance knowledge by situating their relationships in the wider international literature and scholarship. Practices and theories develop and grow as cast members share what composes their theatre productions of language learning and teaching.

Closure

It is exciting to be with you here in Taiwan at this conference. It really is just another “act” in each of our plays. We come together to discuss, learn, and develop. We consider what is possible, sometimes not. We consider what we can each do to enhance language teaching and learning for

our students and ourselves. We take stock of where we are in the life of our language education journey. Yes, “All the World’s a Stage” and it great to part of that with you here where we involve ourselves with the theme: “English Language Teaching and Learning on the World Stage.” I invite you to participate, share, and consider opportunities, possibilities, and understandings of the three patterns of context, content, and professional development. I bid your inquiry into relationships, yours and others. And I welcome the time to make-meaning with you at this particular time, on this particular international stage.

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