Research Issues and Language Program Direction

L. Kathy Heilenman
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The Research-Pedagogy Interface in L2 Acquisition: Implications for Language Program Directors

Rafael Salaberry
Pennsylvania State University

Introduction

Second Language (L2) teaching is as much art as science and, in some cases, it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. In this respect, most language teachers seem to follow their own implicit theories of language learning and teaching. For instance, Flynn (1991, p. 550)—from the perspective of a formal linguistic analysis of L2 development—states that she knows of "no language teacher who provides their students with nothing but unstructured conversation. Whether we acknowledge it or not, we utilize our own implicit theories about language and language learning when we teach." Similarly, from a more general pedagogical perspective, Woods (1996) argues that *it is through the beliefs, assumptions and knowledge* of each teacher "that the teachers structure their perceptions of the curriculum and their decisions as to how to implement that curriculum, from overall organization of the units down to the specific classroom activities and verbalizations" (pp. 282–83). Implicit theories may sometimes contradict the teachers' avowed explicit theoretical position on language teaching methodology. Hence, the existence of implicit theories of language learning among L2 teachers has been identified as a major factor in the implementation of curricular innovation (e.g., Flynn 1991; Woods 1996).

Curricular innovations can be effected by different means, such as selection of instructional materials and provision of course syllabi, as well

as the specific training of language teachers (e.g., teaching methodology courses). However, the potential influence of programmatic decisions on teachers' beliefs and behaviors will not necessarily change teachers' implicit theories of language learning and teaching. Prabhu (1992, p. 236) argues that the stability of teachers' beliefs will rarely be affected by innovation promoted from "outside:"

> *suppose we put to teachers not just the operational aspect but the conceptual aspect as well—that is to say, our theory of how language learning comes about and how the procedures being recommended are likely to bring it about . . . We want teachers, in other words, to make our theory their own—to be as persuaded by the theory as we are. It is not difficult to see that this is a rather naive demand to make. It implies that people's concepts and beliefs are as open to a replacement as their behavioral routines . . . If a threat to one's routine is unsettling, a threat to one's belief can only be more unsettling.*

Therefore, it is possible to argue that teachers' beliefs and behaviors can only be affected by change "from within," or reflection in action (Schön 1983). According to Schön (1983, p. 68) the reflective practitioner "does not keep means and ends separate, but defines them interactively as he [sic] frames a problematic situation." More specifically, Woods (1996) argues that for any particular teaching situation "a teacher may not be consciously aware of all the factors he or she considered, but with further reflection this sense of awareness" will be increased. Similarly, van Lier (1996, p. 8) argues that with increased reflection and involvement in their analysis of a teaching situation, teachers will shift from problem-solving to problem-posing.

For the above-mentioned reasons, one of the most important functions of language program directors (LPDs) is to assess, encourage, and maintain an adequate level of professional involvement and growth among the teachers (or reflective practitioners) who compose language program staff. Even though it is quite common to see LPDs as producers of knowledge (in their role as researchers), or even as interpreters of knowledge (such as pedagogical decisions and policy issues), it is in the realm of teachers' professional development that the major impact of

LPDs may be assessed. This is not surprising given that—as argued above—teachers' beliefs and assumptions play a major role in the language classroom. By acknowledging the existence of strongly held beliefs and assumptions about language pedagogy among teachers, acknowledging the lack of support for any single methodological approach to L2 teaching or a psycholinguistic model of L2 development (see below), and acknowledging the need to increase professional development through reflection-in-action, it is clearly useful to incorporate teachers' perspective into the language programs and LPD's research agendas. However, even though there seems to be agreement among most L2 scholars about the need to increase teachers' level of professional involvement (see Flynn 1991 and Woods 1996 above), there is a major difference of perspective in terms of how to bring about that change: via a top-down or bottom-up approach.

A top-down approach to elicit language teaching awareness will rely on L2 research findings to stimulate reflection about teaching practices. For instance, Gass (1995) analyzed the type of SLA theory courses that might be included in teacher training programs. Gass stated that "teachers need to have the background to measure what is happening in the classroom against research findings" (p. 13). On the other hand, a bottom-up approach will concentrate primarily on analyzing teaching practices to stimulate a heuristic process of discovery. Freeman (1996) makes a similar distinction between first-order and second-order research: "[F]irst-order research examines phenomena in the world with the assumption that accurate objective accounts can be established through carefully assembling and triangulating data from different sources" (pp. 365–66). In contrast, second-order research "shifts the focus to examine participants' perceptions of phenomena in the world" (pp. 365–66). The latter constitutes a hermeneutic approach whose focus is on "what people think and how they understand the worlds in which they live and act" (p. 360). It is possible to argue that the two perspectives of first- and second-order research—or top-down and bottom-up approaches—as means of effecting changes in pedagogical practices represent incompatible (or more accurately orthogonal) approaches. However, Gass (1995) states that teachers and researchers "need to work in tandem to determine how SLA findings can be evaluated and be made applicable to a classroom situation" (p. 16). I will call this the *research-pedagogy interface.* The success of such cooperation between researchers and teachers is dependent on two important

questions: What research findings will be considered relevant for L2 pedagogy?, and Who will determine what are relevant research findings for L2 pedagogy?[1]

In this article I will address these two questions through an analysis of the role of second language teachers in the development of research agendas (i.e., the drafting of explicit hypotheses of L2 development in the classroom setting) and an analysis of the potential areas of professional development that may help LPDs to achieve the objective of increased professional involvement (reflection-in-action) in classroom instruction. The structure of the article is as follows. First, I analyze the rationale for academic second language programs (from a researcher's perspective). Second, I discuss the role of both the communication-learning and planned-contingent paradoxes of adult second language learning for the adequate assessment of second language development in the classroom (elaboration of teachers' explicit hypotheses of language progress). Third, I describe the research-pedagogy interface. Finally, I analyze potential areas of curricular innovation that may increase the level of professional involvement of language teachers.

Second Language Acquisition in a Classroom Setting

The goal of academic language programs rests on the assumption that instruction makes a difference in second language acquisition (e.g., Long 1983; Pienemann 1985). However, some cognitive (Krashen 1982) and related linguistic hypotheses (Schwartz 1993) have questioned the value of any type of pedagogical intervention. Instead, the provision of "comprehensible input" (Krashen) or "positive data" (Schwartz) has been argued to be sufficient to trigger acquisition or language development. A subsequent corollary of such strong positions is the claim that natural settings are qualitatively better than classroom environments, in that the former provide positive instead of negative evidence. For example, Schwartz (1993) argues that natural settings constitute the most advantageous language learning environment because "negative data do not figure prominently, if at all . . . in the input these L2ers receive" (p. 161). More important, the claim that developmental stages of language development in natural settings are representative of language development in the classroom environment has become increasingly prevalent in recent pedagogical

approaches (e.g., Cook 1998). In this section I will argue that, although where the learning takes place may not necessarily change the nature of language development among adult learners (e.g., Birdsong 1989; DeKeyser 1991; Schmidt and Frota 1986), it may nevertheless represent a major factor in the sequential development of the target language.[2]

Let us consider the case of verbal morphological markers of tense and aspect. Schwartz (1993) states that inflectional endings are among the most difficult features of nonnative languages for adult learners and have the "highest amount of variability and lowest degree of success" (p. 160). Schwartz speculates further that "the syntax (being built on the basis of primary linguistic data) continues to grow but the morphology seems to lag behind: learned linguistic knowledge, in this case inflectional verbal morphology, just cannot feed into the grammar" (p. 160). In fact, the development of verbal endings in a natural acquisition setting is a slow and gradual process that, in some cases, takes years, and, in others, merely leads to fossilization (Andersen 1986; Dietrich, Klein, and Noyau 1995; Perdue and Klein 1992; Sato 1988; Schumann 1987; Trévise 1987). For instance, Klein, Dietrich, and Noyau (1995) argue that morpho-syntactic agreement among natural learners is a marginal phenomenon (the "basic variety"). In other words, communication demands (i.e., functional needs) may constitute a necessary but not sufficient condition to reach native-like mastery of the L2. On the other hand, some studies on academic learning show preliminary evidence that classroom instruction may have a strong effect on L2 development of verbal morphology (e.g., Bergström 1995, 1997; Buczowska and Weist 1991; Salaberry 1998). For instance, by their third semester of instruction, the learners from Bergström (1995) "show firm use of the *passé composé* not only with accomplishments and achievements but with all three dynamic verbs (activities, accomplishments, achievements) regardless of level" (p. 153). More importantly, Buczowska and Weist (1991) argue that tutored L2 learners do not follow the same developmental sequence as do L1 learners or untutored L2 learners in the acquisition of tense and aspect. They further argue that their data show that the strongest version of Pienemann's teachability hypothesis should be revised: natural sequences only place constraints on pedagogical practices; they do not necessarily determine the specific developmental stages of tutored learners.

Why would instructed learning make a difference in the acquisition of inflectional morphology? The major distinction between natural and

classroom learners is that the latter are *more likely* to pay conscious attention to morphological endings and strive to incorporate them into their interlanguage. Several empirical studies of classroom learners seem to support this position (e.g. Harley 1989; Pienemann 1988, 1989; Schmidt 1990; Schmidt and Frota 1986).[3] On the other hand, even though classroom students have access to form-focused instruction, they are faced with the problem that the contextualized use of the target language is likely to be in relatively short supply in the classroom, but is essential for the processing of the discourse-based grammatical features (e.g., aspect) of the L2. I turn to this subject in the next section.

Two Paradoxes of Adult Second Language Learning

Klein (1986) comments that "in some respects, communication and learning are at variance . . . communication is based on a set of stable rules which the learner, as speaker and listener, can follow. As a learner, however, he [sic] must not consider the rules he is following at the time to be stable: he must be prepared to control, to revise and even to drop them"(p. 147). In other words, the learner is faced with a *communication-learning paradox.* This paradox has been addressed differently by various researchers. For example, Krashen and Terrell (1983) refer to the conflicting purpose of communication versus learning goals as the great paradox of language teaching; that is, second languages are learned when we try to communicate and not when we try to learn. Interestingly enough, however, the data from the development of verbal morphology among natural learners show the opposite. An exclusive focus on communication in the target language may hinder learners' focus of attention on particular (especially redundant) grammatical features of the target language (see the next section for an example as represented by tense-aspect marking). Swain (1992), for example, argues that communicative-based instruction should be supplemented with a focus on form-meaning relationships, by way of production, which pushes the syntactic use of the target language along with reflection based on authentic language samples and student-produced language.

Responding to the communication-learning paradox, recent pedagogical approaches to classroom instruction have included an emphasis on the provision of a focus on language form, language meaning, and the

interaction of language form and meaning. For instance, Long (1991) makes a distinction between focus on formS and focus on form. In the type of instruction which focuses on formS, attention is placed on the forms themselves (i.e., grammatical syllabus), whereas instruction with a focus on form "overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements *as they arise incidentally* in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning, or communication" (p. 46, italics added). Along the same lines, Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) state that in second language teaching "help should be *contingent*, meaning that it should be offered only when it is needed, and withdrawn as soon as the novice shows signs of control and ability to function independently" (p. 468).

Interestingly enough, the incidental and contingent focus on form advocated by the above-mentioned researchers leads to a second paradox. Contingent and incidental instruction will follow the teacher's assessment of the learner's needs at each stage of development, whereas (pre-) planned instruction (e.g., the sequential nature of a structural syllabus) relies on the notion of an idealized learner who may not be represented by any one student in particular (and even less so in the complex set of conditions of each particular interaction). This volatile condition of classroom interaction is compounded by the fact that not all learners will be at the same stage of development at any one time (e.g., Pienemann 1985). This is the planned-contingent instruction paradox. This paradox of instructed language learning may constitute a powerful argument against the use of pre-fabricated structural syllabi and encompassing psycholinguistic approaches to language instruction. In fact, Pienemann (1987) argues that "a 'psycholinguistic method' of L2 instruction is far out of reach. After the waves of direct method, language lab, etc., the teacher should be spared another 'instant application'" (p. 165).

If neither an encompassing teaching methodology or a pre-digested grammatical syllabus are useful in the context of incidental and contingent L2 instruction, we may profitably turn our attention to the analysis of actual interaction in the language classroom. Even though it is essential for teachers to plan the different pedagogical activities (planned instruction) that will lead to the objective of language learning, language learning itself does not happen as planned, but rather through individualized contingent interaction (incidental). And, for contingent learning to happen, teachers must be active interpreters of classroom interaction (shifting from problem-solving to problem-posing). However, encouraging teachers to take a

more active role in the assessment of classroom learning (bottom-up approach) implies that teachers also take a more active role in the design of the research agenda. An example of this role is shared participation in programmatic decisions such as syllabus design or development of professional development activities. This more active role, in turn, will bring about increased professional development and growth.

In the following section I will examine the usually uneasy partnership of researchers and teachers in the development of research agendas. I will also identify potential points of contact between SLA research and pedagogy from the perspective outlined above.

The Research-Pedagogy Interface

The main reason that prevents researchers from arriving at appropriate solutions for changes in second language pedagogy is simply that there is no agreed upon or well-developed second language acquisition theory. Prabhu (1992), for example, states that there is a "belief that the curriculum represents a predetermination of the learner's development, both at particular points and over a stretch of time (i.e., the course); and this in turn implies that the curriculum developer has far better access than the teacher to the learner's mental development" (p. 226). However, this is only an assumption since experts do not have a clear idea of the psycholinguistic processes that underlie second language acquisition (e.g., Pienemann 1988, 1989). To make matters worse, the teacher is responsible for carrying out a curriculum based on hypothesized—but not corroborated—sequences of acquisition: "[T]he curriculum developer *attempts to predict* or decide in advance the process of development before it takes place, while the teacher has *difficulty perceiving it as it happens*" (Prabhu 1992, p. 226, italics added). As a result, neither curriculum developer not language teacher will make significant progress towards their common endeavor unless a better integration of their efforts is devised (see also Gass 1995).

Unfortunately, however, it seems that both researchers and teachers tend to distrust each other's motives. For instance, van Lier (1996) explains that "some SLA researchers explicitly distance themselves from pedagogy, perhaps in order to bolster their theoretical stature . . . such theories, and the research conducted in their support, cannot be the driving force behind pedagogical practice, however crucial they may otherwise be"

(p. 27). Similarly, Newmeyer and Weinberger (1988) claim that there is an unhealthy relationship between pedagogy and acquisition (or research). The difficulty in establishing an adequate research-pedagogy interface has been highlighted in a recent series of exchanges on the electronic list SLART-L (Second Language Acquisition Research and Teaching List). The concern of some SLA researchers about the inclusion of the word "teaching" in the call for papers for the 1996 student conference, SLRF (Second Language Research Forum), generated an intense debate.[4] In the midst of the debate, an e-mail exchange from Seliger (October 19, 1995) pointed out that the focus of SLRF "has always been on second language acquisition with concerns about teaching only as they impinge on the acquisition process. Be careful about shutting doors too prematurely without consideration of what might be left outside." Along the same lines, what may be neglected by leaving teaching aside will be the cognitive process of second language acquisition as it happens in particular learning settings. Despite the fact that there may exist a common process of acquisition underlying different social contexts, such as academic and natural settings, the analysis of adult language learning cannot be properly assessed without addressing the potential effect of such contextual factors—as there are theoretical and empirical data that, arguably, show such differences in adult L2 acquisition (e.g., Bley-Vroman 1989; Schachter 1988; Schmidt 1990; see previous comments).

It is possible to argue that SLA researchers and SLA teachers have different and incompatible goals (as explicitly claimed by Eubank 1996). For instance, in the area of language testing, Pienemann, Johnston, and Meisel (1993) point out that linguistic profiling (establishing profiles of learners' L2 development) and language proficiency approaches (establishing linguistic proficiency thresholds) have different objectives: research and pedagogy, respectively. Pienemann et al (1993) state that:

> *The opposition between proficiency-oriented approaches to language testing and linguistic profiling exists at the level of construct validity. At the practical level, however, these approaches are designed for very different purposes . . . most proficiency-oriented approaches are designed to capture the global picture of a person's ability in a language. Approaches to profiling are currently unlikely to be able to achieve that objective. (p. 500)*

However, I believe that there are many points of contact between these two approaches to linguistic development. For example, even though the development of morphological means to convey tense and aspect marking in the Romance languages remains a controversial research topic (Liskin-Gasparro 1997; Salaberry forthcoming; Shirai 1997), the distinction between discursive and syntactic means to signal tense-aspect is hardly controversial in the research literature. Discursive means to convey tense and aspect attested in the literature include calendric reference, implicit reference (temporal reference inferred from context), interlocutor scaffolding, serialization (in which the sequence of utterances reflects the actual temporal order of events), and adverbials (see Dietrich, Klein, and Noyau 1995; Sato 1990; Schumann 1987; Trévise 1987, etc.). Discursive means allow learners to achieve functional goals without necessarily controlling formal means for conveying tense-aspect markers. For this reason, it is important that the appropriate distinction between functional (discursive) and formal (morphological) means to convey tense and aspect be kept separate in the assessment of "global functions" versus "grammatical accuracy" in proficiency-oriented approaches. On the other hand, the insights of experienced ACTFL proficiency testers become more an asset than a liability for the development of a SLA research agenda. For this reason, Pienemann (1987) cautions that "applying L2 research is not just writing acquisitional orders into new curricula" (p. 164).

In sum, it is likely that both researchers and teachers may find points of contact in their respective endeavors. A major arena where this interaction is played out is that of curricular innovations insofar as such innovations tend to lie at the intersection of research and practice. In the next section I address possible ways in which LPDs may help bridge the gap between research and pedagogical orientations for the assessment and enhancement of L2 learning.

Managing Pedagogical Practice

General Approaches to Curricular Innovation

Markee (1997) discusses five approaches for effecting curricular innovation in language programs. Three of these describe the wide array of tasks that LPDs normally carry out as part of their management duties, namely, the research, development, and diffusion model, the social interaction

model, and the problem-solving model. The *research, development, and diffusion model* constitutes the rational approach to long-term language program planning: articulating the "vision" of the program, conducting research on classroom learning, and implementing the changes necessary to achieve the avowed vision. The *social interaction model* "seeks to explain what motivates clients' [here, teachers] actual adoption behaviors, not how to manage change per se" (Markee 1997, p. 62). This approach focuses on communication, on being in touch with what teachers interpret as their mission, and on ways to achieve that mission. From this perspective, most meetings and social activities (in fact, information exchange in general) become essential for the successful achievement of objectives established by the language program. For instance, the publication of teachers' classroom experiences in the form of personal stories in the department newsletter (or similar information exchange media) encourages communication among the teaching staff. This also constitutes an indirect way for teachers to obtain confirmation of the achievement of mission objectives such as success in the implementation of a new teaching technique. Finally, the *problem-solving approach* has become more prevalent in recent years as the pendulum of language teaching methodology has swung from general methodological approaches to local level decisions based on teachers' reflection and action (e.g., Freeman and Richards 1996; Prabhu 1992; Richards and Lockhart 1996; van Lier 1988, 1996; Woods 1996). As pointed out by Markee (1997), "this approach assumes that peoples' actions and beliefs are governed by their social values" (p. 67).

The social interaction model and the problem-solving approach are less prestigious than the research, development, and diffusion model due to scope of generalizability and type of pedagogical analysis. First, as a result of a restricted focus on the particular social dynamics of the language program, the social interaction model and the problem-solving approach tend to generate local applications instead of applications general to language program planning. Second, they focus on a dialectic process of language teaching analysis (reflection-in-action) as opposed to a product-oriented approach (application of research findings). On the other hand, Markee points out that there are important weaknesses in the research, development, and diffusion model as well, namely, establishment of unachievable objectives, disregard for idiosyncratic goals of individuals, and the establishment of frequent policy changes to correct the mismatch in

implementation provoked by the first two shortcomings. In short, the research, development, and diffusion model may be deficient if the major agents of change—the teachers—do not become stakeholders in the process of language program planning.

I propose that the synergistic integration of all three models described above may be the appropriate foundation for increasing professional involvement and growth among language teachers (and this, as I have argued, is an essential prerequisite for increasing incidental, contingent learning in the classroom). I will describe three major factors that make such a proposal plausible. First, in principle, there is no reason to do without research-oriented language program planning as long as the diffusion phase of this approach (communication with language teachers) is implemented as an integral component of the entire process of development. The appropriate diffusion of program goals will, in turn, ensure that language teachers will be able to voice their concerns and to share their ideas on the *what, how,* and *when* of the language program research agenda. Second, teachers have as good a—if not a better—sense of what is pedagogically useful than do L2 researchers. In this respect, Prabhu (1992) expressed doubt "that specialists in language pedagogy have any better source for their theories than their own notions and intuitions, though of course *they are more highly skilled in articulating them and supporting them in academically recognized ways*" (p. 240 [emphasis added]). Consequently, teachers may become vital players in the area of pedagogically-oriented research through action research (e.g., Richards and Lockhart 1996). Finally, the inclusion of action research as an efficient and inclusive means to effect changes in a language program will help turn the classroom "from a field of activity into a subject of inquiry" (van Lier 1996, p. 31). The consequences of such inclusive and empowering means of conducting research in a language program may incorporate "a dimension of research in one's teaching" and become "one way to transform the notion of professionalism from an authority-based one into a research-based one" (van Lier 1996, p. 28). In sum, the increased reliance on teachers' contributions and involvement will necessarily lead to the vital component of reflection-in-action (Schön 1983). Were this to happen, the process of teaching would change substantially and move from a process of problem-solving to one of problem-posing (van Lier 1996). At this juncture, it is important to analyze the potential sources of innovation in a language program that may lead to a heightened sense of reflection about teaching practices.

Primary and Secondary Sources of Innovation

Markee (1997) distinguishes two variations of curricular innovation in a language program: primary and secondary sources. Among the primary sources of innovation we identify the triad familiar to all LPDs in charge of teacher education courses and language program administration: (i) pedagogical values (learning/teaching approach), (ii) methodological skills (classroom management techniques, lesson planning, etc.), and (iii) teaching materials (textbooks, ancillary materials, resource libraries, etc.). As secondary sources Markee lists academic (e.g., courses on language teaching) and administrative (e.g., staff meetings, orientation sessions, e-mail groups) means of innovation. There are several ways in which the principled implementation of both primary and secondary sources of innovation may shift the nature of teaching from passive administration of language methods and syllabi to reflective action (see the previous section). The latter is congruent with the type of incidental and contingent learning described earlier in this article.

In general, the *pedagogical approach* of a language program may be specified directly (for example, in a mission statement) or indirectly (for example, feedback on classroom observation). For instance, Davies and Turner (1993) describe an evaluation instrument for classroom observation based on Omaggio's (1986) teaching-for-proficiency proposal. Davies and Turner argue that proficiency is an organizing principle, not a methodology; thus, teachers are responsible for devising ways such as syllabus design and classroom tasks to achieve the objective of proficiency. In turn, the evaluation of classroom teaching "serves as a teaching device that specifies which behaviors contribute to effective teaching in the proficiency-oriented classroom" (p. 207). More importantly, Davies and Turner state that "after the reconstruction of the class, the next steps are to analyze and interpret the data, and then to draw conclusions, *with the supervisor and the TA both contributing to the process*" (p. 210 [emphasis added]). Similarly, the analysis of teaching practice as an academic subject detached from practice, as is the case of methodology courses or orientation sessions conducted without a concurrent teaching practicum, raises a serious issue of validity. For instance, Woods (1996) argues that "learning how to make decisions (and produce the lesson plans which embody those decisions*) in isolation . . . is analogous to the language learning activity of practicing sentences out of context in order to learn the*

syntax" (p. 274 [emphasis added]). Woods contends that, in this way, the validity of the task as well as the transfer of expertise from lesson-planning to actual teaching is diminished. Along the same lines, Freeman (1996) states that:

> *When research enters the domain of meaning, hermeneutic analysis, and interpretation, the alignment of traditional categories may no longer serve. There is a need to view validity in such research as a judgment that links the participants, the researchers, and the wider community that uses the research. (p. 373)*

Reflective practitioners must also be aware of the nature of classroom dynamics within the context of lesson plans, testing procedures, and textbook materials. For instance, Prabhu (1992) makes a distinction between the pedagogical and social dimensions of the classroom environment with respect to *lesson planning*. From the pedagogical perspective, the language lesson can be regarded as a curricular unit or as the implementation of a method of teaching. From the social perspective, a lesson can be viewed as the conventionalized roles and routines of a social event, or as the interplay of personalities during human interaction. Prabhu's identification of the social components of the lesson plan underlines the contingent nature of classroom interaction. Similarly, in the area of *proficiency testing*, Kramsch (1986) argues that the proficiency movement (ACTFL Guidelines) has placed the focus on behavioral functions. However, it is not enough to be able to perform a particular function in the language such as making a request; it is also necessary to consider that same function as an *interactional ability*, as a much broader notion within the organization of thoughts and actions (see the distinction between functional and formal means discussed earlier). Furthermore, Kramsch underlines the importance of the notion of a dynamic view of content that constitutes a continuum from context-embedded to context-reduced. Hence, speakers are in situations where they have to make decisions in terms of the degree of discourse elaboration, a concept that entails *interactional competence* (critical and explicit reflections on discourse parameters based on the context available).

Finally, in the area of *teaching materials*, Carter and McCarthy (1995) argue that traditional textbooks are based on written grammars and that the latter "exclude features that occur widely in the conversation of native speakers" (p. 142). For this reason, Carter and McCarthy suggest that instruction based on the traditional structure of presentation, practice, and

production may be profitably replaced by the sequence of illustration, interaction, and induction "where illustration stands for looking at real data . . . interaction stands for discussion, sharing of opinions and observations, and induction stands for making one's own, or the group's rule for a particular feature, a rule which will be refined and honed as more and more data is [sic] encountered" (p. 155). In sum, the movement from implicit to explicit theories of language learning and teaching through reflection in action brings about a necessary research component to all teaching-related activities.

Notwithstanding the importance of primary sources in the service of curricular innovation, I believe that the adequate use of secondary sources is also essential for achieving the objectives principally addressed by the appropriate implementation of primary sources. The importance of the secondary sources is implicit in the relevance of the social interaction model (described above) for the attainment of social cohesion and the synthesis of mission objectives in a more distributed fashion (i.e., avoidance of a top-down model). For instance, the following professional development activities may become instrumental for the development of reflective practitioners among teachers: book club meetings, administrative and academic support for the development of teaching portfolios, maintenance of a teaching resource library, organization of professional development workshops, and increased information exchange through electronic and paper newsletters. Such activities may lead to increased reflection on pedagogical values (e.g., book club meetings, teaching portfolios), increased reflection on actual teaching practice (e.g., teaching portfolios, access to resource library), increased social cohesion as common goals are identified and assessed (e.g., newsletters), as well as increased creativity and commitment to the profession (e.g., teaching portfolios, access to resource library).

Conclusion

In this article I have presented an argument in favor of prioritizing the goal of teachers' professional development as the most efficient and effective way of achieving research and pedagogical objectives in second language programs. Following the work of Prabhu, Schön, van Lier, Woods, and others I have proposed that teachers can only become professional educators if their implicit theories of language teaching are brought into focus as reflective teaching through various professional development activities such as Markee's primary and secondary sources of innovation.

The notion of reflective teaching includes, by definition, a research component that leads to the development of a research agenda that may or may not coincide with the research objectives of SLA theoretical researchers. I term this the research-pedagogy interface.

I have proposed that the nature of an academic language program must be justified in terms of explicit learning objectives. In this respect, I claim that the relevance of particular perspectives on language development will necessarily be subject to intellectual debate and evolution (e.g., the prevalence of natural settings over classroom settings in the identification of developmental stages of acquisition). Thus, in the same way that researchers put forth specific research hypotheses, teachers need to identify and explicitly articulate their own hypotheses of language development. I have subsequently argued that the existence of two language learning paradoxes in instructed second language learning (the communication-learning and planned-contingent paradoxes) further justify the involvement of language teachers in the process of development of a research agenda for an academic language program. Finally, I have identified the framework within which language teachers may become active participants in the management of pedagogical practices, including the draft of research objectives of the language program. The strategic position of LPDs in helping to bridge the gap between researchers and teachers is fundamental for the successful achievement of such a collaborative framework. Most important, the professional involvement of language teachers in research activities (reflective action through action research) will eventually lead to increased quality of language teaching.

Notes

1. For the purpose of this article the definitions of researcher and teacher are context-situated notions. That is to say, researchers can be regarded as teachers and teachers can be regarded as researchers depending on the particular functions they fulfill at different times with respect to the pedagogical process.
2. For instance, Huebner (1995) presents data showing that study abroad students do not seem to approach the task of language learning in any way differently than they approach regular classroom instruction. Similarly, DeKeyser (1991) shows that most students enrolled in programs abroad merely transfer the same learning strategies previously seen in classroom instruction.

3. For instance, Schmidt (1990, p. 143) lists the factors that he claims influence noticing grammatical features of the target language: (i) task demands, (ii) frequency, (iii) saliency of the feature, (iv) individual skills and strategies, and (v) expectations created by the native language. Similarly, Harley (1989) suggests that the pedagogical conditions that may have a key role in acquisition are: (i) increased frequency and saliency in the input, (ii) appeal to students' metalinguistic awareness, (iii) greater and more focused opportunities for output, and (iv) goal-directed interaction in small group contexts.
4. It is important to mention that the debate included an explicit focus on the issue of who controls the agenda of the conference (e.g., drafting of a constitution, election of a Board). Traditionally, SLRF has been an itinerant conference organized by students, whose host institution changes every year. It seems to me that the fact that no institution—or any non-student group for that matter—may claim ownership of the SLRF agenda provides a necessary and sufficient control against the imposition of specific research agendas.

Works Cited

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