Book Review

Johnson, K. E. (2009). *Second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective.*
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Reviewed by

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Introduction

Teacher education is a crucial point in second language (L2) which can be discussed from various aspects and points of view. Throughout the history of L2 teacher education, it has been discussed and studied from several perspectives such as behaviorist perspectives from the 1960s to the late 1970s, cognitivist view on teacher education in the late 1970s, and sociocultural views in the last two decades. A brief look at the title and the table of contents of "Second Language Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Perspective" indicates that the book is an attempt to look at L2 teacher education from a different perspective than we are used to. With regard to the issue of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and the current global understanding that English is not limited to the countries that use it as their mother tongue, rather, all the speakers of English have a role in the development of the language. This indicates that they bring their sociocultural factors into the language as a determining factor that needs to be taken into account, especially in teacher education. Therefore, this book follows a sociocultural approach to the issue of teacher education.

Second Language Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Perspective" consists of eight chapters, starting from "1: Defining a Sociocultural Perspective" to "8: Future Challenges for Second Language Teacher Education". In between, come 6 chapters that discuss the issues of teacher education from sociocultural point of view, further describing the issue at hand.

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Chapter 1: Defining a Sociocultural Perspective

The first chapter defines a sociocultural perspective to L2 teacher education. In this chapter, the author presents an operational definition of sociocultural factors, better put by herself, "epistemological stance of a sociocultural perspective". She argues that an individual's social life forms the foundation for a higher-level human cognition, despite the common belief that the reverse relationship is the case. Building on earlier works such as those of Vygotsky (1978, 1986), she argues that it is the sociocultural factors that make a distinction between people when higher-level thinking is involved. Considering this perspective as the core of her work, the author generalizes this viewpoint to teachers by defining them as "learners of teaching".

Chapter 2: Shifting Epistemologies in Teacher Education

In the second chapter, Johnson discusses shifting epistemologies in teacher education. She uses the word "epistemology" rather than "beliefs" because she believes that the foundation of what a teacher educator does is built on the epistemological stance they embrace. This chapter is based on the point of view that epistemological shifts in L2 teacher education has stemmed from broader shifts in human cognition. The author states that how educational research conceptualizes teacher learning is nothing but the result of the historical shifts of viewing human learning.

Chapter 3: Teachers as Learners of Teaching

Chapter 3 deals with the issue of teachers as learners of teaching with roots in Vygotsky's internalization theory. This chapter says that a teacher brings his/her beliefs to the classroom in various stages of learning as a language learner, teacher education courses for professional development and how they interact with their students. In all these situations, as the author believes, the teacher brings his/her sociocultural beliefs with him/herself. This chapter concludes with the fact that as teachers learn language that is socially presented to them, various tools such as cultural artifacts and activities, scientific concepts, and social relation helps them to move from this temporary "other" to internalized sociocultural selves.

Chapter 4: Language as Social Practice

Next chapter discusses language as social practice. This chapter starts with a criticism of "native speaker-ness", the belief that if someone can speak a language well, then he/she is also able to teach that language, whereas this belief is not the case. However, knowledge about language (KAL) is an imperative factor to take into account here. This notion is a determining factor in teacher education as the author believes. The chapter continues with referring to a number of classroom-based research studies with the aim of finding if having a theoretical understanding of formal linguistic properties of language, i.e. the syntactic, phonological, and morphological rules enables L2 teachers to help their students acquire it. The results of these studies show that although KAL shapes teachers' perceptions of language, it has little impact on how they teach that language. The chapter concludes with the idea that L2 teacher education should prepare

teachers to have the role of assisting their learners to use the target language in appropriately in social situations while interacting with others.

Chapter 5: Teaching as Dialogic Mediation

Chapter 5 is entitles dialogic mediation, in which a different view of teaching, learning and development is proposed. This chapter rules out two approaches of teacher-centeredness and student-centeredness, continuing with the fact that the foundation of teaching and learning a language is engaging in social activities and learning through it. It also emphasizes the mediating role of classroom interaction "in learners' overall conceptual development". This fact justifies the use of resources of learning and the final outcomes of the classroom, which is "whether or not this is working to build learners' capacity to generate meaning through...relevant interaction and activities".

Chapter 6: Macro-Structures and the Second Language Teaching Profession

Chapter 6 deals with the role of macro-structures in L2 teaching. These macro-structures are broader social, cultural, and historical macro-structures that shape activities that L2 teachers and their students engage in. This chapter does this by considering Activity Theory as a base for discussing and interpreting the relationship between "individual development and the social-material conditions of everyday life". In other words, it is the social world that forms individual cognition. Therefore, as the author suggests, L2 teacher education courses should direct teachers-learners' attention towards the macro-structures underlying the contexts in which they live, learn, and work.

Chapter 7: Inquiry-Based Approaches to Professional Development

In chapter 7 which is about inquiry-based approaches to professional development, the role of reflection on teaching experiences, in particular on-the-job training (OJT) practices is emphasized. Based on this view, one of the significant components of professional development is action research as a tool for change and innovation in their classroom practices. This chapter presents several models for inquiry that contribute to professional development. These models include: Critical Friends Groups, Peer Coaching, Lesson Study, Cooperative Development, and Teacher Study Groups. Due to the fact that all these models are based on social interaction, they are proved to be of help for teachers' professional development in a sociocultural perspective.

Chapter 8: Future Challenges for Second Language Teacher Education

Finally, the last chapter deals with future challenges for L2 teacher education. With regard to the increasing variety of English language used and taught throughout the world, chapter 8 names and elaborates on several major challenges facing L2 teacher education. The challenges that the author lists are: a) taking into account the complex social, political, economic, and cultural settings where teachers learn and work, b) linking teacher learning and student learning, and c) the intellectual tools of inquiry.

Conclusion

The book "Second Language Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Perspective", it takes a somewhat different approach to second language teacher education by looking at it from a sociocultural point of view. This book answers the questions of a wide variety of teachers and teacher educators in an engaging prose. The book is so fruitful that I doubt anyone reading it would finish it without having a new insight formed in them. However, due to the fact that the book needs previous enough knowledge of sociocultural theory, it might require the reader to study sociocultural models before reading this book to be able to understand the theoretical explanations better. For the other part, this book raises so many questions which could lead to better understanding of the issue at hand, but it can also complicate it and confuse the reader. Therefore, the book could also discuss the issue from a more detailed perspective in later chapters because there is no problem with listing what to do and what not to do in a practical sense.