Chapter 4

A Portrait of Grammar Knowledge in Practice:
Teacher Language Awareness in a Swedish Bilingual School for the Deaf

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The underrepresentation of authentic classroom grammar teaching in teacher education leads to teacher candidates being introduced to "pedagogical options in grammar teaching without being able to illustrate when, how, and why teachers in real classrooms draw upon these options" (Borg, 1999b, p. 160). Integrating portraits of classroom language teaching into teacher education programs can help ameliorate that problem. This chapter shares one such portrait, drawn from interview and observation data collected from high-quality teachers in a Swedish bilingual school for the deaf. A portrait of the way in which Christel applies her "Knowledge of Learners," an important component of teacher language awareness (TLA) is presented, organized around observed classroom vignettes during which she focuses on the grammatical structure of both signed and spoken languages. Suggestions are then offered for how such portraits might be integrated into the curriculum of teacher preparation programs to better prepare teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing.

INTRODUCTION

Language education researchers (Borg, 1998c, 1999; Johnston & Goettsch, 2000; Popko, 2005) have long been making the case for integrating portraits of (L2) classroom teaching focused on new language learning (L2) into the design of teacher education programs. "Stimulating portraits of L2 teacher practice," Borg (1998c) suggested, will help promote "a reciprocal relationship in which research is grounded in the realities of classroom practice but at the same time provides teachers with insights into teaching through which they can critically examine, and hence improve, their own practice" (p. 32). This chapter will share one such portrait, drawn from interview and observation data collected from an exceptional educator in a Swedish bilingual school for the deaf: Christel. A portrait of the way in which Christel applies her "Knowledge of Learners," an important component of Teacher Language Awareness (TLA) (Andrews, 2007) is presented, organized around observed classroom vignettes during which she focuses on the grammatical structure of both signed and spoken languages. Suggestions are then offered for how such portraits might be integrated into the curriculum of teacher preparation programs to better prepare teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Teacher Language Awareness (TLA) was defined by Andrews (2007) as teachers' knowledge-in-action about language and language teaching, consisting of their explicit language knowledge, knowledge of learners, language proficiency, and beliefs and feelings about language and language teaching. Lindahl (2019) has argued that the construct of TLA may serve as a framework for examining the ways in which teachers in diverse linguistic contexts conceptualize language and enact linguistically responsive education. Along with Andrews and Lin (2017), Lindahl (2016) has shown that "high degrees of TLA enable teachers to perform such pedagogical tasks as addressing language demands via content and language integration, responding to language-related questions that arise in the classroom, recognizing dialectical varieties among speakers, conveying positive language ideologies in their classrooms, and socializing language learners into academic language communities specific to content-area disciplines" (Lindahl, 2019, p. 87). Teachers of the deaf work in diverse linguistic contexts; deaf children are a heterogeneous group linguistically and culturally, and many would be accurately conceptualized as English Learners (Howerton-Fox & Falk, 2019). Furthermore, Kurz et al. (2021) note a lack of consistency across deaf education teacher preparation programs in their focus on sign language proficiency, comparative linguistics of ASL and English, and ASL

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