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# Introduction to English Language Teaching

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## **Introduction**

### **Rationale of this book**

Writing a book on the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) is, for various reasons, a daunting task: The subject matter is complex as it covers a heterogeneous field where a number of factors come into play, involving different disciplines, research approaches, contexts of practice, learners and teachers, and social settings. Besides, there are quite a number of books on the teaching of English as a foreign or second language already on the market – so why write yet another one? As MEDGYES (2002: 87) put it while reviewing one such book, “While suppressing a yawn, the reviewer begins to wonder what makes any of the titles unique and competitive. Aren’t they mere clones of one another? (... Aren’t I supposed now to review a book which shares too many features with other titles to make it distinctly different?” So, what is it that makes our book distinctively different from other introductory textbooks on the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language?

### **The context: Teaching and learning EFL in Germany**

Each of the books available at present is based on a particular philosophy of the teaching and learning of EFL. This is necessarily so, given the multitude of aspects to consider. Besides, each of these course-books has been produced for a particular ‘EFL market’ and does not therefore take into account the particularities of a specific teacher education or foreign language learning context. Our book, on the other hand, has been written for German student teachers of English as a foreign language in that it refers to approaches and materials which are particularly relevant for our context.

### **English as the language of instruction**

Unlike other course-books, it is written in the target language. This is because we consider it to be a basic professional competence of EFL

teachers to be able to join the European or international professional discourse in English. Besides, English is the means of instruction and communication in university-based methodology seminars, which is why the bulk of basic relevant readings has to be provided in English.

### **Research-based focus**

Our methodology is research-based in that it draws insights about the teaching and learning of English from relevant research. It therefore hopes to contribute to the establishment of *Fremdsprachendidaktik* as an autonomous discipline.

### **Major issues of teaching and learning**

A last distinctive feature of our book relates to our choice of contents and topics. It is based on three aspects of EFL teaching and learning which we consider to be particularly relevant today:

- Promoting intercultural communicative competence
- Developing learner- and learning-centred teaching in classrooms to delineate ways in which the social context of school affects language teaching and learning
- Supporting task-based learning

### **Organization of chapters**

Each chapter follows roughly the same pattern: it introduces the main issues of a topic (including a survey of the historical development, if appropriate); it gives a summary of relevant research; it draws conclusions or illustrates examples of good classroom practice (we have included as many examples for materials and tasks from EFL classrooms as the space we were provided allowed); and it concludes by listing current trends and future perspectives. There is an end-of-book bibliography for students to get a survey of relevant current readings. In the bibliography we marked certain books (see: ♦) as recommended readings for students who wish to focus on specific topics in more detail (to prepare a topic for their exam, for example).

### **Intended readership**

Our book may be used in various learning-to-teach scenarios. Student teachers may wish to prepare or read up on lecture-based methodology courses, or use it in accompanying tutorials. Lecturers may use it as a course book for their introductory methodology courses, and provide additional examples from practice (classroom tasks, lesson videos etc.) to illustrate what has been said. Or student teachers may wish to use it as a compendium to prepare their methodology exams, to choose a topic for their oral exams or to find relevant reading for a classroom research project they wish to do in their teaching practice.

## **Limitations**

We are against top-down models of applied science in teacher education (WALLACE 1991) which merely use classroom practice to exemplify academic research. Instead, we see language teachers not simply as consumers of theory, but as generators of theories based on their professional knowledge and their ongoing reflection on classroom teaching (RICHARDS 2001). Theories should be developed not by people outside the classroom but by practitioners themselves (FREEMAN 2001). However, the limited length available for titles in this series made it impossible to present material in this way.

## **Glossary**

We are not offering a glossary of basic theoretical terms as a tool for students. This is because there is an excellent dictionary for students to use for this purpose we would like to recommend instead. It explains very clearly those difficult theoretical terms (there are about 2000 entries) which students may encounter in the field: JACK RICHARDS, RICHARD SCHMIDT, HEIDI PLATT, MARCUS SCHMIDT. *Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. 3rd. ed. Paperback Harlow: Pearson Education 2002.

## **Thanks**

We would particularly like to thank KEITH MORROW and the editor of this series, ANSGAR NÜNNING, very much for their very thoughtful revision work. A word of thanks also goes to ANNETTE RICHTER who participated in



the design of the general structure of the book. A number of colleagues provided helpful advice, among them KLAUS FEHSE, MECHTHILD HESSE, WERNER KIEWEG, MARKUS RITTER, JUTTA RYMARCYK, and GISELA SCHMID-SCHÖNBEIN. We wish to thank all of them for their support.

# CHAPTER 1

## Language Teacher Education: Defining the Knowledge Base

### 1 Introduction

#### Content and process of teacher education

We would like to begin this book on the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language by asking two basic questions:

1. What is the subject matter or content of foreign language teacher education? In other words: What is it that foreign language teachers need to know?
2. What is the process of teacher learning? In other words: How do people learn to teach?

To begin with a discussion of the knowledge base and how it may be acquired in teacher education may come as some surprise because other textbooks which deal with the same subject matter usually start differently: they place chapters concerned with the teaching of the basic skills at the beginning (CARTER/NUNAN 2001), they summarize what we know about how languages are learned (HEDGE 2000; CAMERON 2001) or they integrate these two aspects, offering some perspectives on what there is to learn – a foreign language – and on language learning itself (JOHNSON 2001).

#### Base teacher education on teaching

The reason why we feature the question of the knowledge base and teacher education so prominently is that when asked to write a compendium on the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language we felt we were in a dilemma: providing knowledge may give readers the idea that all it takes to become a good language teacher is relevant readings. But professional action in dynamic situations of practice (like in a classroom) has been characterized by features such as uncertainty, complexity, uniqueness,

instability and value conflict (SCHÖN 1983). This is why teachers cannot be equipped adequately for their job just by reading relevant academic knowledge. Following SCHÖN and FREEMAN and JOHNSON (1998) we argue that the knowledge base must focus on the activity of teaching itself, on the teacher who does it, and on the contexts in which it is done. The starting point of this book is to highlight the fact that no knowledge whatsoever will ever contribute to the quality of learning foreign languages unless this knowledge becomes part of student teachers' ideas of their professional selves. Therefore we would like to make some basic remarks on teacher education to begin with.

## **2 The content of foreign language teacher education: What is there to learn?**

### **a) A heterogeneous discipline**

#### **Different labels for one discipline**

Second and foreign language learning and teaching is studied in different disciplines and therefore involves different labels. Within the scope of this book we cannot offer a comprehensive analysis of the various concepts used in different contexts, but we would like to present the most important ones (for a detailed description and further readings see BAUSCH et al 2003: 1–18).

#### ***Fremdsprachendidaktik and Sprachlehrforschung***

In the German context the subject matter of foreign language teaching and learning is dealt with in two disciplines, *Fremdsprachendidaktik* and *Sprachlehrforschung*. What they have in common is that they focus on the teaching and learning of foreign languages in different institutional contexts for all age groups. To this day the professional community has not managed to agree on one label which includes the two, even though there are common concerns. As a very basic distinction one can say that the term *Fremdsprachendidaktik* was important in establishing a distinct discipline for the teaching of 'modern languages' as opposed to the methodology for

the ‘old languages’ (the term dates back to the end of the 19th century). To this day the discipline is very much associated with the attempt to define what counts as relevant sister disciplines (*Bezugswissenschaften*, see below). *Sprachlehrforschung* on the other hand is a term that has been used since the beginning of the 1970s to establish a distinct discipline for the study of the teaching and learning of foreign languages, independent of related disciplines.

## **b) Establishing the teaching of English as a foreign language as a profession**

### **Heterogeneous principles, research, standards, subject matter**

The heterogeneity of the field is probably one of the reasons why those professionally concerned with the study of teaching and learning foreign languages cannot base their work on commonly agreed principles, research standards or clearly defined areas of relevant subject matter. Instead, the discipline may be characterised by what seem to be changing fashions over time. This state of affairs was criticised by MACKEY (1973: 255) as long as 30 years ago: “*It is likely that EFL [= The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language] will continue to be a child of fashion in linguistics and psychology until the time it becomes an autonomous discipline which uses these related sciences instead of being used by them.*” Without an understanding of what these ‘related sciences’ are and without a degree of agreement on what counts as the appropriate principles for generating and applying knowledge for the study of language teaching and learning, our discipline will not qualify as a profession and will not gain academic autonomy. We would therefore like to contribute to the development of language teaching as a professional discipline not just by listing the relevant disciplines but also by discussing the appropriate procedures by which student teachers may develop the attitudes, the knowledge and the skills it takes to become professional foreign language teachers. To do so, we will offer a model which sees language teachers not just as consumers of ideas that have been developed outside language classrooms in related disciplines but views language teachers as generators of theories based on a reflection

of their own language learning experiences and on an ongoing reflection of their classroom teaching.

### c) Defining the knowledge base: A historical survey

#### Different views on language teaching and learning

LARSEN-FREEMAN attempted to give a historical survey of developments in the related ‘sister disciplines’ which she defined as linguistics, language acquisition (and views of language learners), language teaching methodology (what we in Germany call *Didaktik*) and resulting views on the role of language teachers.

Linguistics	Language Acquisition	Language Learner	Language Teaching	Language Teacher
Structural	Habit Formation (Behaviorism)	Mimic	Dialogues Pattern Practice Drills	Performer Model Conductor Cheerleader
Generative	Rule Formation (Cognitivism)	Cognitive Being	Inductive and Deductive Exercises	Knower
Social/ Functional	Interactionism	Social Being	Role Plays Information Gaps Problem-solving Tasks Cooperative Learning	Facilitator
Discourse/ Text/Corpus	Constructivism	Meaning-maker	Process Writing Language Experience Whole Language Content-based	Negotiator
Critical	Experiential	Political Being	Critical Pedagogy Participatory Approach Problem Posing	Advocate

Table 1.1: A Historical Review (LARSEN-FREEMAN 1998: 4)

#### Complexity of relevant factors

Simplified as this survey of developments undoubtedly is, it nevertheless demonstrates the many changes there have been in the last five decades in the way we view language teaching and learning. What we can learn from developments as a profession is best described in LARSEN-FREEMAN's (1998: 4) own words: *"(If I asked you which of these views is the correct one, you would no doubt respond that they all have some merit, but that none reflects the whole picture. Today we recognize that each of these areas is highly complex and multifaceted. Rather than search for the one right point of view, we must redirect the nature of our inquiry to search for wholeness – for more complete understanding of the many facets that comprise these basic constructs in our field. Being aware of the complexity has tremendous implications for how we train teachers."* Before we turn our attention to the practical consequences this complexity has on organising learning in teacher education, we will give a brief survey of the related disciplines as defined in BAUSCH et al (2003: chap. 3–11), which include Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition, Philosophy of Education, Learning Theory and Psychology, Literary Studies, and Cultural Studies. Having said this, there is a problem in using English labels for some of these disciplines because some of the terms are not used in English. Languages divide the world up differently and in our field terms cannot be simply 'translated' – e. g. *Methodik/Didaktik* which do not have direct English equivalents.

#### **d) A Survey of related disciplines**

##### **Linguistics**

Linguistics describes languages as systems of human communication. It covers many different areas of investigation, for example sound systems (phonetics, phonology), the study of the basic meaningful forms in language (morphology), sentence structure (syntax), meaning systems (semantics) and how language is used in social contexts (pragmatics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics) (YULE 1998).

##### **Applied Linguistics**

As far as we are aware, the term dates back to the year 1946 when the English Language Institute was founded at the University of Michigan by FRIES and LADO. This went along with the publication of a new journal called *Language Learning*, subtitled, *Journal of Applied Linguistics*. Despite various attempts to arrive at a clear definition of what the discipline is about, applied linguistics is “*an amorphous and heterogeneous field drawing on and interfacing with a range of other academic disciplines*” (CARTER/NUNAN 2001: 1). On a very general level one can say that applied linguistics seeks to establish the relevance of theoretical studies of language to everyday problems of language use in different contexts of practice, e. g. language learning, speech therapy or stylistics (COOK 2003).

## **Second Language Acquisition**

Second language acquisition research investigates how second or foreign languages are learned. Researchers approach the question from different perspectives but they agree that language learning is a dynamic and multidimensional process. Two main approaches may be distinguished: those which claim that learning foreign languages is based on inborn principles and structures, and those which focus on language learning as a result of social interaction that emphasize the role of different contexts of acquisition (for a survey see LIGHTBOWN/SPADA 1999).

## **Philosophy of Education**

Philosophy of Education discusses the general principles and purposes of human education of which the learning of foreign languages are a part. One of these principles, for example, is learner autonomy which has been characterized as the motivation to take charge of one's own learning. To do so, learners need to be able and willing to act independently and in cooperation with others (DAM 1994).

## **Learning Theory and Psychology**

This discipline describes how and why people learn. For example it investigates the cognitive differences in the ways individuals learn (= learning styles), and highlights the need for teaching to take account of

these. It focuses on the relationship between language learning and the age of acquisition or factors affecting the motivation to learn (for a survey see CAMERON 2001).

### **Literary Studies**

This area discusses the nature of literary texts as one form of communication. It explores the factors that constitute this communication, such as the author, the written text and the reader (NÜNNING/NÜNNING 2001).

### **Cultural Studies**

This discipline analyses different cultural phenomena and the way they represent cultural meaning. It looks at how representations of cultures are defined by issues of race, gender, and class and incorporates a historical perspective in the analysis. It also considers the process of relating different cultures (intercultural learning) (SOMMER 2003).

## **3 The process of foreign language teacher education: How do people learn to teach?**

### **Good practice**

In this chapter we would like to present a rationale for good teacher education practice: How is professional expertise best acquired in foreign language teaching? Whenever you ask experienced teachers or student teachers they will complain about the gap between theory and practice, so obviously this seems to be a crucial issue when we discuss models of professional education. Following WALLACE (1991) there are three major models of professional education which will be described in the order in which they appeared historically.

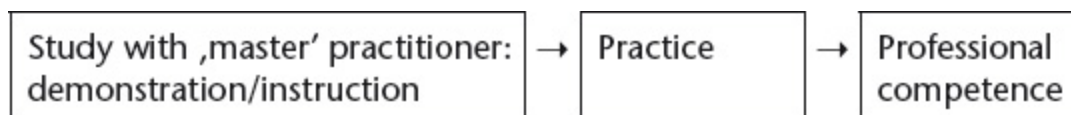
### **a) Three models of teacher education**

#### **The craft model: Learning as imitation of a 'master teacher'**

In the craft model the student teacher learns by imitating the techniques of an experienced professional practitioner and by following his or her



instructions and advice. Professional competence is seen as the passing on of expertise in the craft from generation to generation. This model may be represented as follows:



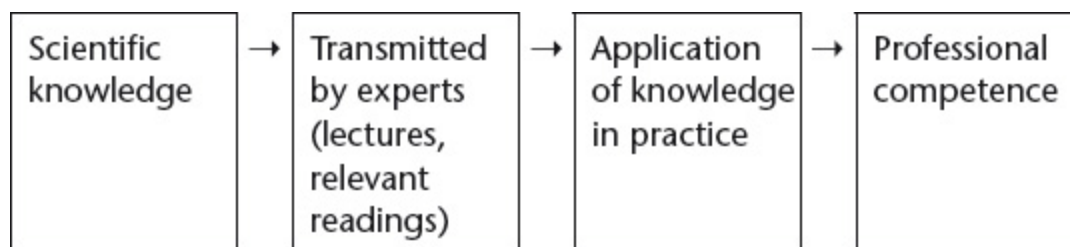
*Model 1.1: The craft model*

### **Teachers as positive role models**

The drawbacks of this model are obvious: it does not capture developments in dynamic societies where change is a basic feature. On the other hand the relevance of teachers as models cannot be dismissed completely. From various learning to teach studies we know that student teachers begin their education with images of teaching that they have acquired during their own learning experiences as students. These imprints are often very resistant to change unless student teachers encounter situations of practice where they observe teachers offering alternative practices. Change does not come about if they just read about alternative practices: these are often not credible as student teachers can't see how they can be put to practice: *"The main reason for the failure of teacher programmes is that they are based on extremely vague conceptions. Having an ideology is not the same as having conceptions and ideas of what should be done and how it should be done"* (FULLAN 1993: 109). Student teachers need to see 'how it can be done' to be able to develop alternative and more appropriate images of teaching. Therefore teacher educators need to be positive role models from which students gradually learn by appropriating the mutually agreed on purposes and corresponding practices. However, this concept of 'teacher as model' must not be confused with the mechanical imitation of behavior, which characterized behaviorist-based teaching. Instead it is understood in the VYGOTSKYAN sense of learning as relational imitation which he expressed in his concept of 'the zone of proximal development' (VYGOTSKY 1978).

### **The applied science model: Learning as application of knowledge**

The applied science model is probably still the most prevalent model underlying most teacher education programmes. The idea is that practical knowledge may be developed by the application of scientific knowledge which is conveyed or transmitted to student teachers (in lectures, for example) by those who are experts in the relevant areas. It is up to the recipients of this knowledge to apply scientific findings by putting it into practice.



*Model 1.2: The applied science model*

### **Teachers reduced to applying what has been developed elsewhere**

This classical Research-Development-Dissemination (RDD) model of innovation assumes that there are general solutions to practical problems, that these solutions may be developed outside practical situations (at universities, for example) and that solutions can be translated into teachers' actions by means of publications, training, administrative orders etc. (SCHÖN 1983). This model is not adequate for various reasons: There is an almost complete separation between research and practice, between those who think and those who do. By this division of labour a clear hierarchy of kinds of knowledge has been established, which expresses a genuine mistrust of practitioners who are reduced to merely applying what has been predefined in the academic and administrative power-structure above them.

### **Students' pre-knowledge is not integrated**

In initial teacher education this model ignores the knowledge that student teachers have acquired during their many years as language learners which, as we know from many learning to teach studies, considerably determines what they learn: *“By the time prospective teachers enter college, their*

*beliefs are well formed and tend to be extremely resistant to change. [... D]espite course work and field experiences, preservice teachers' beliefs about teachers and teaching remain largely unchanged“ (JOHNSON 1994: 440).*

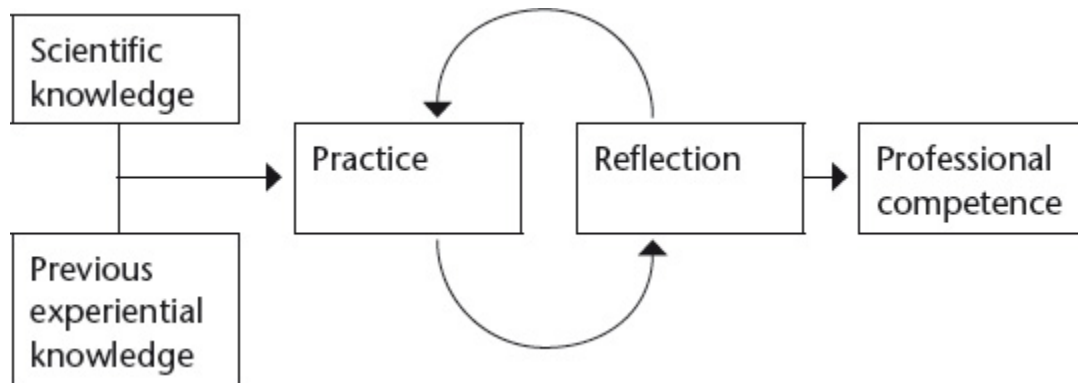
### **The reflective model: ‘Reflected practice’ to develop appropriate practical knowledge**

To understand how we may bring about change in teacher education we need an adequate description of complex professional action. SCHÖN (1983) has analyzed different types of action in practice in a number of professions and has formulated the relationships between professional knowledge and professional action. For initial teacher education the model of reflected practice is particularly relevant as most student teachers will not be able to draw on accumulated practical knowledge that would allow them to act smoothly, routinely and adequately in a classroom. SCHÖN has described this type of routine knowledge as tacit knowledge in action: Thinking and acting are not separate activities but they go together, often without being planned or prepared. This is why practitioners are frequently unable to describe their ‘practical knowledge’.

### **Coping with the complexities of classroom needs: Routines**

The most important example of practical knowledge is routines which have been built up through frequent repetition and are executed largely unconsciously. They are essential to be able to cope with the complex demands of classroom interaction which would be impossible to do on the basis of a conscious application of principles alone (as implied by the previous model): *“One striking feature of classrooms is the sheer complexity, quantity and rapidity of classroom interaction. As many as 1,000 interpersonal exchanges each day have been observed, and the multiplicity of decisions which have to be made, and the volume of information relevant to each decision are such that for the teacher logical consideration and decision making would seem to be impossible” (MAC LEOD/McINTYRE 1977: 266, in: WALLACE 1991: 13).* This is why coping with contexts of practice is so hard for student teachers as many of their

actions will have to be consciously planned beforehand or while they are actually teaching. It is therefore not sufficient if student teachers read about the relevant areas but they need to develop experiential knowledge by actually improving their 'practical theories' and competences through action and reflection:



*Model 1.3: The reflective model*

## **b) Consequences for organizing teacher learning: Offering a multiperspective view on EFL classrooms**

### **Coping with complex demands and becoming change agents**

Teacher education programmes have come under growing criticism in recent years. It is argued that they often fail to provide the relevant knowledge base that would enable student teachers to cope with the complex demands of the school setting and, more importantly, to become part of the social change process (FULLAN 1993). To this day, very little is known about the effectiveness of teacher education programmes. What we do know, however, supports personal anecdotal observation: the dominant teaching formats at universities are transmission-oriented and therefore contradict current ideas of student-centredness and communicative methodology (LEGUTKE/THOMAS 1993). Programme components lack a coherent curriculum framework within which the practicum, if provided at all, often remains an alien element among university courses (GABEL 1997). Only recently have some learning-to-teach studies been published which investigate teacher learning in authentic contexts (SCHOCKER-V. DITFURTH

2001, CASPARI 2003). Research on the nature of teaching and findings from these studies suggest that teacher learning is organised following the three principles below.

### **Principle 1:**

#### **Develop a research approach to learning and a multi-perspective view on the EFL classroom**

##### **Integrating relevant perspectives on language learning**

Student teachers learn to develop a research approach to EFL learning to understand the complex dynamics that determine language learning in EFL classrooms (see SCHOCKER-V. DITFURTH 2001). To do so, they learn to integrate the relevant perspectives on learning and teaching. These include three domains of knowledge:

- relevant published knowledge;
- student teachers' own perspectives on language learning: according to numerous learning-to-teach studies these affect their awareness and images of learning in classrooms and how they are likely to behave, regardless of whatever cognitive knowledge they may have encountered during teacher education;
- the perspective of practice as represented by the experiences of teachers and their students. It is up to them to judge if an innovation is actually relevant to their needs. Following STENHOUSE (1975: 143), we believe that *"the uniqueness of each classroom setting implies that any proposal [...] needs to be tested and verified and adapted by each teacher in his [sic] classroom"* (see chap. 2.5).

### **Principle 2:**

#### **Use experiential learning to develop action-oriented models for EFL classrooms**

##### **Organize experiences of reflected learning**

Seminars are organized in a way which allow student teachers to experience themselves the learning processes that they are supposed to organize with

their EFL students. They work on projects, for example. They decide which topic they wish to choose to work on within their team, they use English as their language of communication, they evaluate selected aspects of the process and the product of their co-operation against mutually negotiated criteria and in doing this, they experience the highlights and the drawbacks involved in co-operative learning. This way, seminars follow an approach to learning which is based on reflected experience: they integrate the experiences of students in classrooms and the experiences of student teachers at university.

### **New teacher role**

In both learning environments a teacher's role may no longer be adequately defined as a transmitter of knowledge to passive recipients. Instead, teachers need to offer expert guidance and support for students to be able to cope with the multiple skills this learning environment involves. Course organizers need to be positive role models from which students gradually learn by appropriating the mutually agreed purposes (see chap. 2.2).

### **Principle 3:**

**Build school development competences through co-operation in cross-institutional projects**

### **Develop dynamic qualifications**

The ability to develop a research approach to language classrooms implies that we overcome the traditional separation of the different institutions school and university. Teachers need what has come to be called 'dynamic qualifications', that is, competences and attitudes which are the basis for any innovation to be successful. These include an appreciation of problems that one has identified during the process, an experiment attitude to practice, and the ability to cope with controlled risks (see KRAINER/POSCH 1996: 25). This is why we ask student teachers to co-operate in teams to develop materials for EFL classrooms, for example, a process which involves intensive negotiation.

## **4 Perspectives and Developments**

**Foster a multiperspective view**

In order to do justice to the complexity of factors involved in language learning, we need to foster a multiperspective view on teacher education (see above), which is currently not mainstream teacher education practice.

**Individualize learning**

We also need to think of ways of individualizing learning in teacher education to take account of differing degrees of experience and commitment with student teachers, to document their learning process and to promote learner reflection. Some universities have started to introduce portfolios, that is written reflections of students' learning processes (see chap. 4.4). There are initiatives by MÜLLER-HARTMANN at the University of Education Heidelberg and QUETZ and BURWITZ-MELZER at the universities of Frankfurt and Gießen.