

Teacher Language Awareness as an Important Element in Teacher Professionalism and Autonomy

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Being an autonomous person means being responsible for one's actions and accepting the consequences of one's behavior. Autonomy introduced to teaching comprises a cluster of behavior capacities characteristic of human interdependence. In the field of teaching, the development of autonomy is pursued as a matter of conscious intention, and its presence can be recognized in teacher's behaviors which are shaped by reflection. This paper focuses on teacher language awareness (TLA) and the relationship between TLA and other dimensions of teacher knowledge. It aims at presenting TLA as one of the key elements of teacher professional development and autonomy. The author focuses on the definition of TLA and discusses a number of factors contributing towards the complexity of TLA. Subsequently the role of TLA in structuring input for learners is analyzed as well as the relationship between TLA and pedagogical practice, and factors affecting the application of TLA in the classroom. Moreover, connections between teachers' cognitions and practices in teaching grammar will be presented. Finally, TLA and teacher professionalism will be summarized.

Keywords: teacher professionalism, subject-matter, knowledge, communicative language ability, pedagogical practice

Introduction

This paper analyses teacher language awareness (hence TLA) as one of the fundamental components of teacher expertise. Based on the description of data brought to light in several studies, it highlights the close relationship between TLA and teacher professional knowledge base. Given the increased recognition in education that subject-matter knowledge is a key element of teacher professionalism, it is argued that TLA should be seen as equally important for the teacher of a foreign language.

What Is Teacher Language Awareness?

Thornbury (1997) gave the following definition of the language awareness of teachers: "The knowledge that teachers have of the underlying systems of the language that enables them to teach effectively" (p. x). This definition clearly narrows down TLA to subject-matter knowledge and its impact upon teaching. Undoubtedly, subject matter knowledge plays a central role in a teacher's language awareness; nevertheless, this awareness is far more complex and entails more aspects which shape it. Andrews (2001) discussed a number of factors which

influence the impact of TLA on pedagogical practice. The author refers to an in-depth study of the language awareness of a group of teachers of English who describe difficulties they experienced in teaching grammar to their students. The most common problem the teachers face is the difficulty in giving their students clear explanations concerning particular grammar structures. The teachers admit that these problems are caused by either their own limitations in the explicit knowledge of grammar, or by the fact that they are not selective enough in giving simple and precise explanations. This shows that analyzing language from the learner's perspective is also an important aspect of TLA. Andrews (2001) claimed that the data from the teachers' extracts suggest that there are a number of factors contributing towards the complexity of TLA. He emphasized the relationship between a teacher's subject-matter knowledge and his or her communicative language ability (CLA). This close relationship becomes very clear when a teacher prepares lessons with a grammar focus and reflects upon lesson content. In such a situation, a teacher encompasses both his or her explicit knowledge of the relevant grammar rules and his or her own communicative use of a particular grammar structure. Then, when the teacher actually teaches this grammar item in the classroom, s/he not only draws on the subject-matter knowledge but also "filters" it through his or her CLA. Andrews (2001) argued that: "Much of the complexity of TLA derives from the uniqueness of the situation in language teaching, where content and medium of instruction are inextricably intertwined" (p. 77). Taking this into consideration, he specifies the areas of special concern which seem to influence TLA:

First, the teacher's language awareness includes two basic elements: subject-matter knowledge and CLA. The interaction between them involves reflection, and the subject-matter knowledge is mediated through the teacher's CLA.

Second, there is a difference between the language awareness of an educated user of a particular language and a teacher of that language. It is not enough for the teacher to be an effective communicator, which means possessing implicit and explicit language knowledge and an ability to draw on this knowledge, in both spoken and written form. The teacher is expected to

...reflect upon that knowledge and ability, and upon her knowledge of the underlying systems of the language, in order to ensure that her students receive maximally useful input for learning. These reflections bring an extra cognitive dimension to the teacher's language awareness, which informs the tasks of planning and teaching. (Andrews, 1999a, p. 163)

Third, the teacher's language awareness is "metacognitive" because it involves not only knowledge of subject-matter and CLA, but also reflection upon these two elements, which constitutes the basis for the teacher's planning and teaching.

The Role of TLA in Structuring Input for Learners

There are three main sources of input for learners: the teacher, other learners, and materials. Andrews (1999a) argued that the teacher's language awareness can interact with these three sources, and that the language produced by them is "filtered" through the TLA, thus affecting the kind of input which is finally made available to the learner. The extent to which TLA interacts with the three main sources of input can vary considerably, due to a number of factors. For example, time constraints play a major role in the teacher's ability to select and filter the input from the chosen teaching materials at the planning stage, and influence the amount of filtered input

during the lesson. The extent of the teacher's explicit knowledge, his or her confidence, and the awareness of how to make use of that knowledge may also heavily influence the quality of the filtered input derived from the three sources. This process is clearly presented in Figure 1.

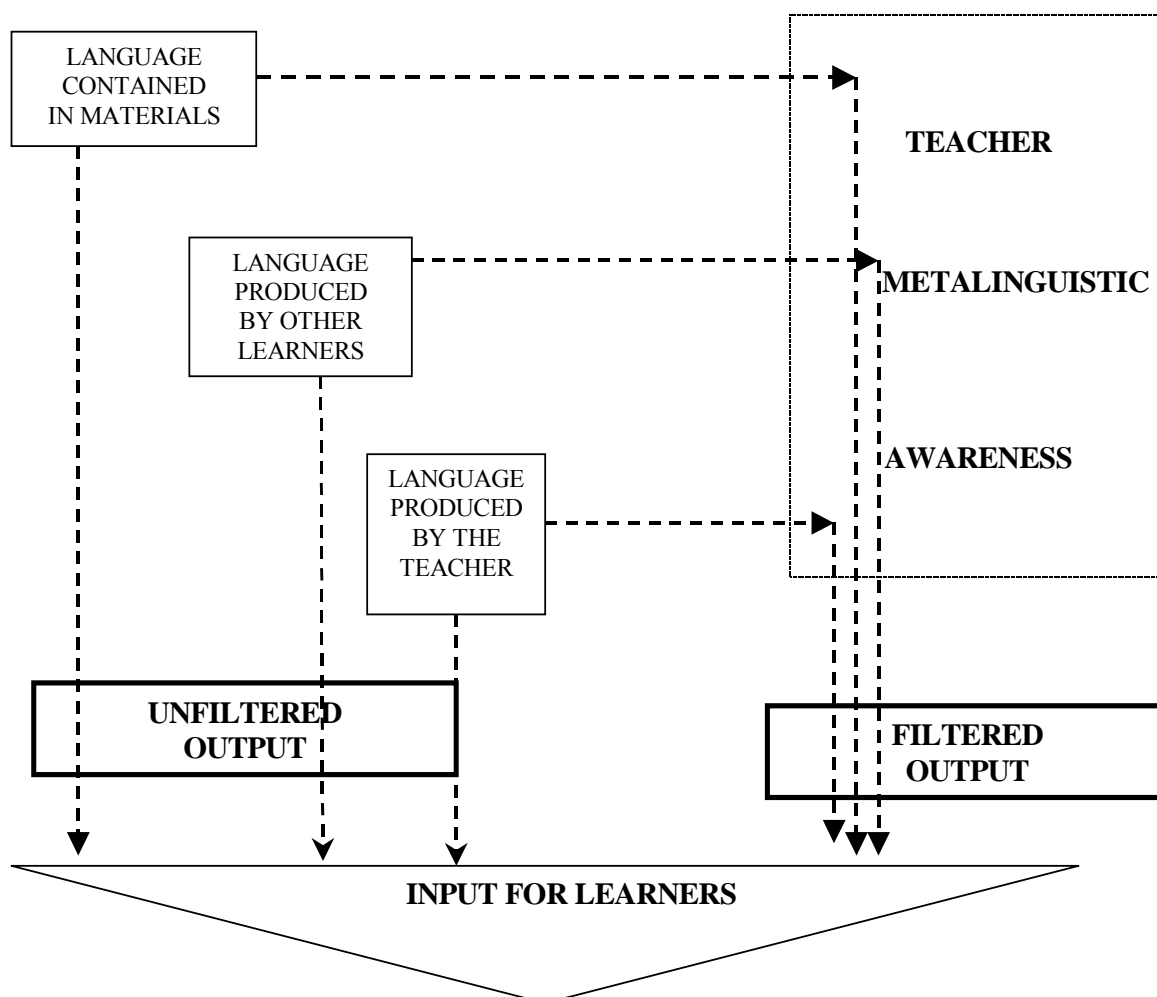


Figure 1. The role of teacher language awareness in structuring input for learners. Adapted from Andrews, 2001, p. 80.

Andrews (1999a) further attempted to shed more light on the impact of TLA upon input for learning. In this study, he discussed teachers representing different levels of language awareness. Although they had some teaching experience, they had not undergone any professional training. The teachers were observed on two occasions, when they were giving a grammar-based lesson as part of their regular teaching practice; in addition, each teacher was also interviewed. The first teacher had a well-developed implicit knowledge of grammar and she was a fluent communicator both in speaking and writing. Nevertheless, she was not confident about her explicit knowledge, which, in her opinion, was down to her experience at school involving very little explicit teaching of grammar, with the result that she learned very little grammar from her teachers. In her teaching, she therefore concentrated on teaching the basic rules and having the students memorize them, rather than using a communicative approach; she implemented a deductive way of teaching grammar. The following example illustrates her attitude:

I'll give them a sheet of paper with tables. The tables tell them the rules of the changes... from direct speech to indirect speech. The first one will be the changes of tenses and then the changes of time and place, in the next one it will be the modal verbs. And then I'll write down some of the sentences on the blackboard and ask them to change it for me into reported speech. (Andrews, 1999a, p. 168)

On being observed, this teacher followed this pattern to the letter, with the limitations of her TLA becoming apparent on several occasions. Furthermore, she accepted the students' lack of response as an indication that they had understood her explanation. In an interview that followed the observed lesson this teacher admitted to having limitations in her TLA, and gave another example which showed how far this teacher was reliant on materials produced by others, and the lack of confidence in her TLA.

The second teacher, in contrast, claimed to like grammar and enjoy teaching it, although he did not learn much grammar from his teachers at school. His past experience as a learner led him to conclude that the reason why students were not interested in grammar lay in the fact that they were not exposed to English outside the classroom, and very rarely used it in real life situations. Therefore, his approach to teaching grammar was exam-oriented and generally based on the textbook. This was exemplified in his structuring input for the learners, and the fact that he did not recognize a major learning difficulty for his students, and did not help them in any way to make connections between the future continuous tense and other ways of expressing the future which had previously been taught. The third teacher described in the study was more experienced than the other two and demonstrated a more developed TLA, which had a positive influence upon the input made available for learning. This teacher described his own English learning experience as very traditional and grammar-focused. Yet he did not employ the same approach in his teaching, because he acknowledged the fact that the students had changed, and he feared they would not accept this way of teaching:

Students are not patient as we were in the past. If we kept using that old method, certainly they will be very bored to do your work at all. You have to handle the discipline problem a lot if you keep using that method. (Andrews, 1999a, p. 173)

Therefore, this teacher introduced more interesting activities and tried to create a more student friendly atmosphere, so as to engage the students' interest and attention. The observed lessons showed that his TLA contributed positively to the quality of the input made available for learning. It was clearly seen in his way of direct use of learner output as a source of input into his teaching; therefore, the learner output was "filtered" through his TLA in order to make it available as input for learning. The following example illustrates his attitude:

...Rewrite them in a positive way. Besides the word *can*, what can we use? What other words like the word *can*? ... [Ss 'Must'] ... For rules we can use *must*. What else? ... [Ss 'May'] ... Is it a good one? For rules? If I say *You may speak English*, if you don't want to, then you don't do it, right? So will it be OK? No. If you use the word *may*, it means that if you do it, very good... if you don't do it, OK, fine. So for rules maybe not a good one. (Andrews, 1999a, p. 174)

The other observed lesson provided evidence for the same teacher's TLA in a different way. This time the grammar point under discussion related to the use of the present participle to join two sentences with the same subject. One of the examples, however, included two sentences with two different subjects, so the exercise could not be done according to the instructions given. Upon noticing this potentially difficult and challenging task, the teacher elicited from his students some suggestions as to how to overcome this difficulty, and then helped them to make an appropriate change so that they could join the sentences in the same way as in the other examples. The

teacher's behavior clearly shows that his TLA was fully engaged and that he managed to make the input available for learning.

Summing up, Andrews argued that TLA plays a crucial role in structuring input in order to make it acceptable and useful to learners. The descriptions of the three teachers provide evidence for: (1) the negative and positive ways in which TLA can affect the input made available for learning and (2) the different ways in which each teacher's TLA interacts with the three sources: materials prepared by others, teacher's own output intended as input for learners, and learner output.

The three teachers responded differently to these sources of input due to the degree of the limitations in their TLA. However, it should be emphasized that teacher performance is not only influenced by his or her TLA, but it also interacts with teacher beliefs, assumptions and knowledge, and with the teacher's personality.

The Relationship Between TLA and Pedagogical Practice

In order to analyze the relationship between TLA and pedagogical practice, it is important to focus on grammar-related tasks which aim at facilitating learning, which are affected by the quality of the teacher's language awareness. These may be grouped as: (1) the tasks undertaken in the planning process and (2) the tasks which occur spontaneously in the course of the lesson.

According to Andrews (2001), one of the main planning tasks involving TLA is analyzing the grammatical aspects from the learner and learning perspective. This planning stage requires from the teacher the "ability to identify the key features of the grammar area for learning and to make them salient within the prepared input" (Andrews, 2001, p. 81). Furthermore, TLA affects the teacher's ability to specify appropriate learning objectives and the choice of learning materials appropriate for the students in terms of their age, language level, and needs. Another group of tasks influenced by TLA refers to teacher activities performed in the classroom. Andrews (2001) enumerates several such tasks: (1) mediating what is made available to learners as input; (2) making salient the key grammatical features within that input; (3) providing exemplification and clarification, as appropriate; (4) monitoring students' output; (5) monitoring one's own output; (6) helping the students to make useful generalisations based upon the input; (7) limiting the potential sources of learner confusion in the input; and (8) all the time reflecting on the potential impact of all such mediation on the learners' understanding.

In order to carry out the above mentioned tasks effectively, the teacher should rely on such factors as: sensitivity, reflection, perception, alertness, and quick thinking; he or she should also possess a good subject-matter knowledge and a good level of CLA. As a result, many pre-service teachers and beginning teachers, confronted with such demands, experience serious difficulties in their teaching .

Factors Affecting the Application of TLA in the Classroom

Andrews (2001) claimed that subject-matter knowledge is one of the two factors which are essential to the teacher's successful application of TLA in pedagogical practice. The quality of teaching and learning grammar depends in particular on a sound knowledge base of underlying language systems. Thus, a thorough knowledge base is crucial for the teacher to deal with grammar-related issues in ways which are most conducive to learning. This further affects the quality of the teacher's reflections about the language and assists the teacher in making informative choices in preparation (the preactive phase), teaching (the interactive phase) and in post-lesson

reflection (the postactive phase). CLA is another factor influencing the impact of TLA on pedagogical practice. This ability, however, is directly related to the language accuracy and functional appropriacy which the teacher applies while s/he “filters” all three sources of language input through his or her TLA. Apart from these two language-related factors, which significantly determine the quality of teacher input, there are other key factors which may strengthen or weaken the impact of TLA upon pedagogical practice, the teacher’s engagement and willingness to teach grammar issues being one. This engagement is closely connected to a teacher’s self-confidence, or lack of it, in relation to grammar, and to his or her attitude towards the importance of teaching according to various methods and approaches. Some of these methods emphasize content issues, while others class management and student responsiveness. Furthermore, there are personality factors and contextual factors determining the application of TLA in the classroom. It is important, for instance, how much time can be spent on the presentation and practice of a particular grammar issue, and whether there is a need to follow a prescribed syllabus, or whether it is possible for the teacher to introduce some changes in order to enhance the students’ learning. These contextual factors certainly influence the impact of TLA on pedagogical practice, along with personality factors such as sensitivity, perception, reflectiveness, and alertness. All these factors determine how far the teacher is willing to engage with grammar issues, and how far s/he engages in “reflection-in-action” and “reflection-on-action” Schön (cf. 1983). It should be emphasized that TLA may be influenced by the contextual and attitudinal factors, given the different times of teaching, different classes, and indeed different teachers; this means that the interaction of these factors is not stable but in a constant state of change. Figure 2 illustrates these factors.

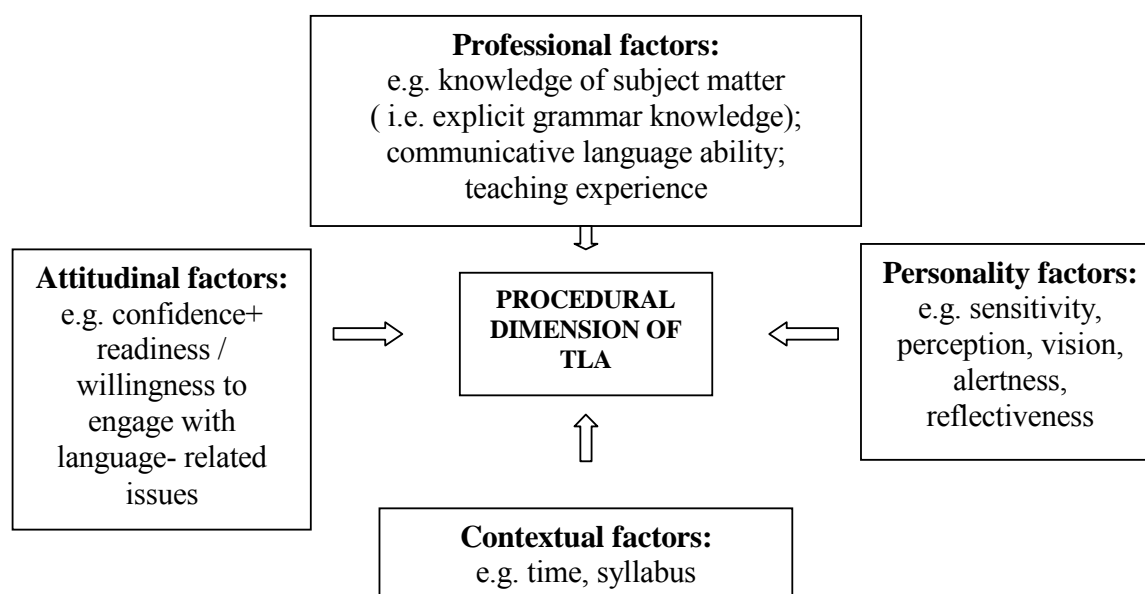


Figure 2. Key influences on the operation of teacher language awareness. Adapted from Andrews, 2001, p. 84.

TLA Versus Teacher’s Engagement

Andrews (2001) examined engagement as a key factor affecting the application of TLA in pedagogical practice. The author claims that a lack of engagement with content and limitation in a teacher’s language awareness may have a negative impact on input made available to learners. For example, one teacher in his study

demonstrated insufficient engagement with content, and thus presented her students with examples and explanations, which could have led them to make incorrect generalisations. This teacher, during a lesson on conditional sentences, used example sentences to which she gave grammatically incorrect explanations. The example sentence: “If the Principal had been nice, the students would have enjoyed school life” was explained as impossible, but the teacher did not refer to time in her explanation. Later on in the post-lesson discussion she explained:

Well, actually what I’ve in mind is like this situation is impossible because of her personality. It’s not about the time. I think most of the students understand that it’s not about time that cannot be changed, so we slightly change the use of that. (Andrews, 1999b, as cited in Andrews, 2001, p. 84)

Following analysis of a range of qualitative data resources, Andrews (2001) made an attempt to present in the form of a diagram the relationship between engagement and awareness, and stated that both of these factors are matters of degree; therefore, different teachers’ profiles can refer to different points on the diagram. This is demonstrated in Figure 3.

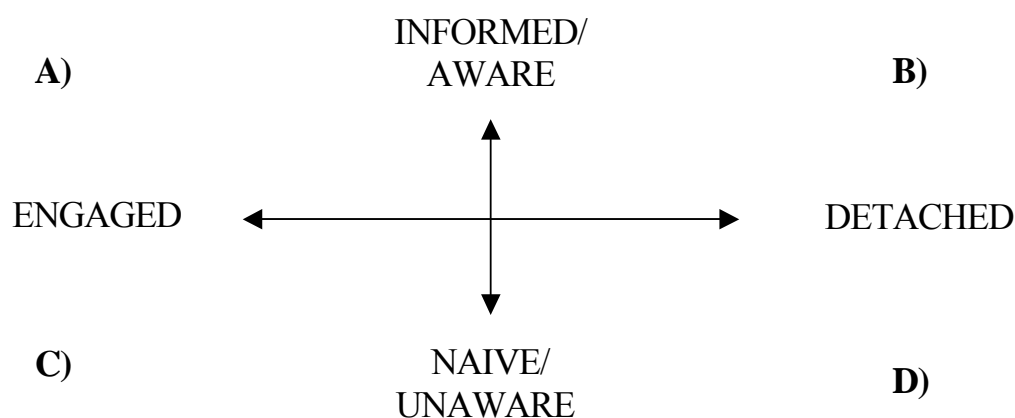


Figure 3. Styles of teacher engagement. Adapted from Andrews, 2001, p. 5.

With reference to the diagram, the author presents four basic characteristics of styles of teacher engagement (Andrews, 2001):

(1) Teacher A is fully engaged with content and possesses a sound language systems knowledge base. This teacher is confident and demonstrates the ability to deal with the language from the learner perspective.

(2) Teacher B, on the other hand, is detached from content issues. Although this teacher also possesses a very solid language system knowledge base, s/he emphasizes fluency and acquisition, but avoids any overt grammar teaching.

(3) Teacher C recognizes the need for engaging with issues of language content; however, this engagement is naive and inappropriate. This teacher’s knowledge base is insufficient to deal effectively with the content-related issues, and s/he lacks the awareness and confidence to handle them successfully.

(4) Teacher D does not possess the language systems base knowledge and s/he is not engaged with the language content. These obvious disadvantages may prevent this teacher from becoming aware of how, if ever, to engage with language related aspects.

Andrews (1999c, as cited in Andrews, 2001, p. 86) presented the examples of teachers participating in the

study whose profiles matched some of these characteristics. The example of Teacher D is based on a semi-structured interview which followed a grammar lesson on conditional sentences. During this interview, it transpired that the teacher had not considered the students' previous learning, nor the learning difficulties posed by the grammar issue he was introducing, as the following example reveals:

Interviewer: So did you assume that they had already had some exposure to conditional sentences?

Benjamin: When I come to class and after 30 minutes I think they have already experienced them...

Interviewer: Were there any difficulties that you anticipated that they might have [with conditionals] ... from their point of view?

Benjamin: Their point of view? ... Actually I didn't think much ... I'm not try think of it. (Andrews, 1999b, as cited in Andrews, 2001, p. 87)

Teacher C's behavior is based on another teacher's lesson which focused on the use of the past perfect tense and past simple tense. The teacher's aim was to show the difference in form and use between these two tenses, and to make these clear to the students. The lesson included a text with a set of pictures, which students were to analyse and then indicate the difference in the use of the two tenses. Unfortunately, the text prepared by the teacher did not justify the use of the past perfect tense, with the unfortunate result that it was confusing not only for the learners but also for the teacher. The following example shows this inappropriate selection of tense:

On the 7th January 1996, a terrible accident had happened. A man and a dog had been killed by a lorry near the road. They had become ghosts! One week later, an old man drove his car near the place where the accident had taken place... (Andrews, 1999b, as cited in Andrews, 2001, p. 87)

Although this lesson presents the teacher's genuine attempt to engage with content, it clearly shows his inadequate subject-matter knowledge, which causes problems with the teaching and learning of this particular grammar issue.

In summary, TLA is a complex area with a wide variety of factors influencing its declarative as well as procedural dimensions. In the article discussed above, it was argued that the dominant influence of TLA is on the way in which input is made available to learners and that TLA may serve as a "filter" which teachers use in their teaching, more or less successfully. In language teaching, content and instruction are closely interrelated; thus, the relationship between subject-matter knowledge, i.e., the declarative dimension of TLA, and CLA is very important, with the quality of this relationship being one of the factors determining the teacher's professionalism. Moreover, a close connection between TLA and pedagogical content knowledge (the knowledge of content and pedagogy) emphasizes the importance of the procedural dimension of TLA and its impact on pedagogical practice. This impact refers to the potential effects of TLA within the classroom and outlines a range of factors which influence the operation of TLA, specifically the extent to which the teacher engages with content-related issues in his or her teaching.

Connections Between Teachers' Cognitions and Practices in Teaching Grammar

Borg (2001) claimed that educational research gives special attention to the importance of teachers' subject-matter knowledge in shaping their behavior in the classroom. Therefore, in English language teaching, the importance of teachers' subject-matter knowledge which Borg calls knowledge about language (KAL) has been emphasized, along with a need to enable teachers to develop and sustain awareness of their KAL. Thus, the

development of strategies which enable teachers to become aware of their KAL and understand how this awareness influences their teaching should have a prominent place in teacher education. Borg (2001) explored teachers' perceptions of knowledge about grammar (KAG) and their instructional practices. He introduced the term self-perception rather than TLA when analyzing the understanding of how teachers' perceptions of their KAG affect instructional decisions in the classroom. The analysis of two cases comes from a study of teachers' cognitions and practices (cf. Borg, 1999), in which two teachers, one a native and one a non-native speaker of English, discussed their classroom practices. The aim of the interviews was to analyze the factors influencing teachers' instructional decisions in teaching grammar, in particular the influence of teachers' perceptions of their KAG on their classroom practices. The first teacher's approach to teaching grammar was not based on a prepared plan, since he preferred to develop language issues as they arose during the lesson. He was generally confident of his own knowledge of grammar, and when the students asked him questions about grammar, he responded by referring these questions back to the whole class. However, there were certain situations when he provided an immediate and direct answer to the student's question without any clarification or discussion. His own comments are as follows:

The reason for my discomfort was that I didn't quite know what the answer was, I didn't have an answer, because normally when I know the answer my response is "What do you think?" And so what happened there was "Why is it in the past?" I didn't know, then I felt I had to come up with an answer. (Borg, 2001, p. 23)

The above given example shows clearly the relationship between this teacher's self-perceived KAG and his action. His typical response, when he was confident and knew the answer, was repeating students' questions back to the class; however, when he felt less confident he modified his usual behavior by giving short answers and moving straight on with the lesson. The second teacher's approach to teaching grammar was different. He rarely conducted grammar work and never did so unless he was prepared. A negative episode from his early teaching career where he was asked a question he could not answer because he did not know the word, still left him with the fear that he might be asked a question for which he would not know the answer. Therefore, he used a limited range of instructional activities when it came to grammar work, which was not spontaneous. In designing a grammar activity he would prepare examples of sentences containing a particular grammar structure, and ask students to analyze them and derive rules from them. This procedure did not help students reach conclusions about the grammar structure, which was the basis of such sentences. However, he felt far more secure teaching vocabulary, and spent more time on vocabulary work, reading and writing. This strong relationship between his self-perception of KAG and classroom practice is clearly seen in his comments:

Yes, I do admit I feel more comfortable [doing vocabulary]. I don't really like teaching grammar all that much. I feel rather uncomfortable ... I'm always thinking there might be a question which might stump me. In vocabulary that rarely happens. (Borg, 2001, p. 25)

In Borg's (2001) opinion, the two cases presented in the study emphasize certain issues relevant to an understanding of the relationship between teachers' perceptions of their KAG and their practice in teaching grammar. The data suggest that teachers' self-perceptions of their KAG influence their work in the classroom. Both teachers behaved in a way that reflected their perception of KAG, and modified their behavior accordingly. The first teacher was generally confident teaching grammar, and thus adopted his usual behavior of encouraging

ad hoc discussions and formulating rules on the spot. Yet in situations where he was uncertain, he modified his behavior accordingly, which was possible to observe in his providing direct responses and minimizing discussion. In comparison, the other teacher lacked confidence in his KAG and this was also reflected in his work; he minimized grammar work and postponed discussion to give himself time to prepare adequately. Nonetheless, when he did feel confident he explained the grammar on the spot, justifying the opinion that positive self-perception of ability motivates behavior.

The data further point to the relationship between teachers' perceptions of their subject matter-knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. The term pedagogical content knowledge was first introduced by Shulman (1986), referring to the practical knowledge of how to represent and formulate subject matter in order to make it comprehensible to others. Thus, the relationship between the two types of knowledge, in the case of the first teacher, was expressed in this teacher's confidence in teaching grammar. He introduced a number of instructional strategies for grammar work, which were congruent with his students' level and linguistic abilities. On the other hand, the second teacher's lack of confidence in teaching grammar resulted in a limited instructional repertoire for grammar work; therefore, his application of teaching techniques was less successful. And yet, this teacher had a well developed pedagogical content knowledge for teaching vocabulary, reading and writing, and thus he was far more successful in teaching these aspects of the language.

Exploring the concept of self-perception and practice in teaching grammar, Borg pointed towards specific aspects of grammar teaching which may be influenced by teachers' perceptions of their KAG. These are (1) the extent to which teachers teach grammar, (2) their willingness to engage in spontaneous grammar work, (3) the manner in which they respond to students' questions about grammar, (4) the extent to which they promote class discussion about grammar, (5) the way they react when their explanations are questioned, and (6) the nature of the grammatical information they provide to students (Borg, 2001, p. 27).

The above aspects support the present author's opinion that in efficient grammar teaching subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge are so closely interrelated that one cannot exist without the other. When teachers develop and sustain awareness of their KAL, the relationship between the two types of knowledge results in input which is useful and acceptable to the learners, thus leading to conscious development and the gaining of teaching expertise.

TLA and Teacher Professionalism

It is a fact that TLA cannot be separated from the professional knowledge base of L2 teachers. Andrews (2003), in his analysis of subject-matter knowledge and its relationship with other aspects of teacher knowledge, offers a precise term: "the subject-matter cognitions of the L2 teacher" (p. 85). He claimed that it is very hard to separate knowledge from other aspects of teacher thinking, more importantly, beliefs. However, knowledge of subject-matter, or KAL, is only one type of knowledge possessed by the teacher; another type, crucial for the teacher to have, is language proficiency, i.e., knowledge of language. These two types of knowledge interact with each other and with pedagogical practice. A number of writers have discussed the connection between these three constituents (Wright & Bolitho, 1993, 1997; Andrews, 1999b, 2001; Wysocka, 2003). Wright and Bolitho (1993) outline the three roles that a non-native speaker novice teacher has to take on, and the interconnected nature between them. These roles are: (1) the role of the language user, which requires an adequate level of language

proficiency; (2) the role of the language analyst, which requires a thorough knowledge of the language systems; and (3) the role of the language teacher, which requires abilities to create a learning atmosphere in the classroom (as cited in Andrews, 2003, p. 84).

Wright and Bolitho (1997) further explore these links in a model of classroom language content and use in which they discuss the most predictable pedagogical events, where the teacher language is prepared in advance, and the unpredictable events, which are created by the interaction of the teacher, student and materials in the classroom. This view of teachers' language awareness is similar to the ideas expressed by Andrews (1997, 1999b, 1999c, 2001) earlier in this paper.

Professional Knowledge Base of the L2 Teacher

As previously stated, subject-matter knowledge is at the core of teacher professionalism. Shulman (1987, as cited in Andrews 2003, p. 87) was convinced of the importance of subject-matter content and the relationship between knowledge of content and knowledge of pedagogy, which led him to coin the term pedagogical content knowledge. He went on to include the relationship between these two aspects as central to understanding the knowledge base of teaching:

(...) the key to distinguishing the knowledge base of teaching lies at the intersection of content and pedagogy, in the capacity of a teacher to transform the content knowledge he or she possess into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by the students. (Shulman, 1987, as cited in Andrews 2003, p. 87)

In view of this opinion, the connections between such understanding of the knowledge base of teaching and the characteristics of TLA discussed earlier in this analysis are clear. TLA can be seen, therefore, as a particular combination of the teacher's knowledge and beliefs about the subject-matter and the cognitive knowledge of the learners.

Tsui (2003) also emphasizes teacher knowledge as a combination of a variety of significant aspects. In research based on case studies of four teachers of English as L2, she outlines the following aspects of teacher knowledge:

- (1) It is integrated and so "it cannot be separated into distinct knowledge domains" (Tsui, 2003, p. 65);
- (2) It specifies the importance of teachers' personal conceptions of teaching and learning in their management of teaching and learning;
- (3) The teacher pedagogical content knowledge is embodied in the act of teaching, and refers to the management of learning, and the realisation of the curriculum in the classroom;
- (4) Teachers reflect on their practices and their context of work, and through this process they modify their understanding of teaching and learning and develop knowledge which "constitutes part of the contexts in which they operate and part of their world of practice" (Tsui, 2003, p. 65).

Further, Tsui (2003) spoke of pedagogical content knowledge as "an integrated and coherent whole", which is a central feature of teaching. It is also "a situated and practical" kind of knowledge because it refers to the specific context of the classroom and to the teacher's classroom practices (p. 59). This opinion is further supported by Andrews (2003), who discussed the role of the teacher as a mediator of the input for learning, and emphasizes the fact that the TLA could have a significant impact on how that input is mediated to learners, so that it could be

expected that teaching will have some impact on what is in fact learned. In other words, “it seems reasonable to hypothesise that the competence with which the teacher plays that role might be a major variable affecting the learning which takes place” (Andrews, 2003, p. 90). That is why the teacher who correctly judges the learners’ level and provides them with accurate output which is tailored to their language level and learning needs, facilitates his or her learners’ learning. However, such abilities, according to Andrews (2003), would be dependent on certain knowledge bases, in particular, subject-matter cognitions (with KAL at their core), language proficiency (knowledge of language), and knowledge of learners. Further, Andrews (2003) argued that the interaction of these particular knowledge bases could be described as TLA. Naturally, they also interact with other knowledge bases such as: knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of curriculum, and knowledge of the context. Consequently, in expert teaching, all these knowledge bases will be fully integrated. Figure 4 illustrates this interaction.

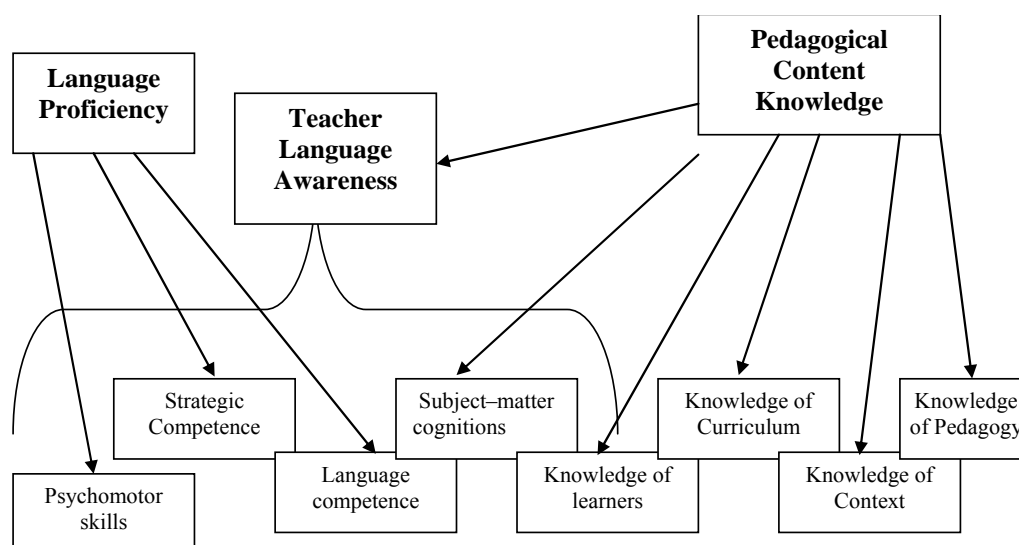


Figure 4. The relationship between teacher language awareness, communicative language ability, and pedagogical content knowledge. Adapted from Andrews, 2001, p. 79.

Discussion

TLA is a complex phenomenon entailing many aspects which interact with each other. Subject-matter knowledge and CLA are the basic constituents of TLA. However, the teacher’s ability to reflect upon these two kinds of knowledge, and ensure that his or her students receive useful input for learning, seems to be equally important. The present author is of the opinion that there is no TLA if there is no reflection upon subject-matter knowledge and CLA, because the reflection upon the two elements is the basis for teacher planning and teaching. The teacher, other learners, and materials are the three main sources of input for students. These sources are “filtered” through the teacher’s TLA, and in this way TLA affects input which is finally available to the learner.

The importance of the teacher’s subject-matter knowledge has been given special attention in English language teaching. The teacher’s KAL and his or her awareness of this knowledge may enable teachers to realize the significance of TLA in their teaching. Teachers’ perceptions of KAG and their instructional practices are worth special attention. The difficulties which most teachers encounter when teaching grammar seem to be rooted in the quality of the relationship between KAG and pedagogical content knowledge. It stands to reason that a lack of confidence in teaching grammar results in the provision of a limited range of instructional practices

for grammar work. On the other hand, however, the teacher's confidence in teaching grammar has a positive influence on his or her behavior. It may thus be concluded that teachers' perceptions of their KAG influence their instructional strategies for grammar work. Moreover, TLA is closely intertwined with the teacher professional knowledge base, which involves KAL, knowledge of language, and pedagogical practice. It should be emphasized that the three constituents specify the three most basic roles of the L2 teacher, i.e., the language user, the language analyst, and the language teacher. Further, these roles are "filtered" through the teacher's knowledge and beliefs about the language and learners.

As indicated in the above discussion, there is a highly complex interrelationship between TLA and the various factors influencing its operation. All have an impact on TLA; however, the nature of teacher engagement with language-related issues is one of those factors that might be of special interest in studies examining novice teachers' teaching, especially the impact of engagement on both the development and application of TLA. Other related factors, including the causes of teacher confidence or lack of confidence in relation to grammar, and the impact of such a feeling upon pedagogical practice, including teachers' employment of avoidance strategies, should be closely analysed by teacher trainers. The acknowledgement of such problems and limitations highlights the need for improvement in and the updating of teacher training courses.

Conclusion

The above presented analyses pursued the problem of development and focused on TLA. In the discussion on teacher development, teacher language awareness was given special consideration. The "metacognitive" character of the language awareness of the teacher was emphasized because the interaction between the subject matter knowledge and CLA involves reflection, and the subject matter knowledge is mediated through the teacher's CLA. TLA affects teacher behavior, and it interacts with the three sources of input for learners: the teacher, other learners, and materials; thus, the relationship between teacher language awareness and pedagogical practice was discussed. Moreover, the analyses of the professional knowledge base of the language teacher concluded in defining TLA as a particular combination of the teacher's knowledge bases, i.e., knowledge about language, knowledge of language, cognitive knowledge of students, knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of curriculum, and knowledge of the context. A full integration of these knowledge bases is achieved in expertise in teaching.

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