Chapter 82

# From Preservice to Inservice:
## Can Practicing Foreign Language Learning Online Help Teachers Transfer Linguistic, Cultural, and Technological Awareness Into Teaching English Language Learners?

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## ABSTRACT

*Wang (2012) suggested that preservice teachers perceived that their initial experiences as online language learners increased their linguistic, cultural and technological awareness, which would further benefit them when working with diverse students. However, that study was unclear about whether teachers perceived that they could transfer their awareness into teaching practice. Therefore, extending the pilot study, this follow-up study explored inservice teachers' perceptions of linguistic, cultural and technological awareness transfer in teaching English Language Learners by asking them to engage with an online language course and reflect on their experience. This study proposes a model for language teacher linguistic, cultural and technological awareness development and transfer, as well as discusses issues related to language teacher awareness transfer.*

## INTRODUCTION

The continuing linguistic, cultural and technological diversity among students and the increasing influence of Internet technologies on learning bring challenges in teaching to today's teachers (Beatty, 2013; Burns & Richards, 2012; Coiro, Leu, Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Mills, 2010). The teacher education and professional development literature suggests that teacher educators should prepare preservice teachers to work with linguistic, cultural and technological diversity by raising their awareness in these areas (Mills, 2010; Russell, Bebell O'Dwyer & O'Connor, 2003; Wang, 2012). A review of teacher cognition theories suggests the importance of teacher awareness development (Andrew, 2007; Borg, 2001). To expand the understanding of teacher awareness development through teachers' learning experiences, Wang (2012)

conducted a pilot study to explore preservice native-English-speaking teachers' perceptions while learning a foreign language online. In this pilot study, preservice teachers refers to student teachers who are undergoing training through teacher education programs before taking on their positions as full time teachers. The results suggested that preservice teachers perceived that their experiences of online foreign language learning prepared them to work with English Language Learners (ELLs) as well as benefited them by increasing their linguistic, cultural and technological awareness which in this study refers to teachers' general knowledge about any aspect of a language, culture, or technology. Being linguistically and culturally aware means that teachers need to be aware of broad issues related to teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students such as students' home-school language gap, teachers' self-awareness of their own language use, and diverse students' cultural backgrounds. Teachers' technological awareness refers to teachers being aware of issues such as appropriate use of new technology to facilitate diverse students' learning (Ferreira, Salinas, & Morales, 2014; Thomas, 2013). However, the literature is unclear about whether and how teachers transfer linguistic, cultural and technological awareness developed through teacher education contexts into school teaching practice. Therefore, a follow-up study is essential to explore how teachers, from their perspectives, transfer their linguistic, cultural and technological awareness into teaching ELLs. If teacher educators know more about how teachers perceive that they transfer awareness, educational programs for teachers can use this information to improve their offerings. In this current study, a literature review presents a model of teacher awareness development. Then, a follow-up study is presented that explores teacher awareness transfer. This follow-up study develops a model for teacher linguistic, cultural and technological awareness development and transfer and discusses related issues. Finally, conclusions and implications are presented.

## LITERATURE

Based on a review of the literature on language teacher cognition, language teacher education and teacher awareness development, a model of language teacher awareness development was derived (See Figure 1 for the model).

This model in general depicts a linear process of language teacher awareness development and transfer, from developing awareness in teacher education contexts to transferring awareness to ELL classroom

*Figure 1. Model of language teacher awareness development*
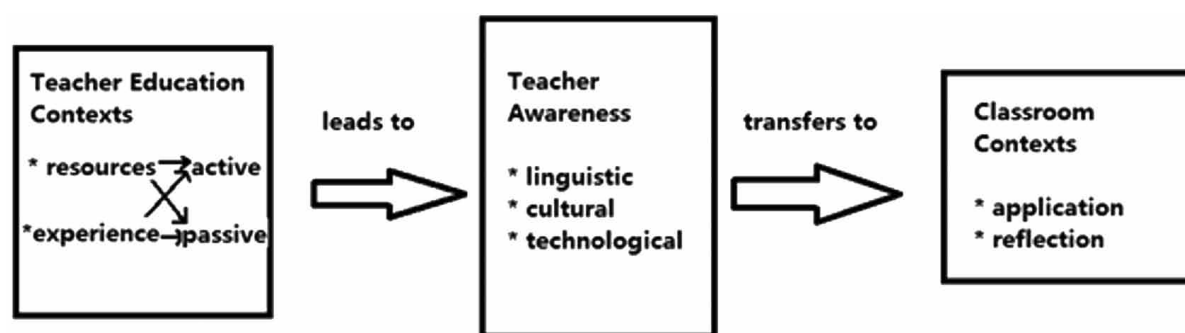
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