Introduction

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Rationale for this book: the linguistically aware teacher

Primary school teachers across the world are responsible for developing children's talking and listening, reading and writing skills. They are responsible for assessing development in these areas and for creating learning environments in which language and literacy learning can thrive.

Knowledge from research in linguistics and applied linguistics now underpins much of the primary school language and literacy curriculum. Obvious examples include the teaching of phonics and phonological awareness, genre-based approaches to writing and to reading comprehension, and of course the teaching of modern foreign languages. Primary teachers draw on frameworks derived from applied linguistics when they seek to understand these aspects of the curriculum, and to analyse children's phoneme awareness, spelling, reading strategies or writing attainment. Evidence from applied linguistics research prompts teachers to bridge the language and literacy gaps between home and school or to use the relationship between oral language, reading and writing to make learning in the classroom more efficient. It helps primary teachers consider how to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of individuals with defined language and literacy difficulties, or the needs of bilingual and multilingual children who are learning English as an additional language at school.

Finally, applied linguistics research contributes to our understanding of classroom pedagogy and curriculum organisation. For example, it offers insights into group interaction and classroom discourse and, as such, has the capacity to inform how teachers teach and how they manage their classes to ensure more efficient learning. It offers a framework to help us understand the gendered way that pupils network around books, and offers the potential of a research-based approach to organising the curriculum and resources in ways that help to address gender gaps in literacy attainment.

Why this, why now?

In the current educational climate it is particularly important that teachers have an understanding of applied linguistics. First, there is increasing international

focus on raising academic attainment, and many countries have policy developments focused around 'excellence agendas'. To raise attainment, teachers are required to teach efficiently, to tailor the curriculum for particular schools and classes, and to support individual children to achieve success at school. This means that teachers need in-depth understanding of curriculum knowledge but also wider knowledge, for example, of linguistic ethnography to understand how beliefs about literacy are shaped, how a range of resources – cultural, social, linguistic and material – affect children's mastery of reading, language and writing conventions, how they affect the ways that children take advantage of the language and literacy opportunities offered in school, and what schools and teachers can do about this. Teachers are often making decisions about curriculum content, organisation and delivery in a 'high-stakes' environment, with regular scrutiny of classroom practice. This makes it even more important that curriculum decisions are based on clear analysis and evidence from research. Understanding the basis of the language and literacy curriculum and of language and literacy development allows teachers and education policy makers to make reliable decisions and to explain their decisions to others.

The second reason for an enhanced knowledge of applied linguistics amongst primary teachers is that school populations are changing. The global economy has increased international mobility. In any metropolitan area it is now the norm to find bilingual and multilingual children. Primary teachers are responsible for adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of this diverse range of children. They need to understand the linguistic issues such children face and how to adapt the curriculum to promote rapid language learning.

Diversity is not just a question of the number of languages children speak. Inclusion policies within the legislative frameworks of many countries mean that children with individual language and literacy difficulties or with speech, language and communication impairments are also present in many classrooms (for an international review of this, see Ainscow and Sandill 2010). Legislation often puts education staff in the driving seat and it is the role of the primary teacher to ensure partnership working, effective support, and development opportunities for all children.

Partnership working is the third reason that modern primary teachers need an understanding of applied linguistics if they are to meet the demands of the current educational climate. Successful primary teaching in modern schools requires primary teachers to work with a number of other professionals, including English as an additional language teachers, and mother-tongue support teachers; learning support teachers; educational psychologists, and speech and language therapists. Teachers will often be involved in consultancy approaches, where language teaching or interventions are planned amongst several professionals, but delivered in the classroom by education staff under the immediate direction of the primary teacher. In such co-professional situations, it is useful

for primary teachers to understand the ways that linguistics frameworks are used by other professionals.

However, few primary teachers currently study linguistics in pre-service courses, few teacher educators have expertise in the area, and linguistics can seem a 'difficult' subject, with little relevance to the crowded teacher education programme. As a result primary teaching graduates may lack sufficient linguistic knowledge to recognise where their literacy-teaching frameworks come from, or understand how to adapt and apply them appropriately. They may also lack a knowledge base to analyse children's talk and literacy development, and lack a linguistic metalanguage to help them think about progression or to communicate with other professionals. A lack of such knowledge runs the risk of unreliable decision-making, based on habit rather than evidence, and may result in inefficient teaching and discriminatory practices, however unintentional.

This book seeks to advance the concept of a linguistically aware primary school teacher and suggests how an applied linguistics knowledge base might be constructed: a knowledge base centred on the mainstream school curriculum, that acknowledges diversity and equips teachers to understand the support needs of children with additional speech, language and communication needs, and of bilingual and multilingual children who do not have a language learning difficulty, but for whom the English of the mainstream classroom is an additional language to be mastered.

The development of the book

In developing this book, we took an intentionally broad view of applied linguistics. We made no distinction between topics that might be considered 'pure' as opposed to 'applied', as long as they were relevant to teaching in primary schools. In this we reflected the breadth of interest of the sponsors of the seminar series on which this volume is based, the British Association of Applied Linguistics (BAAL), which aims as an organisation to be 'a forum for people interested in language and the applications of linguistics'. This breadth allowed an eclectic selection of speakers to be invited to the seminars. Presenters were asked to contribute chapters to this volume, and their topics were augmented by chapters from invited authors based in Australia, the UK and the USA. BAAL members, education policy makers, teacher educators, psychologists and speech and language therapists also attended the seminars.

Seminar presenters were based in the UK and were mostly language researchers aligned with three professional groups – educationalists, speech and language therapists (SLTs) and psychologists. Many taught on pre-service qualifying courses whose graduates would collaborate as professionals in primary schools. However, despite their common interests, presenters from

different professional groups did not all know each other, and had not accessed each other's work. In one rather striking case, two presenters from the same university but aligned to different professional groups met at the seminar for the first time. They found many interests in common.

As well as a range of professional disciplines relevant to primary schools, we sought contributions reflecting a range of linguistic methodologies (including ethnographic-, discourse-, corpus- and psycho-linguistics) and of professional concerns (literature; language development; teacher education; foreign language teaching; psychology; English as an additional language, and speech and language therapy). In particular, we were interested in what we felt could be a changing set of demands on primary teachers across the globe. We sought scholars who had considered the diversity of present-century primary classrooms and the challenges presented by current research into the language and literacy curriculum.

The consideration of such a wide range of topics risks incoherence and fragmentation. However, we would submit that presenting this range of ideas was in itself useful in furthering academic knowledge. It also promoted the type of co-professional interchanges needed to deal with diverse and mobile classroom populations. And importantly, it reflected the complexities of knowledge, opinion, policy, professional requirements and classroom practices facing primary teachers as they consider children's language and literacy learning.

To ameliorate a potential over-abundance of models and methodologies, we asked contributors to focus on two questions related to their field of expertise: 'what do primary teachers need to understand so that applied linguistics is relevant to their professional work?' and 'how is such understanding built?' We hoped in this way to uncover some practical approaches to the issues facing the classroom teacher. The different shapes of professional discourse, policy structures and the variety of contexts in which they operate, inevitably mean that both these questions need to be problematised and Part I focuses on this.

The diverse knowledge frames that primary teachers need

In introducing a text such as this, there is a temptation to concentrate on convergent opinion, rather than stressing the range of views expressed. Yet diversity is one clear message from both the chapters in this book and the seminar papers and discussion which preceded them. Rather than ignoring diversity, we sought to embrace it. Part II broadly addresses 'what' do primary teachers need to understand and illustrates the breadth of applied linguistics approaches to the study of language and literacy, although the influence of applied linguistics is so wide that this section can only illustrate this. However, Part II suggests that no single perspective has a monopoly on 'truth' but that each

appropriates different ideas and methodologies from linguistics, and uses them to different ends. Each perspective generates insights into learning, and has implications for what should happen in classrooms and this book illustrates that important pedagogical insights for primary teachers come from the full range of research.

One participant wrote, after the original seminars: 'It is both stimulating and a bit horrifying, to hear and then try to integrate, the range of perspectives in other disciplines.' However, the important issue may not be the range of perspectives, but how this range is handled. Diversity is only a problem if one seeks agreement in the form of a single, convergent or integrated approach. Perhaps an effective and efficient primary teacher can, and should, develop a deep familiarity and facility with a wide range of knowledge-frames, each providing different pedagogical insights. If difficult choices must be made about what is most desirable, it is important that such choices are informed by a broad view of what is possible and that consideration is given to the roles and affordances of both initial and continuing professional development.

The costs of attaining such fluency are undoubtedly great – in time, effort and, of course, money and ultimately, decisions about what primary teachers need to know must be made after considering the domains in which such knowledge is likely to impact. Part III of this book tracks some possible ways forward, illustrating approaches specifically designed for teachers and offering tools that may be immediately useful.

What matters? Fundamental principles

Decisions about the applied linguistics knowledge that primary teachers need to understand should be informed by the fundamental principles that apply to all education – issues such as children's rights and the nature of knowledge. They should also recognise and acknowledge the changing realities that impact on what teachers do and that shape how they think about teaching and learning.

Children's rights

Pedagogies that arise from linguistic methodologies and knowledge frames are interwoven with other realities of working in a modern primary school. One important reality, as stated, is the need to foreground the rights of children who have speech, language and communication difficulties, and of children who are learning English as an additional language. An absolute requirement is that all those involved in education are mindful of the arguments about the increasing diversity of school populations.

There is evidence that teachers at present lack sufficient understanding to meet the diverse needs of such children. In this book, Maggie Vance reviews this evidence in relation to the inclusion of children with speech, language and communication needs, and Jessie Ricketts and her colleagues present research indicating that teachers may not notice the comprehension problems of children who do not have diagnosed needs. Both Angela Creese and Carolyn Letts in their chapters outline the evidence related to teaching children who are learning English as an additional language, whilst Deborah Horan and Afra Ahmed Hersi suggest that current teacher education provision does not equip teachers to meet these diverse needs. Clearly, where educational policies extend a welcome to all children into the primary classroom, teachers need to be empowered with appropriate linguistic knowledge to ensure all children's educational wellbeing.

Another aspect of children's rights is the right of all children to have analytical and 'noticing' teachers, who recognise progress in a variety of dimensions, can celebrate achievement and can take a diagnostic view of attainment. An understanding that allows teachers to bring a variety of applied linguistics lenses to children's work allows them to spot patterns in 'errors' and promote new ways of understanding. Many chapters illustrate this, for example: Debra Myhill does so in the context of children's writing; Terezinha Nunes and Peter Bryant and also Kenn Apel and his colleagues do so in the context of children's spelling, and Vivienne Smith in the context of reading children's picture books.

The language used to talk about achievement, progress and attainment shapes professional understandings. Applied linguistics provides a metalanguage with which teachers can discuss children's engagement, development and attainment in language and literacy. As Debra Myhill points out, teachers will not necessarily share this metalanguage with children, but need it none the less if they are to recognise child progress.

Emerging knowledge

Another reality is that knowledge, including knowledge about language and about literacy teaching and learning, is not fixed but evolving. One reaction to this may be to suggest that knowledge is unimportant, since it will soon be superseded. In our view, the evolving nature of knowledge makes it even more important that teachers' professional understandings are complex and are constructed from a wide range of perspectives. It is not just that emerging research knowledge can inform how teachers interpret curriculum content, assessment and pedagogical guidance, although Alison Sealey's description of work on linguistic corpora (described in Part II) suggests that it has the potential to completely revolutionise the pedagogy of grammar and vocabulary teaching.

Fundamentally, it is that the understanding of emergent knowledge thrives when teachers have a solid grounding in current frameworks and a clear grasp of the enquiry-driven nature of such frameworks. By building and exploring knowledge from a variety of theoretical perspectives, professionals anchor and deepen what they know. Thus, also in Part II, Elspeth Jajdelska gives insights on narrative comprehension from a historical research paradigm, which complement those from the psychology paradigm offered by Jessie Ricketts, Joanne Cocksey and Kate Nation.

Other realities of emerging knowledge concern the organisation and implementation of the curriculum. Gemma Moss uses linguistic ethnography to explain how, often fleeting and unacknowledged, participation in language and literacy practices taking place at the 'edge' of school life, can shape children's identities, interests and understandings of what it means to be a reader. Adam Lefstein and Julia Snell use sociolinguistics to analyse patterns of classroom discourse between teachers and their pupils, challenging current practice by showing how some ingrained patterns serve to actually undermine, rather than promote, learning.

Inter-professional and co-professional working

On a purely pragmatic level, the work of a primary teacher does not take place in isolation. Classroom teachers will need, at some time, to communicate with SLTs, learning support teachers, specialists in English as an additional language, foreign language teachers and educational psychologists. Without a shared metalanguage for talking about language use and development, confusions can arise.

Any discussion of a metalanguage automatically raises issues about 'what counts' and 'who decides'; decisions about linguistic terminology obviously reflect views about what is important and about models of child learning. Some professions, such as SLTs, have already made decisions about relevant models. These professionals, and the models they use, are part of the wider landscape of primary teachers' work, and have to be recognised. Shared descriptive terms are important for understanding what matters to other professionals and what they count as evidence. Such shared understandings underpin effective collaboration.

Curriculum policy

New policy initiatives place demands upon teachers and schools. These may focus on specific schemes, such as the introduction of foreign language teaching in the primary school, discussed by Dan Tierney, or general policy concerns such as social and linguistic inclusion. But policy has a more widespread

and subtle influence than this: policy frameworks shape what matters, what teachers are expected to know, and how they are expected to use this knowledge. Dominic Wyse, using policy development in England as a case study, begins the book by illustrating how decisions about national curriculum policies in England have shaped the primary classroom and primary teachers' knowledge and understanding of literacy and literacy teaching in that country. He argues that policy development can be rather arbitrary and, may lack robust systems of 'checks and balances'. In such circumstances, teachers need access to knowledge frameworks that will keep their work grounded and evidence based to ensure balance.

Who decides? The selection of topics for this book

An important conclusion from the seminars and from this book is that, if researchers, policy makers and practitioners are to embrace the wide range of knowledge-frames required for primary teaching, the thorny issue about how the different perspectives 'play out' in policy and practice needs wider acknowledgment and discussion. Kathy Hall (Hall 2010; 2002) highlights the problems that arise when the different lenses for viewing reading and readers compete for policy leverage: 'different lines of reading research have emphasised different practices with consequences for learners and representations of competence. Depending on the viewing frame, certain features of literacy are deemed to be relevant, to merit attention and so are carefully detailed, while other features are glossed over, consigned as background and so rendered less relevant' (Hall 2010: 15).

How policy choices emerge is not the concern of this book. But by choosing authors and topics in the first place, the editors have in effect presented their view of the knowledge that matters, and it is incumbent on us to explain where this view came from. The choices we made were not driven purely by our own interests, by a narrow research agenda or by current policy emphases. They were driven by an awareness of the ways that primary classes are changing in terms of the diverse language skills and knowledge that children bring to school, and the changing demands of the primary curriculum. We would argue that decisions about the nature of 'what should matter' in primary teachers' knowledge of applied linguistics, must reflect such changing landscapes rather than personal enthusiasms, strength of rhetoric or disciplinary muscle.

The range of contexts in which primary teachers work means that no one is in a position to construct a definitive list of 'important things to know', even were such a list desirable. Different contexts will require a different depth and scope of knowledge, and we would suggest that teachers are best positioned to select sensibly, according to their own circumstances.

Useful and less useful knowledge: how teachers need to understand

There is wide agreement in the book that applied linguistics knowledge that does not impact upon children's experiences is not the type of knowledge that is required. Authors are clear that applying knowledge for primary teaching should focus on applications of relevant aspects of research, not on learning linguistics and then trying to apply it. Teachers do not need knowledge that is so abstract it requires them to 'translate' it into the classroom and work out its potential usefulness. Nor do they need knowledge that is completely bounded by programmes or activities. Agreement on three types of applied knowledge can be extracted from this book: knowledge that is *tailored* to the curriculum, knowledge that allows language to be *analysed*, and knowledge that fosters *pedagogical creativity*.

Knowledge that is tailored to the curriculum: The authors in this book recognise that teachers need highly specific and relevant knowledge, directly arising from, and applicable to, curriculum and classroom realities. This is more useful than providing extensive information of the sort used by applied linguistics researchers that requires teachers to work out what is and is not useful in the context of the classroom. Other professions, notably speech and language therapists (SLTs), have taken a similar view of the need to tailor linguistic knowledge, in their case to support clinical application. SLTs have made confident, professional decisions about the ideas, techniques and applications that are most helpful. For example, frameworks for syntactic and phonological analyses are routinely taught in pre-service speech and language therapy courses, and used in practice, in the context of helping SLTs make decisions about how to proceed with a particular client.

In arguing for tailored knowledge, the intention is to recognise the complexity and variety of tasks that primary teachers face, and the different ways knowledge can be introduced and understood. Several authors (including Myhill; Ellis and McCartney; Smith; Jajdelska; Hammond; Hartshorne; Horan and Hersi; and Ellis and Briggs) argue that the process of tailoring research knowledge must be dynamic and that knowledge tailored in this way results in productive and evidence-based applications, and new insights. Such knowledge provides a cornerstone for understanding that frees teachers from simply 'delivering' pre-packaged programmes and policies handed down from on high. Tailored knowledge should empower teachers to ensure that conversations with the policy makers and professional regulators who currently control much of a primary teacher's practice are evidence-based and measured.

Knowledge that develops an analytical 'eye': There is also a focus on the knowledge teachers need to analyse talk, reading and writing and to make appropriate changes at an individual, class, stage or whole-school level. To

deliver a 'noticing teacher', who ensures children's rights, teachers need to know how to use their knowledge to respond analytically to needs, whether presented by individuals or by whole communities. Identifying what children currently understand (as evidenced by their spoken and written texts and by their reading) should prompt teaching that is more focused, and is delivered at the point when it is most meaningful and helpful for the child. Of course, not all analytic techniques need to be applied to teaching; some help develop content knowledge, and Greg Brooks makes an impassioned plea for knowledge of the international phonetic alphabet in this context. Nor can the knowledge of analytical techniques be totally divorced from the tailored curriculum, a point emphasised throughout this book: Jennifer Hammond stresses the need for ongoing diagnostic assessment of children's language and literacy strengths to identify and target needs; Terezinha Nunes and Peter Bryant highlight the need to assess children's understanding of morphology, Elspeth Jajdelska illustrates how analysing the linguistic features of modern texts can help teachers avoid potential comprehension difficulties and Angela Creese discusses how an analysis of children's bilingual knowledge may be used productively. How the teaching profession can build such analytical knowledge is a strong feature of Part III, where procedures and targeted approaches are offered by Henrietta Dombey and Jane Briggs; Greg Brooks; Kenn Apel and his colleagues; Sue Ellis and Elspeth McCartney; and Carolyn Letts. Mary Hartshorne discusses an approach that allows teachers to analyse their own competencies.

Knowledge that fosters pedagogical creativity: Another common theme is that teachers need to link their linguistic knowledge to the activities and behaviours that help learners build capacity in talking, listening, reading and writing. Combined with knowledge that is tailored and analytical this allows teachers to link different linguistic knowledge domains in ways that are purposeful and enabling and that promote curiosity and inquiry-driven learning processes. Teachers then acknowledge the importance of child-to-child as well as child-to-adult interactions around texts and language activities. These points are evidenced by many researchers, such as Debra Myhill, Terezinha Nunes and Peter Bryant, Alison Sealey, Vivienne Smith, Adam Lefstein and Julia Snell, Gemma Moss and Angela Creese, amongst others. The powerful pedagogies that these researchers capture and promote have the potential to re-define curriculum frameworks, to re-focus them and make them less atomistic in delivery. Knowledge framed in this way ensures that teachers' understandings are applicable to classroom learning and to the realities of teaching.

Developing teacher understanding

Even given appropriate knowledge, framed in a way that is suitable for primary teachers' main concerns, the question of how teachers construct and use their