RESEARCH ISSUES

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Identifying Research Priorities: Themes and Directions for the TESOL International Research Foundation[1]

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■ In recent years, a number of research agendas have been published that are highly relevant to the activities of the TESOL profession internationally (e.g., August & Hakuta, 1997; Brindley, 1990; Brindley et al., 1996, 2000;[2] Center for Applied Linguistics, 1998; National Center for Research on Teacher Education, 1988; Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1996). With limited research funding typically available to TESOL researchers, including teacher researchers, and with the enormous

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[1] TIRF is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to generate new knowledge about English language teaching and learning domestically and abroad. TIRF plans to work collaboratively with others to apply the results of research to practical language problems and to publicize certain high-priority research issues as well as preferred research designs and networks (e.g., ideally team based, multimethod, and multinational, involving the direct and substantive participation of colleagues from the regions in which research will be conducted). For more information, see http://www.tirfonline.org/.

[2] See Brindley et al. (2000) for the official research agenda of the TESOL organization, commissioned in 1998 and later approved by TESOL's Board of Directors. Research topics and priorities were grouped into three clusters: (a) language learners (e.g., components of English language and literacy skills, learner variables); (b) educational settings (e.g., curriculum, assessment, needs analysis, teacher education); and (c) language in society (e.g., sociocultural and sociopolitical aspects of TESOL, language policy and planning, multilingualism; English in global society). The current discussion of research priorities represents a subset of topics in the *TESOL Research Agenda*.

potential scope of research pursuits across the profession internationally, we feel it is helpful to identify a subset of important and timely topics that researchers across educational contexts can pursue using a variety of research methods. In addition to the research many TESOL professionals conduct within their own local institutions, promoting possibly larger scale TESOL research, ideally conducted by multinational, interdisciplinary teams of researchers exploring similar issues, has scholarly and practical benefits. Examining TESOL topics both locally and globally provides the field with broad yet highly contextualized understandings of contemporary issues in different socioeducational settings.

Highlighting a particular set of research priorities, as we do in this section, or even the geographical regions that are named, does not diminish the importance of the many others that are not included here; nor does it suggest a rank ordering or a consensus among contributors that these and not other priorities should be singled out. However, the identification of research priorities for a field is not a random process either. The selection of topics for further investigation should be principled, with preference given to (a) issues that have not been sufficiently researched and have important theoretical and practical value at present; (b) issues in which there is considerable interest among well-defined groups; (c) issues involving underrepresented learners (or teachers), populations, and geographical regions around the world; and (d) issues with major policy implications (see, e.g., August & Hakuta, 1997; Tucker, 1999b). Naturally, the articulation of priorities also reflects the expertise, research experience, and interests of those who produce them; thus, in what follows, each priority piece represents the personal perspectives and backgrounds of individual authors—some dealing with issues affecting adult EFL learners or teachers, and others with issues affecting younger ESL learners; some focusing on oral proficiency, and others on literacy. Nevertheless, each piece is contextualized within a larger body of research, and we believe each has wide potential relevance to the field of English language education internationally.

This Research Issues compilation represents a departure from the standard format and content, which has in recent years examined various quantitative and qualitative research methods. For this issue, 10 researchers were each asked to outline an important area for further research within TESOL, together with a rationale and a list of sample research questions; each piece was initially limited to 400 words and 10 references.

Although no single research priorities piece could possibly represent all the issues connected with the subfield it is associated with or provide a comprehensive set of references or research questions, we hope that this compilation will help catalyze and focus further collaborative research efforts; that it will stimulate discussion about significant topics that require immediate attention; that it will provide funding agencies

with a list of issues deserving funding in the meantime; and that the results of research based on these priority statements will be widely disseminated and will have an impact on future policies and practices related to the teaching and learning of English.

Age of Beginning Instruction

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■ Many countries (e.g., Costa Rica, Korea, Japan, Thailand) have recently taken steps to introduce the teaching of English to students in their schools at an earlier age or grade level. This trend—noticed in foreign language education circles in the United States as well—seems to be based on the adage "earlier is better" rather than on any empirical data (cf. Cummins, 1979; d'Anglejan, 1990; Dickson & Cumming, 1996; Genesee, 1978; Pufahl, Rhodes, & Christian, 2001). The belief follows that it is maximally desirable to offer students an early introduction to the target language followed by a long and well-articulated sequence of training (Abbott, 1998).

In many situations, the validity of the adage "earlier is better" would seem to depend at least partially on the optimization of a number of factors. These include an explicit or implicit policy with respect to the role of language in education based on sound planning, and the existence of a well-developed curriculum for the various levels or stages of formal education (i.e., a framework that specifies fairly explicitly a set of language, content, cognitive, and affective objectives that are then tied to or illustrated by exemplary techniques and activities, and supported by written materials). Other factors are the availability and adequate distribution of appropriate pedagogical materials and the availability of trained, proficient teachers, as well as the availability and use of appropriate assessment procedures for providing formative and summative feedback. As educators and policy makers in diverse settings worldwide wrestle with the important question of how to improve the quality of instruction and educational attainment for students, a clear understanding of the structure and capacity of the current system would seem to be a critical element in any proposed reform (see, e.g., Dutcher, 1994; Tucker, 1999a). This leads me to propose a number of questions for the TESOL field's collective attention in the near future:

1. What are the effects within a particular educational context of systematically varying the age of introducing children to instruction

in English as an additional language? (These effects could be measured in terms of factors such as ultimate English language proficiency, school retention, subject matter proficiency, and continuation to higher education.)

2. What is the relative contribution of factors such as those identified above (e.g., availability of materials, trained proficient teachers) to ultimate attainment?

3. What are the most appropriate assessment procedures for examining questions such as these?

4. Can the same assessment procedures be used for multiple purposes, including placement, achievement, and others?

The provision of answers to questions such as these will respond positively to Swain's (1996) call for policy makers to "transfer a cycle of discovery" (p. 100), that is, the stages and processes of evaluation, theory building, generation of hypotheses, and experimentation that can help ensure the implementation of programs appropriate for the particular sociocultural contexts in which they will operate.

L2 Instruction: Time to Teach

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■ Sufficient time for learning is recognized as a requirement in all second/foreign language learning situations (Carroll, 1975; Stern, 1985; Swain, 1991). Estimates of the time needed vary considerably and depend on many factors, including the similarity of the L2 to the language(s) already learned, the intensity of instruction and exposure, the quality of the instruction, individual differences in aptitude and motivation, and the level of proficiency that is targeted. Adults may need thousands of hours of instruction and opportunities to use the language outside the classroom to attain high levels of L2 proficiency for social interaction and work-related communication (Cleveland, Mangone, & Adams, 1960). Minority language children in majority language classrooms and students in immersion programs may also need several thousand hours to reach age-appropriate ability to use the language in cognitively demanding situations (Collier & Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 1979; Krashen, 2001).

Where English is a foreign language, the expected level of proficiency is often not as high as in L2 contexts, where students need to use the

language in all aspects of education and work. Students usually receive only a few hundred hours of instruction, spread over several years, and only students who are exceptionally gifted or motivated or who have out-of-school exposure acquire the ability to use English effectively. It is frequently suggested that the best way to improve student achievement is to begin instruction earlier. However, other options may better maintain the students' L1 development while increasing the likelihood of success in the L2. Some research has shown that, in foreign language settings, shorter periods of concentrated instruction are more effective than *drip-feed* exposure (Hawkins, 1988; Lightbown & Spada, 1994, 1997), and students with a wide range of academic ability can benefit from intensive instruction (Collins, Halter, Lightbown, & Spada, 1999). The increased intensity appears to lay a foundation for further learning, both in and out of the classroom (Dussault, 1997; Lightbown & Spada, 1991).

Research in French immersion contexts (i.e., content-based instruction in what is essentially a foreign language setting) shows that the additional time gained by an early start may be less important than sustaining exposure and instruction as students get older (Lapkin, Hart, & Harley, 1998; Turnbull, Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1998).

These findings lead to three key questions for research:

1. How much time is required for most students to reach specified levels of proficiency in a variety of classroom settings?

2. How does the age of the learner interact with total instructional time?

3. How generalizable is the finding that a concentrated period of instruction is more effective than an extended period of less intensive instruction?

Learning to Read in an L2

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■ The increased, widespread demand for literacy instruction in English for children from non-English language backgrounds presents an enormous challenge. Reading in English is hard, even for L1 speakers. How can high literacy achievement be ensured for L2 speakers of English? Researchers know what the cognitive processes underlying skilled reading are, and thus know the component skills that children need to learn: the alphabetic principle, vocabulary, an understanding of discourse

structures, and the ability to treat text as communicative (National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Some of these capacities are language neutral; others vary with orthography and language community (Garcia, 2000). For example, children need phoneme awareness to profit from initial reading instruction in English but need only syllable awareness in Spanish (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 2000). The genres encountered in English differ enormously from Hindi genres. The goals of reading—whether to memorize, to appreciate, or to analyze the text, for example—may differ as well. Teaching reading well requires analyzing both universal and language-specific reading subprocesses. This line of thought leads to several key research questions:

1. Do literacy skills transfer from an L1 to English as an L2? If so, learners of English who have had literacy instruction in the L1 will benefit. More specifically,

2. Which L1 literacy skills transfer to support the acquisition of literacy in the L2?

3. Does the transfer of these various skills happen automatically, or does it require instruction focused on helping learners see and exploit the potential for transfer?

4. At what level of L1 literacy skill is initiation of literacy instruction in the L2 (a) most efficient, (b) most risk free, and (c) most likely to be successful?

5. What is the best initial literacy instruction in English for L2 speakers of English?

6. At what level of L2 oral proficiency is the introduction of initial literacy instruction in the L2 most likely to succeed?

7. At what level of L2 oral proficiency is the introduction of initial literacy instruction in the L2 most efficient?

Children learning to read in a language they do not speak are at high risk of poor outcomes. This issue is relevant to schools in South Africa, Namibia, Singapore, and other settings where English is being widely adopted as the universal language of schooling; in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Israel, and other places where English is a universally taught foreign language; in Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, and other countries where elite schools have adopted bilingual models; and, of course, in the United States, where large and increasing numbers of non-English speakers are acquiring initial or secondary literacy in English. The TESOL field needs a concerted research effort to inform literacy instruction for such children—to determine when to start literacy instruction and how to adapt it to the L2 reader's needs. L1 literates may enjoy positive transfer to English L2 literacy, but research is needed to

enhance the likelihood of such transfer, to understand its limitations, and to pinpoint areas of likely interference.

Dual-Language Education for English Language Learners

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■ Dual-language education (DLE) provides instruction aimed at developing bilingual abilities. Contexts and languages vary widely, from Spanish/English programs in the United States, to a Hungarian/Slovak school in the Slovak Republic, to a Maori/English program in New Zealand (Christian & Genesee, 2001). These schools share a common goal: development of the L1 of the students along with high levels of proficiency and literacy in an L2. An increasingly popular form of DLE is two-way immersion, in which students from two different language backgrounds are integrated for all or most of the instructional day. All students receive content instruction and literacy instruction in both languages, with the goals of developing bilingualism, strong academic abilities, and positive cross-cultural attitudes (Christian, 1996; Lindholm-Leary, 2001). There has been a surge in the popularity of these programs in the past 10 years, and they are currently receiving a great deal of attention. The incidence of two-way immersion remains highest in the United States, but programs are being implemented around the world— for example, a Macedonian/Albanian program reported by Tankersley (2001). Gaps remain in the research base needed for guiding program design and implementation, however (Freeman, 1998; Tarone & Swain, 1995; Valdés, 1997).

For all dual-language approaches, questions arise related to school-based language instruction and the need to master content through, and literacy in, an L2 (August & Hakuta, 1997; Christian & Genesee, 2001). The acquisition of literacy competence as well as subject matter learning is a critical factor in academic success, and these processes need to be better understood when L2 learning is occurring at the same time (Crandall, 1992). Other important questions involve how to ensure language learning to high proficiency levels when the focus is primarily on content. Some critical research questions include

1. What factors should affect choice of language and methods for initial literacy instruction (e.g., L1/L2 proficiency levels, age of student,

L1/L2 linguistic differences, grouping for literacy instruction, level of resources available)?

2. How can students develop high levels of proficiency in the L2 and the L1 when they are primarily learned through content in an immersion setting within a dual-language program (e.g., What is the optimal timing and amount of L2 language instruction? What about focus on form issues?)?

3. How do student characteristics (e.g., age, socioeconomic status, prior experiences, language proficiency) interact with instructional processes and results? Are there any students for whom a bilingual approach is not recommended?

School-based dual-language programs offer great promise for developing the linguistic resources of a society and its members. L2 professionals therefore must learn how to facilitate optimal functioning of and results for dual-language education.

Interaction in the Classroom

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■ The general conclusion from the limited research on interaction in the classroom as an explanation for acquisition (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000; Mackey, 1999; Ohta, 1999, 2001) is that specific, well-designed tasks in experimental settings have a moderate effect on acquisition. It is tempting to take this finding as evidence that interaction in the classroom leads to acquisition and to tell language teachers to have more interaction in their classes. This actually has been done. "Good practice" mantras stress the benefits of interaction, and teachers seem to accept this. The real point is to what extent and how the words of experts reflect what goes on in normal, everyday language teaching (cf. Gass, 1997; van Lier, 1996). For example, in a project on classroom interaction carried out in the teacher education department of the University of Nijmegen (Hermans-Nymark, van der Ven, & van Esch, 2001), we were unpleasantly surprised by data from observations in a number of normal, nonexperimental EFL classes. Even though the teachers observed knew that we were interested in classroom interaction and may therefore have done their best encourage it, the amount and quality of the interaction appeared very limited. Rather, the form interaction took was basically that the teacher asked a question and the student answered (or did not). If this is normally the case in a country in which attitudes toward English

are extremely positive, the need to know English is evident, opportunities to use the language outside the classroom abound, and levels of proficiency in this language are generally high, one might wonder how interaction in the classroom can play a role in settings that are less favorable in these respects.

Major questions with respect to the role of interaction in the foreign language classroom are the following:

1. What is known about interaction in normal classes? What is the impact of teacher and student characteristics on the occurrence of interaction, in particular between learners rather than between the teacher and individual learners?

2. If there is interaction, does it have specific effects on acquisition, or does it have a more global effect that goes beyond the linguistic features that emerge in the interactions? Is listening to other people's interaction enough, or is active participation of all individuals a prerequisite for language development?

3. If there is no high-quality interaction, what can we offer teachers in terms of tasks and activities that take into account the limitations of normal classrooms and quite often not-too-motivated adolescents?

The conclusion seems to be that research needs to be done on what, if any, interaction takes place in real L2 classrooms and what effect that interaction has on the ongoing process of language acquisition.

Language Assessment and Program Evaluation

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■ Research into language assessment and program evaluation is central to any agenda that seeks to address problems of language teaching and learning. A great deal of research in language testing has developed the technical aspects of measuring language ability for the purposes of informing decisions about individuals as well as evaluating language programs (e.g., Bachman, 2000). Examples of research priorities within measurement or language testing include the use of statistical modeling techniques to validate the large-scale tests of English language proficiency that are undergoing revisions to incorporate a more communicative view of language ability (e.g., the TOEFL 2000 Project). However, researchers still need to determine which aspects of individual language ability and language program effectiveness can be measured (i.e.,

quantified on an interval-like or strongly continuous scale) and which would be better assessed with nonmeasurement (qualitative) techniques. For example, the interactive aspects of language ability and programs that view language as coconstructed or that focus on collaborative learning may be better assessed and evaluated qualitatively. Language ability and language program effectiveness are complex constructs. Limiting assessment procedures to testing or measurement may miss important information about these constructs.

Drawing on the recent work of Brindley (2000), it would be important to investigate the relationship between instances of language use or performance and the criteria and principles teachers use to assess that performance. For example, further work describing the nature of ESL/EFL learners' language use on particular tasks could be compared with participatory action research by teachers that articulates their process of assessing learners' language ability. This research would also lead to recommendations concerning the type and degree of support teachers need from their institutions in order to carry out assessment- and evaluation-related innovations (Bamforth & Grieve, 1996; Bottomley, Dalton, & Corbel, 1994; Brindley, 1998). In particular, the following questions seem most important:

1. What is the range of nonmeasurement assessment techniques that can be used for language assessment and program evaluation?

2. What political and ethical issues arise for nonmeasurement assessment that differ from those for language testing (see Shohamy, 2001)?

3. To what extent is it possible to report qualitative, alternative assessment data as aggregated test scores without losing important assessment information (see Brindley, 1998)?

4. How can nonmeasurement approaches to evaluation be used to address the issue of different stakeholders having different criteria for judging proficiency, achievement, and program effectiveness?

5. What procedures can be developed to resolve potentially conflicting interpretations of qualitative, alternative assessment data by different stakeholders or judges?

An effort to address these questions will logically include a combination of measurement and nonmeasurement techniques for language assessment and program evaluation. Broadening the perspective to include alternative, nonmeasurement approaches does not mean abandoning the established language testing research program. However, it does mean being open to new validity frameworks implied by the different research paradigms underlying the alternative assessment approaches (Hamp-Lyons & Lynch, 1998; Lynch & Hamp-Lyons, 1999; Teasdale &

Leung, 2000). Finally, although these research priorities may seem more appropriate for an international language testing research agenda, many of the central research concerns of TESOL assume valid and reliable methods for assessing language ability and evaluating program effectiveness. For that reason, I argue for keeping assessment issues within the research priorities being articulated here.

English as a Global Language

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■ The demand for English language and English language education has increased exponentially with economic globalization. It is the language of business, technology, science, the Internet, popular entertainment, and even sports (Crystal, 1997, 2000; Graddol, 1997). In academic contexts, Swales (1987) estimates that over 50% of the millions of academic papers published each year are written in English, and the percentage is growing year by year. The response to this demand by governments around the world has been to introduce English as a compulsory subject at younger and younger ages, often without adequate funding, teacher education, or the provision of appropriate resources. In business, industry, and government, workers are increasingly expected to develop proficiency in English. This has created many challenges for TESOL educators internationally.

Currently, the TESOL field has a need for basic research to answer many questions being raised by governments, bureaucracies, and industry. These bodies need to know how and where to direct scarce resources (this is a pressing need in developing countries). There is an urgent need to know the costs and benefits of training students and employees in the English language. A related issue has to do with the effect of the spread of English on indigenous languages, which may lead to a denial of the right of children to be educated in their own language.

The following key questions arise:

1. What are the English language needs of workers in a wide range of workplaces and occupations, from multinational corporations to governmental and quasi-governmental institutions, such as hospitals and immigration offices?

2. How can technology help meet these needs?

3. What are the most effective, cost-effective means of meeting these needs, and what curriculum modes are most effective (e.g., traditional

classroom-based, self-access, independent learning, distance learn-ing, technology- and Web-based)?

4. What are the implications of the changing workplace and economy globally for the teaching, learning, and use of English, often with speakers of other languages or varieties of English?

5. What is the impact of English as a global language on the educa-tional practices and medium of instruction in educational systems around the world (Phillipson, 1992)?

6. What are the costs and benefits, in terms of time, money, and effort, of (a) enhancing and (b) maintaining English language skills in foreign language settings (Master, 1998)?

7. In developing countries, to what extent is access to English a mechanism for determining who has access to economic advance-ment and who does not?

8. What are the negative effects of English as a global language, and how might these be countered (Kachru, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Shorris, 2000)?

Learning English for Academic and Occupational Purposes

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■ In order to study or work in mainstream or English-dominant contexts requiring high levels of English proficiency, increasing numbers of children and adults must learn ESL both as an object of study and as a means for learning and doing other things. Often they must also pass high-stakes language examinations that control admission into such academic and professional fields as medicine, pharmacy, engineering, or teaching. However, although a fair amount is known about early L2 development and communicative competence (e.g., Brown, 2001), insuf-ficient research has examined language learning, discourse socialization, and assessment at more advanced levels of secondary and postsecondary education for various academic or occupational purposes (Jordan, 1997; Zamel & Spack, 1998). Lacking is knowledge about the processes, outcomes, and time required for immigrant adolescents (Faltis & Wolfe, 1999), "Generation 1.5" young adults (i.e., people who immigrated to a

new country during their childhood and have grown up and been educated in the new country; Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999), international students, and older adults to become fully functional (socio)linguistically within schools, workplaces, and other community settings requiring English. The current (socio)linguistic practices, discourse requirements, literacies, and assessment practices (and gatekeeping measures) within particular fields across the humanities, social sciences, and sciences must also be understood better. This knowledge will enable practitioners to design more effective L2 programs, including those integrating language and content instruction (e.g., Duff & Labrie, 2000; Mohan, Leung, & Davison, 2001; Snow & Brinton, 1997). Qualitative and quantitative research should then examine the impact of participation in language programs on students' demonstrable L2 abilities, content knowledge, career outcomes, and ability to participate in local discourse communities as well as the global society (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1998; Duff, Wong & Early, 2000).

Therefore, some research questions to be pursued are

1. What are the current English language and literacy requirements and practices in specific academic and professional/vocational fields (e.g., health sciences) nationally and internationally? What genres of speech, writing, and interaction characterize those fields, and how are they best taught and acquired?

2. What kinds of preparation, intervention, and assessment are most effective in assisting ESL learners in these settings to attain their own goals as well as reach established external standards? What policies concerning standardized proficiency testing or other forms of assessment apply, and how valid are these policies?

3. What factors contribute to underachievement or attrition among particular ethnolinguistic groups of L2 students in academic/occupational programs, and what interventions might improve completion rates and other desired outcomes for these groups? How might access to programs be increased for underrepresented groups?

4. What is the impact of ESL program completion on participants' language abilities and identities within their academic and professional communities?

These research questions are equally applicable to immigrant and nonimmigrant L2 learners internationally who seek sufficiently advanced language and literacy skills to conduct work, studies, and interpersonal communication in English-mediated environments.

Teacher Learning and Student Learning in TESOL

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■ Over the past decade around the world, teacher education has been identified as a central variable in the transformation and reform of educational systems at national and local levels (e.g., in Brazil [Ministry of Education and Culture, 1996]; in Italy [Lopriore. 1998]; in South Africa [National Department of Education, 1996]; in the United States [National Commission on Teaching for America's Future, 1997]). The argument, which is grounded in common sense and in research, is that because teachers are central mediators in what and how students learn in their classrooms, teachers must engage in their own professional learning in order to improve student learning (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2000). Further, the ways in which such professional learning—known as *teacher learning* (Kennedy, 1991)—is organized and facilitated make a difference in terms of its durability and long-term efficacy. This line of research has potentially profound impacts on educational practices (e.g., teacher mentoring) and policy development (e.g., teacher licensure). The major assumptions that underlie research into teacher learning are as follows.

First, because teachers are central mediators in what and how students learn in their classrooms, strengthening teacher learning will improve student learning. Such improvements in teaching rest on teachers' engagement in professional learning. In TESOL, for example, this assumption underlies the introduction of the certificates in Crosscultural, Language and Academic Development and in Bilingual, Crosscultural, Language and Academic Development required of teachers in California. Second, teacher learning occurs both explicitly, through formally organized pre- and in-service teacher training and professional development, and implicitly, through personal and professional socialization of individuals into teaching. The TESOL field, for example, focuses on both formal training in organized interventions ranging from the intensive preservice teaching certificates (e.g., the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate's Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults, or the School for International Training's TESOL Certificate) to postgraduate education. Likewise, around the world interest has increased in how new teachers are effectively supported and socialized at the school level (e.g., Gebhard, 1998). Third, in many contexts, ESOL instruction is becoming more complex and demanding as schools admit learners who are more linguistically and culturally diverse. Therefore, teacher learning becomes the critical link in support-

ing this diversity through educational reform and systemic improvement. (This issue is addressed by Tucker and by Duff in this review.)

These three assumptions frame two clusters of research issues, the first of which concerns teacher knowledge (Johnson, 1999):

1. How is ESOL teacher knowledge formed both over time and in particular settings? How, in turn, does such knowledge shape classroom practices? How do teachers' prior knowledge and experience shape new professional learning?

2. What is the role of subject matter knowledge (e.g., applied linguistics and English language proficiency) in instruction? What do ESOL teachers need to know about language in general and English in particular in order to teach? How much and what kinds of subject matter knowledge is needed to teach learners of which levels?

3. What is the role of teacher research in the study of teacher knowledge?

The second set of issues concerns formal and informal teacher learning (e.g., Freeman & Richards, 1996):

4. How do teachers learn to teach ESOL learners? How do various designs of initial and ongoing training and development support teacher learning?

5. Specifically, how do various designs and practices in preservice preparation prepare new teachers to teach under various circumstances (e.g. EFL, ESL; P–12; adult basic education)? How do designs and practices in professional development support experienced ESOL teachers in different settings?

6. How do teacher standards and licensure shape classroom effectiveness and student learning in TESOL? Can anyone teach English?

Teacher Preparation and Development

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■ English is taught by a variety of people around the world—trained and untrained teachers, native and nonnative speakers. Effective English learning depends to a large extent on appropriate teaching. Therefore, research questions arise about appropriate initial teacher preparation and the continued professional development of teachers throughout their careers (see Flowerdew, Brock, & Hsia, 1992; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Li, Mahoney, & Richards, 1994; Sachs, Brock, & Lo, 1996).

Recently, some widely held beliefs about English teaching have been challenged. For example, the idea that native speakers are the best teachers has been questioned—and has even been called the *native speaker fallacy* (Braine, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999; Phillipson, 1992). The long-standing debate over British versus American English as the preferable model has given way to the concepts of multiple possible targets and nativized Englishes (Lowenberg, 1990). As advances in travel, communications, and technology have accelerated the pace and frequency of contacts between people and among peoples, traditional needs for learning English have evolved into new needs. (Consider the workplace context in Jakarta where a Japanese manager deals with Indonesian employees in English.) These developments have generated concerns about the appropriate initial preparation of language teachers, the standard of target language mastery to be attained by nonnative-English-speaking teachers working in varied contexts, and the nature of the evolving knowledge and skill bases needed by all teachers. As the demand for English language educational opportunities increases, so will the demand for appropriately prepared teachers.

This set of concerns entails many potential research questions:

1. How do classroom activities planned and executed by teachers relate to students' language learning? In other words, given a certain curriculum, how do teachers turn allocated time into engaged time, that is, the time students spend on task (Nerenz & Knop, 1982)?

2. How can effective teaching best be identified, measured, and promoted? What characteristics of teachers are identified as effective, in terms of their behavior and their thinking?

3. What are the most effective ways of promoting language learning under the varied conditions to be found around the globe (e.g., limited resources, large classes, limited time to learn)?

4. What standards of target language proficiency should be expected of nonnative-English-speaking teachers? How are those standards influenced by local supply and demand (e.g., in EFL contexts where not enough properly trained teachers are available)?

5. How can in-service development best be promoted and sustained? How do effective models of in-service development change, given local needs and circumstances?

6. How can teachers bring about their own continued professional development? What role do the professional associations play in such development?

Of course, research on effective teacher preparation and development is predicated, at least in part, upon an understanding of language learning itself. Therefore, this particular focus on teacher research

should be viewed in concert with the foci on language learning discussed by the other contributors to this section.

CONCLUSION

The primary goal of research is to produce new knowledge or new understandings and, in the TESOL profession, to improve education. The generation of research priorities and agendas is part of an ongoing process of brainstorming, culling, selecting, ranking, commissioning, proposing, conducting, and disseminating important research to different audiences. The aggregation of previous research findings is an essential part of the process, and advice and suggestions from stakeholders, other scholars, and potential collaborators in the field are also invaluable.[3] This culling process allows researchers (and research foundations such as the TESOL International Research Foundation) to identify subsets of issues from much larger sets that are of greatest interest, significance, and relevance. To that end, we welcome feedback from *TESOL Quarterly* readers about important priorities from their own contexts and perspectives (which may or may not include those presented above)—and particularly those from outside North America; this input, which can be submitted on an interactive bulletin board in the Publications section of http://www.tesol.org/, will facilitate the collective identification of the most pressing global research issues at this time.

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[3] For example, a 1-day discussion of these priority statements and additional research/policy concerns related to English (L2) education internationally took place in February 2001 among representatives from the TIRF Board of Trustees and invited representatives from several key associations (the American Association for Applied Linguistics, the American Educational Research Association, and the National Association of Bilingual Education), organizations (the Center for Applied Linguistics, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, the National Education Association, the Defense Language Institute, and the World Bank); and publishers (Pearson Education and Oxford University Press). The discussion was envisioned as the first of many such consultations, which in the future will include substantial international representation and participation.

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