

# 1 Knowing, Believing, and the Teaching of English

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*What do good teachers know and how do they construct their insights about literacy, interpretation, and craft? Pamela Grossman and Lee Shulman reflect on the scope of English education, and consider the nature of knowledge in English. They then carefully explore the development of teacher knowledge in English language arts instruction. On the basis of their analysis, they propose a professional education focused on the interpretation of "cases of teaching."*

In the halls of Congress and in the conference rooms of statehouses, knowledge has become politically significant. Even as the Cold War becomes a memory, the new economic crusades are boldly proclaimed. America has lost her economic primacy because she has lost her children's minds. Our educational standards have slipped, leaving us vulnerable to defeat on all fronts—economic, political, even moral. We must immediately pursue new campaigns of the mind and of the spirit, setting the highest standards for our students' intellectual achievements. We must become deeply concerned with the knowledge and skills our students develop and with systems of education and assessment designed to foster those accomplishments. The battles will be fought on fields named English, Mathematics, History, Geography, and Science. The generals are political leaders, the foot soldiers are students, and—apparently—the oft-ignored combat officers are the nation's teachers.

When serious educational problems become grist for political mills, polemic and hyperbole typically characterize the resulting discourse. But, as John Dewey recognized in his preface to *Experience and Education* ([1938] 1963), theoretical or ideological controversies typically underlie salient social conflicts. The concerns over what U.S. students ought to know and be able to do are more than convenient topics for political mischief. They are enduring questions for each subject-matter domain of the school curriculum. On rare occasions the leaders of a curriculum area achieve a modicum of consensus regarding its content and scope. Even so, the question of what teachers should understand if they wish to teach a domain responsibly is no simple challenge. In the field of English teaching, where canons are under question and "consensus" is more frequently misspelled than accomplished, the problem of teacher knowledge is daunting.

How can we think about teacher knowledge in English? What are the grounds on which competing claims for needed teacher knowledge can be supported or dismissed? What are the implications of such positions for views of teacher preparation that include the liberal arts component of undergraduate education, as well as coursework in pedagogy? What kinds of research in learning, teaching, and teacher development can be fruitfully pursued in conjunction with these questions?

## **The Diffuse Nature of English as a Subject Area**

In order to study issues related to teacher knowledge in English, we first have to pin down the very subject called English—hardly an easy task! As Applebee remarked in his history of the teaching of English:

Whether the model for the educational process has been growth in language, the four basic skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) or the three basic disciplines (language, literature,

and composition) some aspects of what teachers considered to be important have been lost... Inevitably, the edges of the subject have blurred and wavered, creating for the teacher of English a perpetual crisis of identity. (Applebee 1974, 245–46)

Another author calls English "the least subject-like of subjects, the least susceptible to definition" (Rosen 1981, 5). Barnes, Barnes, and Clarke (1984) detail the alternative "versions" of English found in British classrooms, and in his account of the English Coalition Conference held at Wye, tellingly entitled *What Is English?* Peter Elbow comments, "This book is trying to paint a picture of a profession that cannot define what it is" (1990, v).

This crisis of identity and persistent ambiguity regarding the subject affect researchers in English education as well. Few of us attempt to look at the field as a whole. Instead, we choose to concentrate on the areas of writing, or literature, or language, with some attempts to interrelate perhaps two of these areas. Or perhaps we focus on the basic skills of language arts—reading, writing, listening, or speaking. Studies of teacher knowledge in English have often simplified the problem space of English by choosing to study teacher knowledge in one of these areas. One early study of teacher knowledge, for example, investigated preservice teachers' knowledge of literary criticism (Madsen 1968). In our studies of teacher knowledge in the "Knowledge Growth in Teaching" research, we looked primarily at knowledge of literature, with some attention to knowledge of writing (Shulman and Grossman 1987). Researchers at the Center for Research on Teacher Education at Michigan State University have chosen to focus on teachers' knowledge of writing (Comeaux and Gomez 1990, 1991; Gomez 1988). Yet teachers of English do not have the luxury of simplifying their problem space in teaching—they must teach all of these curricular areas. The areas of language, literature, and writing are not as detachable in practice as we sometimes represent them to be in research. So the multifaceted and diffuse nature of English as a subject area poses dilemmas for research on teacher knowledge.

The very multiplicity inherent in English as a subject matter, however, is precisely what makes teacher knowledge such an important issue to grasp. As Grossman argues in a paper on English as a context for secondary school teaching:

As an inherently ambiguous subject, which is less hierarchically organized than is math and encompasses a variety of subdomains, English may offer teachers greater freedom within the confines of the classroom. As it would be difficult, if not impossible, for teachers to cover all of the territory encompassed by the subject of English, teachers may necessarily select the purposes and areas they plan to emphasize in their classrooms. The inherent complexity of the subject, with its separate domains and subcomponents, may also offer teachers greater autonomy in developing curriculum. (Grossman 1993, 7)

This point regarding the potential for individual autonomy embedded within the very nature of English as a subject matter reflects analyses of role confusion and complexity in other domains; Coser (1975), for example, argues that the multiplicity of expectations facing an individual creates the possibility for individual choice.

The potential for individual autonomy within the subject matter of English places greater demands on teachers' understanding of the subject. In order to make informed curricular decisions, in order to decide to exploit one aspect of the "curriculum potential" of English rather than another (Ben-Peretz 1975), teachers rely on their own understandings and beliefs about the nature of the discipline.<sup>1</sup> Even in districts that prescribe a certain set of texts to be read, English teachers still exercise considerable choice about additional texts to include, and about ways to approach the prescribed texts. The adoption of whole language programs in a number of schools across the country also poses important questions about elementary teachers' knowledge of literature and language. Although part of the allure of whole language programs has been the greater autonomy given to teachers to shape curricula to meet the particular needs and backgrounds of students in developing literacy, such programs also place greater demands on individual teachers' knowledge of texts, literature, and language (Florio-Ruane, Mosenthal, Denyer, Harris and Kirscher 1990; Wells 1990). Again, the inclusive nature of whole language approaches, in which literature,

writing, and other aspects of the language arts are combined, requires teachers to make decisions about which particular aspects of language arts to emphasize at particular times. What guides teachers' thinking and decision making in these contexts? Teachers' knowledge and understanding of literature and other language arts provides a potential source for pedagogical reasoning.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Nature of "Knowledge" in English**

The second problem in research on teacher knowledge is unpacking what constitutes knowledge in English. Much of the research in teachers' knowledge from the 1960s originated in the areas of science and math; many of the early studies, in fact, were done in the context of large-scale curriculum development, such as the School Mathematics Study Group (SMSG) work at Stanford. Current studies of teacher knowledge also have concentrated on the areas of science and math; for example, in the second volume of *Advances in Research on Teaching* (Brophy 1991), which is dedicated to the topic of teachers' subject-matter knowledge in relationship to teaching practice, six of the nine chapters address science or math, while only two chapters discuss English. In part, the research on teacher knowledge has been dominated by what Bruner (1986) has termed "paradigmatic ways of knowing." This focus on paradigmatic ways of knowing has implications for the nature of both research questions and methods. For example, in the areas of science and math, researchers often compare teachers' knowledge of a particular topic in science or math to disciplinary knowledge of that same topic, demonstrating how teachers' knowledge differs from that of experts in the field (see Ball 1990; Hashweh 1987). This may be a less appropriate research model for those of us who want to study teacher knowledge in areas that are characterized more by narrative ways of knowing, again using Bruner's distinction, or, perhaps more important, in areas characterized by considerable internal conflict concerning what can and should be known. If English represents a set of competing schools of thought regarding the very nature of reading and writing, what does it mean to know English well enough to teach it?

Part of the difficulty in studying teachers' theoretical knowledge of literature, for example, is that there are multiple theories against which to look at teachers' knowledge. And yet, understanding teachers' theoretical stances toward literature may be critical to understanding their approaches to teaching. As Elbow (1990) and Scholes (1985) remind us, any act of teaching is implicitly theoretical; "teaching and theory are always implicated in one another" (Scholes 1985, 102). In teaching a text, teachers act upon assumptions about the nature of text, the nature of literature, what it means to read a text, how one marshals evidence to support a particular reading of a text, and the very nature of evidence itself. What implications for teacher knowledge follow from this theory-laden view of teaching? That we implicitly adopt a theoretical stance when we teach does not necessarily mean that we are explicit about our assumptions or about the limitations inherent in any single critical theory. If we see the teaching of literature as teaching students a single critical stance to adopt toward text, then the tacitness of that theoretical stance may not be a problem. Students will learn through apprenticeship, by observing and participating in a particular way of reading text. But if, as the English Coalition Conference report suggests, we want teachers to engage in "the process of inviting and affirming multiple readings instead of a right reading and then explicitly reflecting on where those readings come from and where they go..." (Elbow 1990, 52-53), what then must teachers know and believe?

First of all, we might argue that teachers themselves must be fully literate, in Wells's definition of the term.

This, then, is the empowerment that comes from engaging with texts epistemically: as a reader or writer (and particularly as a writer), by conducting the transaction between the representation on the page and the representation in the head, one can make advances in one's intellectual, moral, or affective understanding to an extent that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to achieve. To be fully literate, therefore, is to have both the ability and the disposition to engage with texts epistemically when the occasion demands. (Wells 1990, 374)

In part, this form of literacy may be a legacy of a liberal education, as people who are liberally educated develop a capability to engage in multiple interpretations of whatever texts they read—whether in literature, history, or science. The liberating feature of liberal education is the recognition that all sources of knowledge, all texts, are human constructions rooted in particular times and places. That some texts manage to transcend the particularities of their times and places, that *King Lear*, for example, can be read by contemporary Japanese readers, is testimony to a certain greatness in the text. Nevertheless, no text loses all vestiges of its genesis. Therefore, we have multiple readings of texts precisely because of the situated character of knowledge and its creation. All knowledge can thus be seen as text in context. Bevington (1990), for example, describes the many new alternative readings of Shakespeare—feminist, historicist, deconstructionist—and how each sheds a new light on an old text. For us, the history of alternative interpretations becomes the beginnings of a pedagogical repertoire, a set of alternative readings that can be used to transform the teaching of particular texts to diverse readers in different contexts.

The particular pedagogical value of multiple interpretations lies in the diversity of student readers. If reading is indeed a transaction between a text and a reader in a particular context, then teachers must believe that there are multiple readings possible of any given text—that the meaning they have constructed from a particular text is not the only possible meaning that *could* be constructed. This belief is central to teachers' ability to enable students to make their own meanings from texts. To prepare teachers who can identify and encourage multiple readings of texts may mean to prepare them not within a single theoretical community, but within multiple communities, and thus make them aware of the competing assumptions regarding the reading of text. It also means reengaging prospective teachers, elementary and secondary alike, in reading and talking about many different kinds of texts (Florio-Ruane et al. 1990).

Teachers must also have explicit knowledge about their own theoretical stances, or predominant orientations toward literature, in order to help others see the assumptions guiding a particular reading of a text. Polanyi's discussion (1962) of tacit knowledge helps us understand that we don't necessarily need explicit knowledge in order to perform a familiar skill, such as riding a bicycle, playing an instrument, or reading a text; we can rely on our tacit knowledge. But if our goal is to encourage multiple readings and to help others gain conscious control over different interpretive stances, to become critical consumers of texts and of theories, then teachers will need more explicit knowledge of their implicit theoretical orientations, as well as the ability to talk about the invisible aspects of interpretive processes.<sup>3</sup>

In order to support this vision of an English classroom, teachers will also need to know how to recognize the kernel of an interpretation lying beneath students' partial, incomplete, and sometimes floundering utterances. Students' tentative interpretations are themselves texts that require explication. It is not always apparent from where an interpretation is coming or where it's headed. Teachers must draw on their knowledge of their students and those students' backgrounds, their knowledge of the texts, and their knowledge of common and uncommon readings of central texts, as well as their knowledge of multiple critical theories, to help them to interpret students' readings.

In the area of writing, we must be concerned with the relationship between procedural and declarative knowledge. Teachers may possess declarative knowledge about writing, for example, about the different forms writing can take, but they possess procedural knowledge of their own writing, also. What is the relationship between knowing about writing and knowing how to write? Even more interesting, and potentially troublesome for researchers, is the tacit nature of much of our knowledge about language. For teachers who grew up speaking standard or mainstream English, the process of internalizing the rules was not a self-conscious one; in detecting and remediating errors, they may rely on what "sounds right." Yet how does this tacit knowledge of language play out in teaching? How do teachers respond to students who bring to class different experiences with language and different dialects? What is the relationship between the tacit knowledge of experienced language users and the more explicit knowledge needed to construct answers to student questions about language?

Yet another issue facing researchers who do research about teachers' knowledge concerns the distinction between knowledge of generic processes involved in language arts and English, such as processes involved in writing or processes involved in constructing meaning from text, and knowledge of

particular content, such as specific literary texts or particular kinds of writing. As researchers, what do we focus on? Do we study teachers' knowledge of the different processes involved in writing in the abstract, or do we study that knowledge in the context of teaching about particular kinds of writing?

Now that we've explored the difficulties of studying teacher knowledge in English, we have to admit that the difficulties have not deterred us from trying to study it anyhow, researchers being a notably quixotic and unrealistic group. Let us tell you about some of the ways we have tried to study teachers' knowledge in English and some of what we've found.

## **Knowledge Growth in Teaching Research**

The intent of the "Knowledge Growth in Teaching" studies was to follow the growth and use of subject-matter knowledge among preservice teachers during their year of preparation and their first year of teaching. In these studies, we were particularly interested in both how teachers drew upon their knowledge of subject matter acquired during their undergraduate preparation and how they constructed new understandings of subject matter through the process of learning to teach.

There is a widely held misconception that our view of teacher knowledge is a static one, a view that teachers come to their instructional tasks with a fixed "knowledge base" that undergirds their work. This foundational view of teacher knowledge is misleading, as it appears to communicate that the knowledge for teaching exists somehow outside the teacher, derived from research and other authoritative sources, and is then applied to the challenges of teaching. The view we espouse is quite the opposite of a static one, although we suspect that our metaphor of a *knowledge base* unfortunately lends itself to just that misrepresentation. We did not see ourselves eliciting static knowledge from the minds of teachers, but rather observing the growth and construction of knowledge over time. We assumed that in the process of reading or teaching a text, teachers will develop new understandings of the text prompted by student readings, as well as through their own reengagement with it.<sup>4</sup>

In "Knowledge and Teaching," Shulman (1987) presents a model of "pedagogical reasoning and action" to portray how knowledge contributes to, as well as results from, the intellectual activities of teaching. In this model, teaching is seen as an alternating and simultaneous interaction of teacher understanding, transformation, action, evaluation and reflection, and progressive development of new understandings. The model of pedagogical reasoning is fundamentally a conception of how teachers continue to learn from their experiences in classrooms. The mechanism for both thought and learning is some form of reflection. During the processes of curriculum analysis and planning (comprehension and transformation), the teacher engages in reflection for action. The teacher rehearses and anticipates what might go on in the minds of the students and how different representations might relate both to the potential of the texts and the constructions of the readers. During active instruction, the teacher engages in reflection *in* action, processing experience, weighing alternatives, and shifting grounds as the teaching and learning unfold. After the active teaching, the teacher reviews and evaluates, playing back the experiences, examining pieces of student work, now reflecting *on* both action and thought. The way in which these processes, often tacit, accompany all the processes of pedagogical thinking and action remains elusive. But as pedagogical reasoning is one of the most important places where teacher knowledge develops, it is well worth our research interest and efforts.

In these studies, we used a variety of methods to investigate teachers' knowledge. Our measures of teachers' knowledge of English included self-reports of areas of greater and lesser understanding in English; transcripts of undergraduate and graduate coursework; transcript-guided interviews, in which participants talked about what they had learned from different courses; and a variety of tasks related to literature and writing, such as thinking aloud about a short story or poem, or responding to a sample of student writing. These think-aloud tasks perhaps come closest to drawing upon teachers' implicit theoretical stances toward literature or writing, but the responses themselves are not always easy texts to

understand. Finally, we used observation cycles in which we observed teachers teaching a unit in order to get a sense of the relationship between knowledge and teaching practice.<sup>5</sup>

We recognize that this work poses significant methodological tangles, including the level of inference required to infer knowledge of literature or theoretical stance from readings of particular texts, the vagaries of self-report data, and the insufficiencies of "objective" data such as number of courses taken in a subject. Taken individually, each method is insufficient (see L. S. Shulman 1988 for a discussion of a union of insufficiencies in teacher assessment). We found that the particular responses to questions given by participants were less important than the thinking that lay behind the responses. For example, in Grossman's study (1990), she used Randall Jarrell's "Death of the Ball Turret Gunner" as a text in a think-aloud task. Following discussions in which participants constructed their own understandings of the poem, they were asked to think about teaching it to high school students. As part of the interviews, participants were given copies of textbooks in which the poem was used.<sup>6</sup> Both Lance and Vanessa, the teachers with the most and the least subject-matter knowledge in the study, responded negatively to the textbook question, "What is the meaning of this poem?" (from Brooks and Warren, *Understanding Poetry*), but they objected on different grounds. Lance objected on disciplinary grounds:

Because you can't capture in prose what poetry does. I mean it's always this illusion that the poem meant, is saying, this thing and that . . . *you* could just say it. But you can't just say it. And so it promotes this kind of bad way of thinking about poetry, which isn't a good idea, I think. (Interview, 10 February 1987)

Jake, another teacher who possessed a strong background in literature, objected to the question on similar grounds: "I would never ask questions like that. I would say, 'Discuss the poem, or discuss the meaning or meanings of the poem.' I don't like these questions because they're reductive" (Grossman 1993, 33). Vanessa also objected, but for different reasons:

I don't like these [questions] as well, because they're too specific. . . I like to give my kids questions that they can't copy and that they can each have their own answer to and support them, and that way they'll have to and they will get more excited about what they're doing if they have to support what they're doing. This kind of stuff is good to help them start understanding a poem. (Interview, 3 February 1987)

While all three teachers objected to the textbook treatment of the poem, Jake and Lance objected on disciplinary grounds, while Vanessa seemed to object on pedagogical ones. From these texts, it is easier to infer something about Jake's and Lance's understanding and beliefs about poetry than it is to infer Vanessa's; rather, we get a sense of Vanessa's beliefs about the *teaching* of poetry.

Using classroom observations as a source of data poses similar difficulties in interpreting teachers' knowledge. For example, classroom observations of the teaching of science have demonstrated that beginning science teachers are less likely to ask open-ended questions about topics about which they are relatively less knowledgeable (Carlsen 1988). Yet using teachers' use of open-ended questions during classroom discussions as an indicator of their knowledge of literature may be problematic. One interpretation of these openended questions may be that they reflect an underlying knowledge of the underdetermination of literary meaning and the potential for multiple interpretations of a text. On the other hand, teachers' use of relatively narrow questions and reliance on the "initiation-response-evaluation" discourse structure described by Mehan (1987) may reflect their own experiences in school-based discussions of literature as much as their understanding of literature per se (Florio-Ruane et al. 1990).

What did we conclude from our studies, given all of the necessary caveats and cautions? First of all, we concluded that subject-matter knowledge matters. What teachers knew about their subjects, particularly what they knew and believed about how knowledge is constructed in a specific discipline, affected how they planned for instruction, how they selected texts and organized curricula, and how they interacted with students in the classroom (see Shulman and Grossman 1987 for a full description of the findings of the "Knowledge Growth in Teaching" project). In English, we focused particularly on how

teachers' orientations toward literature, their theoretical stances, to use Elbow's term, affected what they believed about the goals of teaching literature, as well as how they planned for instruction and conducted classroom discussions (Grossman 1991).

We also concluded that subject-matter knowledge alone is not sufficient for teachers. Knowing English is not the same as knowing how to teach English to a diverse set of learners in particular contexts (see Clift 1991; Vendlar 1988 for additional discussion of this issue). Teachers need to go beyond their own understanding of content to understand something about the purposes for teaching English or language arts at particular grade levels, the different underlying philosophies about teaching literature, language, and writing, and students' understandings and potential misunderstandings of that content. When the beginning teachers without teacher education in Grossman's study (1990) tried to teach what they knew about Shakespeare to high school students, they discovered the limitations of untransformed disciplinary knowledge, as Lance comments about his teaching of *Romeo and Juliet* to ninth graders:

It was really hard for me to adjust my expectations in the sense that I was always interested in pushing ideas to the extreme, like proving the most obscure theses and showing little nuances in the language that no one had even seen and why that works. And these kids, of course I know that now, wanted nothing to do with that. That was just totally irrelevant to them. (Grossman 1990, 107)

Through the process of teaching, and, we would hope, through professional preparation, teachers engage in constructing their understanding of what it means to teach English. We see this construction of pedagogical content knowledge, as we've termed it, as a central task facing beginning secondary school teachers. Teacher education can help provide the frameworks for thinking about the teaching of English, and for helping students reexamine their own experiences as learners in English classrooms (Florio-Ruane et al. 1990). Teacher education can also help prospective teachers learn how to interpret students' difficulties in interpreting literature or in writing essays, as well as introducing prospective teachers to new ways of thinking about the teaching of writing (Comeaux and Gomez 1991). The data from Grossman's study (1990) suggest that teachers do not necessarily construct new conceptions of the teaching of writing, for example, from experience alone, even when experience teaches them that their current approach isn't working.

Yet pedagogical content knowledge is inextricably linked to other knowledge necessary for teaching. While new teachers can imagine wonderful discussions about literature that take into account multiple perspectives, they must also understand something about managing group dynamics in order to make that vision possible in a classroom setting (see, e.g., Clift 1991). The different domains of teacher knowledge are inevitably interactive and interdependent.

We have also learned that context matters in teachers' knowledge, that is, that teachers' knowledge both shapes and is shaped by the contexts in which they work. In a study of science teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, for example, Brickhouse and Bodner (1992) describe a beginning teacher caught between his convictions regarding science instruction and the constraints inherent in the context in which he is teaching. In a study of junior high school English teachers, Zancanella (1991) describes the effects of institutional constraints on how teachers teach literature. And in a study comparing English and math teachers in three different secondary schools, Stodolsky and Grossman have found that teachers' conceptions of their subject matter affect their responses to changes in the student context of their schools; at the same time, the contexts in which teachers teach begin to shape their conceptions of what it means to teach their subject matter (Stodolsky and Grossman 1992). Teacher knowledge, like all knowledge, is situated in the contexts of its use. We must begin to pay more attention to the contexts in which teachers work and to the complex relationships among content and context.

## Implications for Professional Education: The Uses of Cases

Studying teacher knowledge, its construction as well as its interplay with instruction, can help teacher educators understand more clearly the relationship between professional knowledge and professional education. As Feiman–Nemser (1983) observed, the teacher education curriculum provides a number of distinct opportunities for different kinds of learning to occur. A number of studies have indicated the importance of subject–specific methods courses in developing pedagogical content knowledge in English (Comeaux and Gomez 1990; 1991; Florio–Ruane et al. 1990; Grossman 1990; Grossman and Richert 1988; Ritchie and Wilson 1993). In all instances, these courses must find some way of addressing prospective teachers' past experiences as learners in English classes and their subsequent experiences as student teachers in English classrooms. Prospective teachers' own prior experiences as learners, and their apprenticeships of observation (Lortie 1975), may have inculcated ways of thinking about English teaching that do not support the vision of English advocated in teacher education coursework (Ritchie and Wilson, in press). In this sense, teacher education must adopt a form of teaching for conceptual change in order to have an effect. Teacher educators must also be aware of what prospective teachers are learning from their field experiences, and how those experiences mediate the lessons of teacher education coursework. Creating school–university partnerships, in which teachers and professors collaborate on the preparation of future teachers, provides an opportunity to diminish the potential dissonance between what prospective teachers hear at the university and what they experience in the schools (Athanases, Caret, Canales, and Meyer 1992).

The contextual and interdependent aspects of teacher knowledge help explain our interest in the uses of case methods in teacher education. As researchers concerned with knowledge acquisition in complex and ill–structured domains have argued (Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich, and Anderson 1988), teachers and doctors, among many others who work in such domains, must draw upon and integrate multiple knowledge domains under conditions of uncertainty and novelty. Classroom events rarely unfold the same way twice. To prepare teachers to deal with the complexity of the classroom, Lee Shulman and others have argued for the use of multiple cases of classroom teaching during teacher education. Cases of teaching, as opposed to prescriptive proclamations of best practice, can attempt to represent the messy world of actual practice, in which often neither the problem nor the solution is clear. To prepare prospective teachers for the widely diverse settings in which they will teach, proponents of case methods argue that it is better to engage them in discussions of ten cases of the teaching of *Hamlet* in a host of different contexts than to offer them the one best way. Cases also offer the opportunity for integration of knowledge, as the analyses of cases will usually draw upon issues related not only to the teaching of content but to issues of classroom management, school context, student diversity, the ethics of teaching, and many other areas.

In addition to reading cases of other peoples' teaching, prospective teachers can be encouraged to write cases of their own teaching as well (LaBoskey 1992; Richert 1992). Casting experience into narrative form provides a vehicle for reflection, an opportunity to select and analyze a particular episode of one's teaching. Learning to craft cases from classroom teaching can help prospective teachers learn from their own experiences. For English teachers in particular, writing cases can reengage them as writers, as they explore writing in a new and potentially unfamiliar genre.

Cases permit learners to explore a wider variety of settings and circumstances in the teaching of English than can ever be experienced directly. Some may worry that advocates of case methods want to supplant field experiences with cases, but we would never advocate cases as a replacement for direct experience in the field. Instead, we argue for a balance between the intensity of a few vivid experiences in the field and the vicarious exploration of a wide range of circumstances through cases. As the psychometricians used to observe about testing, we are always searching for a balance between "fidelity and band width;" while field experiences possess undeniable fidelity, cases provide greater band width. Field experiences are often difficult to share, as prospective teachers are encountering quite different circumstances in their separate classrooms and schools. When individuals report to a group on their own field experiences, no one else in the group has experienced those same circumstances. When all have



studied the same well-crafted case, on the other hand, there is a parity of expertise in the group, which serves as an invitation for all to participate in the discussion. Moreover, when we shift to case writing as the mode of instruction, field experience is highlighted and illuminated. Far from replacing experience, the use of case writing enriches experience and makes it available for further conversation and group reflection.

Teaching with a variety of case methods, including both reading common texts and writing one's own texts, also reflects a particular perspective on teachers' knowledge. The knowledge and practical understanding teachers act upon daily in classrooms is unlikely to be composed of principles derived from research, not even the precepts of dedicated teacher educators. Rather, teachers' knowledge is composed largely of a repertoire of cases, of what happened in particular classes with specific kids. A curriculum built around the use of cases can provide both the beginnings of a case knowledge for prospective teachers and ways of constructing meaning from cases, initiating beginning teachers into explicitly pedagogical reasoning. Finally, helping prospective English teachers understand the multiple ways in which the teaching of common texts can unfold, helping them construct reflective and critical interpretations of these cases, and encouraging them to author their own cases of teaching has the additional benefit of modeling the kind of full and thoughtful literacy we want them to promote among their own future students.

### **Future Research on Teachers' Knowledge and Thinking in English**

While a number of teacher educators have begun to experiment with the use of case methods during teacher education (J. H. Shulman 1992), we know very little about what prospective teachers actually learn from case methods. One area ripe for future research lies in answering the many unanswered questions about teaching and learning with cases (Grossman 1993). What makes particular cases pedagogically powerful? What do prospective teachers remember about cases once they are in the classroom? How do they draw upon cases as precedents for practice in the process of pedagogical reasoning and action, if they draw upon them at all? While there is a sparse literature on learning from cases in the area of teacher education, we recognize that teaching with cases is but an instance of the larger phenomenon of teaching with narrative texts. The questions we raise about how and what teachers learn from both reading and writing cases of teaching are related to more general issues about how and what people learn from narrative.

In addressing these questions, the community of researchers in English education has the obvious advantage of having studied the processes of understanding different kinds of texts (e.g. Langer 1989) or of what makes certain texts "difficult" (e.g. Purves 1991), and of having studied what students learn through writing (e.g. Marshall 1987). As teacher educators grapple with questions related to teaching and learning with cases, they would be wise to consult with colleagues in English education.

### **Case Studies of Teaching Common Texts**

Another area for future research in the area of English education lies in documenting exemplary cases of the teaching of English in a wide variety of contexts. One of the most fascinating strategies for observing how individual knowledge and skill can be applied to exploit the potential inherent in a given situation is to provide a number of practitioners with the opportunity to try their hand at the "same" problem. Thus, in duplicate bridge we give all competitors the same deal of the cards. In chess, we collect and publish casebooks of great players employing the "same" gambits or defenses. In our earlier work on medical diagnosis ("Medical Problem Solving" [Elstein, Shulman and Sprafka 1978]), we trained actors and actresses to present the "same" clinical cases to several dozen experienced internists.

We propose a large set of studies in which researchers carefully examine and analyze the ways in which both new and experienced English teachers instruct students in the same texts, be they short stories, plays, novels, poems, or other works. Let us study a number of teachers at work with *As I Lay Dying* or *To Kill a Mockingbird*, or see how *Of Mice and Men*, *Beloved*, *Black Boy*, or 1984 plays out in different classrooms under the tutelage of diverse teachers and the constructive interpretations of diverse learners.

We and our colleagues have studied a number of novice teachers teaching Gina Berriault's short story "The Stone Boy" or the poem "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner." Grossman (1902) has analyzed parallel pedagogies of *Hamlet*; Gudmundsdottir (1989) has done the same with *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and U.S. history. Wilson and Wineburg (1988) have examined the teaching of the American Revolution by several exemplary secondary school teachers. The National Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature has also begun to assemble a set of case studies of the teaching of experienced English teachers (e.g., Burke 1990; Forman–Pemberton 1989; Hansbury–Zuendt 1991). As we examine teaching under those circumstances, we come to appreciate the extent to which teaching is truly constructivist, an activity of continuing transformation of subject matter by both teacher and students. We come to understand why classroom management and organization prepare the ground for the substantive pedagogy to follow, but do not define it.

We therefore propose that extensive, analytic casebooks of English teaching be developed that focus on multiple teachings of the same or closely parallel works. The multiplicity and the parallel structures will forestall unwarranted temptations to convert described cases into prescribed orthodoxies. Cases will be analyzed, contrasted, and interpreted through commentaries and other glosses. Those who worry about inadvertent canonization, through treating the texts we study as the texts we must teach, need not be concerned. First, some texts are taught so widely that it would be irresponsible to ignore them (e.g., *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Death of a Salesman*). Multiple case studies of the teaching of less-familiar texts may also provide support and encouragement for teachers to teach alternative texts as well.

In what sense is this research? We believe that the "knowledge base" of teaching must be composed, in large measure, of carefully collected and analyzed cases of teaching and learning. These cases provide contextualized instances of English teaching that can be compared with one another, analyzed for their distinctive features, and reviewed to understand the strategic and moral lessons of their stories. Principles can be derived from the analysis of these accounts (as they can from experiments and other more traditional forms of investigation) and tested against other accounts.

## Conclusion

We believe that discussions about teacher knowledge and belief are central to the discourse on teaching and teacher education in English. The interplay between knowledge and teaching is an intricate one, as, we believe, the process of teaching provides the impetus for the constant revision and renewal of what one knows and believes. Knowledge begets teaching, which in turn begets new knowledge.

Considerations of teachers' knowledge and the contexts that support its growth and renewal are particularly critical during periods of reform. The calls for educational reform are likely to continue. Standards will be stipulated, challenged, elaborated, and revised. In English, the debates may become more strident and the frameworks less coherent. The tensions between depth and coverage will be exacerbated. The classroom teacher will increasingly serve as practical broker and interpreter of the curriculum, struggling to construct pedagogical bridges between the school programs of a single state or district and the diverse sensibilities of children who are products of dozens of cultures. In the face of political imperatives and daily ambiguities, our nation's teachers will need ever greater knowledge and understanding, a scholarship of disciplines and students, a competence of communication, and a wisdom of practice.

At the heart of teachers' capacity to cope will be their developed pedagogical understandings, knowledge, and skills, and their dispositions and commitments regarding children, their subject matter, and the social conditions that surround both. Few teachers can flourish without the help of a supportive organization and a cadre of fellow teachers committed to similar values and initiatives. Nonetheless, no organization can overcome fundamental deficits of content and pedagogy in the preparation of its teachers. Central to reform in English education is the capacity of teachers to teach students the reading, interpretation, and writing of texts. When conversations about the attainment of new standards are pursued in statehouses and federal offices, we need to convince policy makers that such efforts represent empty

rhetoric unless we can learn to educate the next generation of teachers adequately and support them appropriately in their work.

## Notes

1. We have always been sympathetic to Miriam Ben-Peretz's conception of "curriculum potential" in which any curricular text—including a detailed math or biology textbook and associated workbooks and materials, or a basal reading series—is seen as the starting point for pedagogical thinking, not a finished product to be transmitted from teacher to student.
2. A recent study of elementary school teachers' perspectives regarding the role of literature in language arts, conducted under the auspices of the National Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature (Walmsley and Walp 1989) concluded that "many elementary teachers had neither an instructional philosophy for the teaching of literature, nor a well-developed practical plan for making literature a part of their elementary curriculum" (from Center Update newsletter).
3. Wells (1990) also refers to the problems of tacit knowledge in apprenticeship models of literacy development. Observing overt behaviors of literate people is unlikely to provide learners with the knowledge they need. "Indeed, since these literate practices are, as we have just seen, essentially a matter of engaging with a particular text in a manner appropriate to one's goals on a particular occasion, it is difficult to see how such essential *mental* activities could be acquired by simply observing an expert's overt behavior. Equally, it is of little value to guide the novice's action if he or she has no understanding of the significance of the action to the overall goal of the activity. What this means, therefore, is that in the case of such cultural practices as those associated with literacy, talk in and about the activity can no longer remain an optional aspect of the collaboration ... but must be seen as both central and essential" (Wells 1990, 380).
4. At times, the research itself became the opportunity for construction of new knowledge of content; through the nature of our interactions with preservice teachers, we collaborated in the construction of new understandings. The nature of the tasks may have prompted new insights, rather than eliciting prior knowledge. Any efforts to study knowledge will need to take this aspect into account.
5. Grossman's work on pedagogical knowledge in English (1993), Gudmundsdottir's work on pedagogical content knowledge in English and social studies (1989), and Clift's work on knowledge development in an English teacher all use similar methods (Clift, in press).
6. The poem was chosen, in part, because it appears in a number of secondary school poetry textbooks, including *Understanding Poetry*, edited by Brooks and Warren, *Ways to Poetry*, edited by Clayes and Gerrietts, and *Sound and Sense*, edited by Perrine. The poem also appeared in a textbook on American literature used by local school districts.

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