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AUTHOR   Brown, Ronald L.
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ABSTRACT
              It is suggested that second language teachers often
view themselves and are viewed by others as technicians, passive
purveyors of prescriptive content, but that they should be encouraged
to perceive themselves as professionals. Professionals are defined as
those who, by virtue of knowledge and experience in teaching and
learning, make instructional decisions and control the learning
process. The discussion proceeds to examine three aspects of
professionalism in second language education, especially as it
relates to English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teaching. First, it
recommends development in ESL teachers of a constructivist approach
to teaching and learning. Second, it is argued that teachers should
personally establish explicit objectives with regard to attitude,
content, and process in the classroom. Finally, it is proposed that
the best time to instill this kind of professional commitment is
during ESL teacher education. Benefits of a professional approach to
ESL teaching include improved instruction, increased creativity,
better teacher morale, and an ability to tolerate ambiguity.
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Developing Professionalism in Second Language Education

Ronald L. Brown

University of Guam

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Send correspondence to:

Dr. Ronald L. Brown
University of Guam
Division of English and Applied Linguistics
UOG Station
Mangilao, Guam   96923   USA

Tel: (671) 734-9433
FAX: (671) 734-0012

2

DEVELOPING PROFESSIONALISM IN SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Dr. Ronald L. Brown
University of Guam, USA

Introduction

The topic of this paper concerns professionalism in second language education. In other words, it is about ESL teachers being in charge of their own teaching. While TESL education programs provide background in language theory, methodology, and syllabus design, an essential dimension that is frequently neglected is encouraging teachers to view themselves as professionals.

The conventional view of a "professional" in second language education is one who conducts research in language acquisition and learning, while those teach in ESL classrooms are "technicians", passive purveyors of prescriptive content. This is not a unique perception, as evidenced by the salary level of the average ESL teacher. Moreover, all too frequently, the primary criterion for securing an ESL teaching position is English fluency. Traditional ESL instructional methodology, consisting of a sequential order of units and lessons in a self-contained, prescriptive English language curriculum, lends itself to passivity. Within this context, ESL teachers can indeed become technicians; and the quality of language learning experienced by their students is questionable. As alarming is the danger

that qualified ESL teachers, those who have authentic background and experience in second language education, may themselves accept the status of technicians.

This paper discusses three components of professionalism in second language education. First, the advantages of developing in ESL teachers an awareness of the constructivist approach to teaching and learning will be described. Next, the need for ESL teachers develop attitude, content, and process goals will be discussed. Finally, the role of TESL education in nurturing professionalism in second language teaching will be considered.

To begin, for the purposes of this paper, a *professional* in second language education is defined a teacher who, by virtue of knowledge and experience in language teaching and learning, makes instructional decisions and controls the learning process. The professional TESL teacher is actively engaged in proactive teaching and in mediating classroom situations. This is in contrast to the teacher who operates as a technician by passively following a prescribed curriculum and reacting to student performance.

The constraints that encourage teachers to become technicians must be acknowledged. First, at the risk of introducing a cliche, the classroom is a highly complex setting. ESL teachers frequently cope with large a number of students, many of whom may be resistant to independent

production of language, preferring to remain passive during class.   Furthermore, teachers face the dilemma of fulfilling administrative expectations which may be institutionalized into a prescribed syllabus with standardized testing. Teacher accountability and continued employment may be directly related to student performance on this testing system.

These and other constraints can result in the ESL teacher developing feelings of being overloaded and powerless, and encourage them to cope by seeking ways to simplify.   The path of least resistance is to become a technician by abandoning professional independence in favor of passively following mandated instructional materials. After all, an established syllabus provides an organizational structure of content along with a systematic and coordinated system of presentation.   Teachers can fulfill obligations by covering the required exercises and focusing on correct responses, assuming that correctness indicates learning.   If students fail to perform well on the tests, it is the fault of the students or the materials, but not the teacher. Such constraints are likely to remain part of the teacher's life for the foreseeable future, but this does not mean that the ESL teacher is doomed to an eternal role of technician.

Constraints exist in every profession. An ESL teacher who thinks as a professional recognizes constraints while making decisions and maintaining control of instruction.

Effects of Student Situational Interpretations on Learning

For ESL teachers to accept the role of professionals, it is necessary that they understand the nature of teaching as supported by recent research. Despite its weaknesses, the process-product research of the 1970's established that specific teaching behaviors result in improved student learning (Brophy & Good, 1986). In addition, it established that instructional management, that is identifying the desired learning outcomes and keeping students on task, is essential for effective teaching, concluding that effective teachers are those who are actively engaged with and in control of their instruction.

A more recent view of the relationship between instruction and learning, and how students interpret their instruction, is the "cognitive mediational paradigm" (Duffy & Roehler, 1989; Winne & Marx, 1982). A contructivist view greatly influenced by Piagetian theory, this theory contends that students are constantly striving to make sense of classroom activities, or in Piagetian terms to establish equilibrium, and adapt themselves to the dynamics of schooling in order to survive. In short, students want to pass -- preferably with high grades. By interpreting various classroom activities and their consequences, students construct their own sense of "school reality" to establish equilibrium. Frequently, this interpretation of "school

reality" does not entail learning, but only what is necessary for passing. Thus, in order to make sense of instruction and to survive schooling, students construct interpretations of teachers' instructional acts on the bases of their prior experiences in school.

The resulting student construction may not match the teacher's intended objective. For example, a teacher assigns a worksheet in transforming sentences from active to passive voice for practice. The teacher intends that the worksheets will be a means of giving students the opportunity to gain facility in the use of the passive voice and may further intend that practice with these transformations will transfer to independent production. The students, however, may conclude that the purpose of the exercise is accurate completion of the worksheets, making no connection of the activity to their own independent language use. The students have constructed an interpretation that makes sense to them in view of their previous experiences with worksheets: teachers collect worksheets, correct them, and award good grades to those with a large number of correct responses.

Teachers who are in active control of instruction have opportunities to mediate such interpretations of classroom activities and to develop more appropriate learning purposes. They assess student actions and reactions during instruction and clearly communicate their learning goals to

correlate student understanding with the intended outcomes
(Pearson, Roehler, Dole, & Duffy, 1992).

Objectives: Content, Process, and Attitude

Essential to the development of professionalism in
ESL instruction is the establishment of explicit objectives
that are clear to both the teacher and the students.
Although this may be stating the obvious, in many situations
the ESL teacher is presented with institutional objectives
which remove curricular decisions from the classroom
instructor; thus, the teacher has neither personal nor
professional involvement in the curriculum. Moreover, such
objectives are ordinarily limited to the content of the
course, or at least the content that the institution desires
students to know at the end of a given academic term. Yet,
ESL teachers do more than pass language content on to their
students; their instruction also involves processes and
attitudes. Thus, instructional goals and objectives should
involve all three aspects of classroom instruction: content,
process, and attitude.

Content objectives refer to the specific information
about language that the student must learn and on which he or
she will be evaluated. As previously mentioned, these
objectives may have been mandated by the institution so that
the teacher may have had little or no opportunity to
influence curriculum development. Even institutions that

establish objectives through the cooperative effort of
curriculum committees may provide little opportunity for
input from those who are not members of the committee. In
such situations, teachers justifiably conclude that they have
been deprived of decision-making roles and are thereby
withdraw into the roles of technicians who passively follow a
prescribed curriculum and react only to student performance.
Nevertheless, although an ESL teacher may have had little
influence on developing curriculum, the process in which
content objectives are met in the classroom provides several
opportunities for active decision-making.

Process objectives refer to the methods and procedures
used to meet the content objectives; in other words, how
teaching works. Here the ESL teacher has a wide range of
decision-making opportunities. The first step would be to
identify the constraints, such as packaged objectives,
overloaded classrooms, or poor instructional materials,
than plan how both the administrative and personal objectives
could be met. In this way, the teacher becomes a decision-
making professional who has taken control of instruction.

Content and process objectives depend on *attitude*
objectives, which involve developing positive conceptual
understandings that motivate students and mediate
instruction.

For ESL teachers to control the instructional process,

they must develop positive attitudes about language
education, and not have erroneous nor negative concepts about
teaching. In other words, *to be professional, ESL teachers
must think of themselves as professionals*, and accept
responsibility for both successful and unsuccessful
instructional results. Moreover, just as teaching is an
active, decision-making process, a fundamental goal in
ESL instruction is to help students understand that language
is an active, meaningful, and productive activity with the
goal of communication. Such a concept contributes to
positive attitudes about language by establishing accurate
expectations; for example, completing worksheets on verb
forms is neither meaningful nor productive.

Developing Professionalism in TESL

The obvious time to instill professional commitment is
during the TESL education program. Yet, to what extent does
teacher education inspire professionalism? While mandated
objectives and curricula are conducive to turning teachers
into technicians, the teacher education program may furnish
the institutions with finish products from the outset. ESL
teachers may not behave as professionals because the manner
of educating them to be teachers has not been linked to
putting them in charge of their own teaching. Rather than
encouraging future teachers to be independent decision-
makers, courses often present some authority's approach to

language learning with little opportunity for independent and critical thinking. The result is graduates who have learned to wait for others to direct them and who are unable to respond reflectively and creatively to teaching situations they encounter in the classroom.

The cognitive-mediational paradigm discussed above is therefore relevant at the tertiary level; students in TESL education programs also construct interpretations of instructional activities in order to make sense of the class and to survive. When a TESL education program delivers theory, methodology, and the instructional procedures in a manner in which students react passively, the system produces graduates who are compliant and reluctant to be decision-makers.

This is not to suggest that teacher education programs scrap courses in theoretical foundations and instructional methodology and operate on the basis of laissez-faire and rugged individualism. A strong grounding in learning theory, language acquisition and learning, and up-to-date methodology are essential to produce teachers of quality. Nevertheless, TESL education programs should involve students actively in their own learning, in effect putting them in charge of their own development as professionals. When teachers are required uncritically to follow materials, theories, and established procedures, they

become passive, depending on the system rather than taking charge (Apple, 1983).

The desired product of the TESL education program is a teacher who is creative and flexible and who can provide authentic occasions for language production that are not anticipated by a mandated curriculum. The teacher must have the confidence in his or her professionalism to deviate from the syllabus when the occasion demands it, and must be able to communicate this confidence to his or her immediate supervisors. In short, the teacher must be in charge.

Fianlly, a related aspect of professionalism concerns teacher morale. We surely hope that a teacher has chosen a career in language education because it offers challenging and personally rewarding work. When personal control of the career is removed by requiring adherence to mandated approaches and procedures, the teacher is robbed of professional dignity.

Professionalism is not component that can be directly taught; but it can be encouraged and nurtured. Because it lies in the affective domain, a commitment to professionalism is difficult to observe. Yet, teacher educators in their roles as mediators can organize instruction to nurture this commitment and observe indications that their students are assuming control of instruction. An intensive study of teaching styles has shown that effective teachers construct a

model of teaching that works for them in a specific setting
(Dillon, 1989). Students who have control of their own
learning will more likely be teachers who take charge of
their own teaching.

Another indication of professionalism is the ability
to tolerate ambiguity. For example, rather than insist on a
single procedure for teaching language, a professional is
willing to accommodate a variety of complex options. As part
of their education, students in TESL education should be
encouraged to select a variety of principles from among
several theories and procedures depending on the situation.

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to discuss the
development of professionalism in second language education.
A professional was defined as a decision-maker who is in
charge of instruction. This was in contrast to a technician
who passively follows instructional materials and reacts only
to student performance. Despite the real constraints facing
language teachers, developing professionalism is both
possible and essential and ESL teachers have the potential to
establish professionalism through the establishment of
content, process and attitude objectives. Finally, TESL
education programs have both the opportunity and the
obligation to instill professionalism into their students.
This means educating ESL instructors to be actively engaged

in a proactive mediational role rather than merely monitoring student responses to textbook exercises.

The problem with instilling professionalism in second language education involves a dilemma. Students in an ESL class construct a simple interpretation of the purpose of the class -- passing tests -- while teachers view the course as a means of improving language competence. Thus ESL teachers fail to realize how their students may have constructed an interpretation of what is important. ESL teachers may have been encouraged, or in some cases intimidated, in their beliefs by university professors who argue that any deviation from the current theory of language acquisition or learning is obsolete or "atheoretical". Such views are contradicted by recent research indicating that effective teaching is comprised of the ability to combine aspects of a variety of theories for the purpose of making instructional decisions which are relevant to a particular classroom situation (Duffy, 1990; Leinhardt, 1990).

The challenge in second language education is to promote inspired teaching through professionalism. This involves a recognition by TESL education programs that effective teaching does not originate in a particular theory of language acquisition or approach to language instruction. When teachers invest their methodology of teaching into a single theory or approach, they have abdicated their

responsibility for instructional decisions and become passive technicians. On the other hand, professionalism is more likely to result when language teachers are encouraged to make decisions on a variety of philosophical and theoretical approaches.

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