
A Question of Knowledge Base

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While many university language departments frame their mission primarily in terms of literary and/or cultural studies, they invariably teach language and devote resources to the pedagogical training of graduate students. The question to be addressed in the six papers in this special section is: What constitutes the knowledge base for this language teaching and pedagogical training? In 2000, Claire Kramsch wrote an article in the *Modern Language Journal* that explored the epistemologies of, and relationships among, the fields of Second Language Acquisition, Foreign Language Education, Foreign Language Methodology, and Applied Linguistics in providing a knowledge base for the teaching and learning of languages in educational settings. She pointed out that before World War I, language teaching was grounded in philology, but that the rise of psychology and structural linguistics brought language teaching into the realm of the social sciences, leading to the development of the field of Second Language Acquisition in the 1970s. Kramsch argued that today Applied Linguistics is the overarching interdisciplinary field that connects the theory and the practice of language acquisition/use and most amply accommodates sociocultural, historical, and semiotic perspectives in addition to linguistic and psycholinguistic dimensions.

With globalization, many of the traditional tenets of foreign language teaching and learning at the university level have been put into question (e.g., communicative competence as the undisputed primary goal, the native speaker as definitive model, the notion of a homogenous monolingual target culture, and the traditional divisions between the teaching of language, literature/film, history and culture). They are now slowly being replaced by such concepts as multicompetence, the multilingual speaker, multiliteracies, translanguaging, and the development of social and historical consciousness.

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the *L2 Journal*, the Executive Board organized a Roundtable in October 2020 designed to revisit the relationship between research and practice in the teaching of foreign languages. We selected speakers to represent different languages, but also to represent different positionalities within the university (graduate students, lecturers, department chair) in order to get a variety of perspectives. Panelists were given three questions and asked to answer some or all of them as they chose:

1. From where are foreign language teachers expected to draw the knowledge necessary for them to teach in this new dispensation?
2. Which field of inquiry are they expected to call their own: Foreign language methodology? Foreign language pedagogy/education? Curriculum and instruction? Second language acquisition research? Applied linguistics? Psycholinguistics?

Sociolinguistics? Literary/cultural studies? ESL? *Didactique des langues*? *Fremdsprachen-didaktik*?

3. What insights have you gained or are you likely to gain from this field for your teaching or learning of a foreign language?

The question of intellectual base is not a rhetorical one; it is crucial for hiring, evaluating, and promoting language teachers, as well as for advising them in their professional development (Which professional meetings should they attend? What should they read? What kinds of research opportunities are available to them? What are the best venues for publication?). The question of knowledge base is also crucial for language majors and for those considering graduate studies in the language.

The six authors in this special section all have a stake in the teaching and learning of languages at UC Berkeley. Margot Szarke is a Lecturer in the French Department; Dominick Lawton is a graduate student in Slavic Languages and Literatures; Ignacio Navarrete is a professor and former Chair of the Spanish and Portuguese Department; Minsook Kim is a Lecturer of Korean in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures; Gabriella Licata is a graduate student in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese; and Annamaria Bellezza is a Lecturer in the Department of Italian Studies. At the October Roundtable these authors were joined by the members of the Executive Board of the L2 Journal: Robert Blake, Mark Kaiser, Rick Kern, Claire Kramersch, and Emily Linares.

REFERENCE

- Kramersch, C. (2000). Second language acquisition, applied linguistics, and the teaching of foreign languages. *Modern Language Journal*, 84(3), 311-326.