

# A Long-Term Approach to FL TA Development



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# Overview of today's workshop

- Introduction/rationale: Contextualizing the workshop (15 min.)
- Elements of a long-term approach to FL TA professional development (15 min.)
- Articulating professional development activities consistent with approach (20 min.)
- Organizing professional development activities over a long-term trajectory, questions to ask yourselves (5 min.)
- Workshop: Articulating professional development practices over a long-term teaching trajectory for your context (90 min.)

# I. Introduction / Rationale

## Need for curricular change

Unified, **four-year curricula that situate language study in cultural, historic, geographic, and cross-cultural frames**; that systematically incorporate **transcultural content and translingual reflection** at every level; and that organize the major around explicit, principled educational goals and expected outcomes. A curriculum should consist of **a series of complementary or linked courses that holistically incorporate content and cross-cultural reflection at every level ...** The work of **revamping and unifying the language department can only be carried out through a sustained collaboration among all members of the teaching corps.**

(MLA, 2007, pp. 5-6)

## Need for professional development mirroring this change

The changes we foresee in the undergraduate curriculum **call for changes in the way graduate studies are structured as well.** To meet the needs of undergraduate language programs (which is where the majority of PhD candidates will find employment), **graduate studies should provide substantive training in language teaching and in the use of new technologies** in addition to cultivating extensive disciplinary knowledge and strong analytic and writing skills.

(MLA, 2007, p. 7)

# Recurrent recommendations to improve FL TA professional development

- Include more extensive coursework related to teaching or linking teaching and scholarship (Allen, 2009; Bernhardt, 2001; Byrnes, 2001; Barnes-Karol, 2003)
- Offer opportunities for graduate students to team teach courses in language, literature, & culture (Magnan, 1987; Stepp-Greany, 2004)
- Allow graduate students to independently teach advanced undergraduate courses (Byrnes, Crane, & Sprang, 2002; Dickson, 1996; Gutiérrez, 1987)

Allen & Negueruela-Azarola (2010)

## FL TAs' experiences & perceptions of professional development

- They may not get as much out of the methods course as we think (Allen, 2011; Brandl, 2000; Rankin & Becker, 2006)
- Their confidence in their capacity to teach language does not translate into the same confidence about teaching literature (Mills & Allen, 2008; Mills, 2011)
- They perceive gaps in what they think professional development should include and what it actually includes (Gonglewski & Penningworth, 1998; Gorell & Cubillos, 1993)

# Need for a long-term, theoretically informed approach to FL TA development

## Typical professional development plan

- “Frontloaded”: happens before or concurrently with 1st term of teaching
- Transmission model of teacher learning
- Short-term, immediate need focusing on lower-level teaching
- Follow-up activities, e.g., supervisor observations or workshops are non-systematic

## Alternative professional development plan

- Begins before or concurrently with 1<sup>st</sup> term of teaching but continues over a number of years
- Teacher learning as a gradual conceptual process
- Focus on both short-term and long-term teaching of both lower-level & advanced courses
- Systematic goals and articulated sequences of professional development

## II. Key elements of a long-term approach to FL TA development



# Conceptualizing teacher learning from a sociocultural theory perspective

- Teachers are *learners of L2 teaching*
- Learning to teach is a dynamic *process of social interaction*
- Teacher learning is *both internal & collective activity*
- Professional development is *a conceptual process*; the use of *one overarching concept* can unify curricula & provide teachers with coherent notions of FL teaching & learning

(Johnson, 2009; Lantolf & Johnson, 2007; Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003)

# Conceptual tools vs. pedagogical tools

- Conceptual tools
  - Examples: literacy, communicative competence, scaffolding
  
- Pedagogical tools
  - Examples: reading/listening matrix, semantic map, journaling
  
- Aligning conceptual with pedagogical tools
  - Difficulty for novice teachers to instantiate pedagogical applications of theoretical concepts and frameworks
  
  - How can this happen? Systematic opportunities for dialogic mediation, scaffolded learning and assisted performance → critical for development to take place

(Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999)

## Levels of appropriation of conceptual & pedagogical tools

1. Lack of appropriation due to incomprehension, resistance, or rejection
2. Appropriating the concept's label but none of its features
3. Appropriating surface features of the concept but not understanding how various features contribute to a conceptual whole
4. Appropriating conceptual underpinnings & being able to use the concept in new settings
5. Achieving mastery in implementing the concept

(Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999)

## The value of an overarching concept to orient TA professional development

“L2 teachers typically enter the profession with largely unarticulated, yet deeply ingrained, everyday concepts about language, language learning, and language teaching that are based on their own L2 instructional histories and lived experiences. L2 teacher education programs are faced with the task of overcoming the inertia of teachers’ everyday concepts, for example, that language and culture are separate, albeit related, content and thus should be taught separately, and that grammatical accuracy is a necessary precursor to engagement in successful communicative activity.”

Lantolf & Johnson, 2007, p. 884

## Contributions of literacy as an overarching concept to FL TA professional development

- It is consistent with both immediate & future teaching needs of FL TAs
- It allows for rethinking traditional perceptions of language versus culture or literature and “productive” versus “receptive” skills
- It reorients responsibility for educating FL graduate students as teachers not just on the LPD but all departmental teaching faculty

# Articulating professional development practices consistent with this approach

Principle	Activities
Teachers are <i>learners of L2 teaching</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesson study (planning, teaching, evaluating)</li> <li>• Instructional Unit Portfolio</li> </ul>
Learning to teach is a dynamic <i>process of social interaction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class discussions</li> <li>• Lesson study (planning, debriefing)</li> <li>• Reflective reading blogs</li> <li>• Final interviews</li> </ul>
Teacher learning is <i>both internal &amp; collective activity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective reading blogs</li> <li>• Class discussions</li> </ul>
Professional development is a <i>conceptual process</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concept maps</li> <li>• Reflective teaching journals</li> </ul>

# Learning to teach is a dynamic process of social interaction

- Sample activity: LESSON STUDY
  - **Goal:** Building pedagogical knowledge and improving teaching
  - **Components:** 1) Formulating learning goals; 2) Designing the research lesson; 3) Designing the study; 4) Teaching and observing the lesson; 5) Analyzing the evidence; 6) Repeating the process (teaching the lesson again the semester after); 7) Documenting the lesson study
  - **Role of FL TAs:** In groups of 3-6 TAs (novice and experienced) collaborate on a topic that poses problems for students in their class and set goals; they create a lesson intended to address the lesson goals; they develop a plan to find out how students learn from the lesson; one member of the group teaches the lesson, the others observe; debrief; rework the lesson; document the whole process for the benefit of other teachers.
  - **Role of teacher supervisor:** mentoring, providing guidance
  - **Products:** A detailed, usable lesson plan; an in-depth study of the lesson that looked at teaching and learning interactions, explaining how students responded to instruction, and how instruction might be modified based on the evidence collected.

# Example of lesson study

See packet of materials for lesson study template

# Learning to teach is both an internal & collective activity

- Sample Activity: REFLECTIVE READING BLOG
  - **Goal:** helping TAs to learn and assist their understanding of readings by asking to react to them and referencing concrete evidence
  - **Components:** Weekly reflective reading reaction and response to a peer's posting
  - **Role of FL TAs:** posting reactions, ask questions and comment on a peer's posting(s) once a week
  - **Role of teacher supervisor:** following up with questions, comments, and suggestions for further explorations or readings



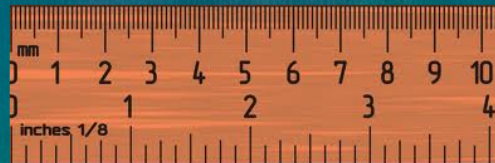
# Example of reflective reading blog

## Latest Entries »

### Do YOU measure up??

Filed under: [Uncategorized](#) by [danijennings](#) — [Leave a comment](#)

November 29, 2010



When we hear the term "assessment" we usually think of a scantron test, or some other form of multiple choice test that tests our ability to recall random information and facts— in short, academic bulimia. Can't we just do this in our FL class as well? Some teachers would ask that question. But, in fact, we cannot. If the test were a simple vocabulary test, there may be justification for a scantron test, but even then, the test is not challenging the students to better themselves. Kern explains that assessments need to "collect... and measure... information relevant to student learning and performance" (Kern, pg 267). And, since we are teaching for literacy, a mere vocabulary test will not cut it. We need to test the students in the four components: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. But even those are just the basic things we should be assessing for. Teachers using a literacy-based approach are also teaching culture, big "C" and little "c". We need to assess the students' total comprehension and understanding if we want to know anything at all about our classroom! Without accurate assessment information, we (as teachers) are lost when it comes to re-designing our courses for better effectiveness.



## Recent entries

[Do YOU measure up??](#)

[Death to textbooks for language learning!!!!!!! MUAHAHAHA!!!](#)

[It's time to turn to our culture capsules! Wait...Where'd they go??!?!?](#)

[I'm mapping my future!](#)

[Bottoms UP!!!!!! Or.....is it Tops Down??? OR BOTH?!?!?!?!?](#)

["Here's your text." "But this IS A BOOK!?!?!?!?"](#)

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# Learning to teach is both an internal & collective activity

## ➤ Sample Activity: REFLECTIVE JOURNALING

- **Goal:** to document the experiences, thoughts, questions, ideas and conclusions that show evidence of learning, because a scholarly approach to teaching requires critical inquiry into practice and into learning
- **Components:** a record of events and results and reactions to them that lead to reflection, development of new understanding and action
- **Role of FL TAs:** demonstrating active and reflective engagement in the issues and ideas they encounter as teachers
- **Role of teacher supervisor:** dialoguing with TA on the basis of journal entries that lead to build new understandings together

# Example of reflective journaling

See packet of materials for sample prompts and a sample entry following a lesson study

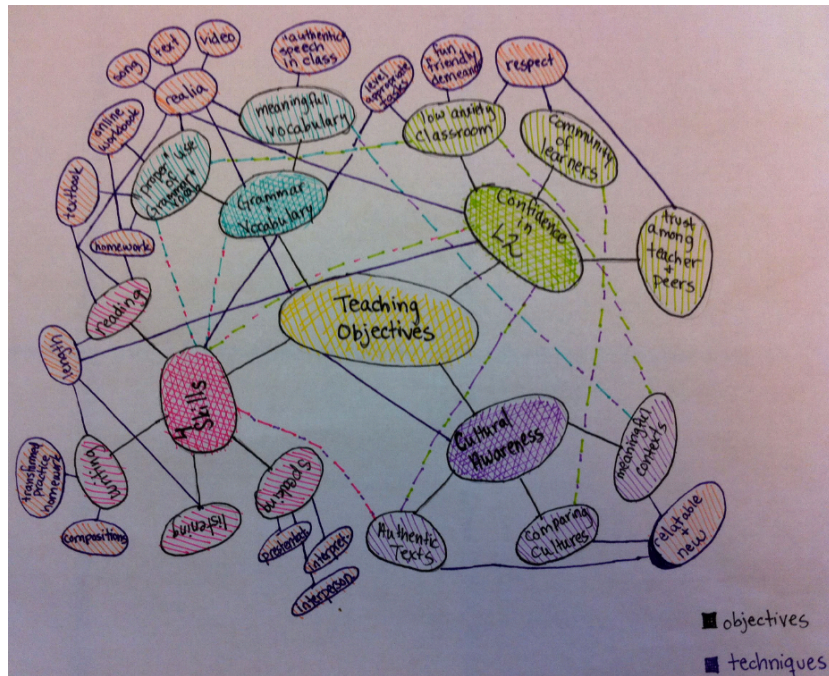
# Learning to teach is a conceptual process

## ➤ Sample Activity: CONCEPT MAPPING

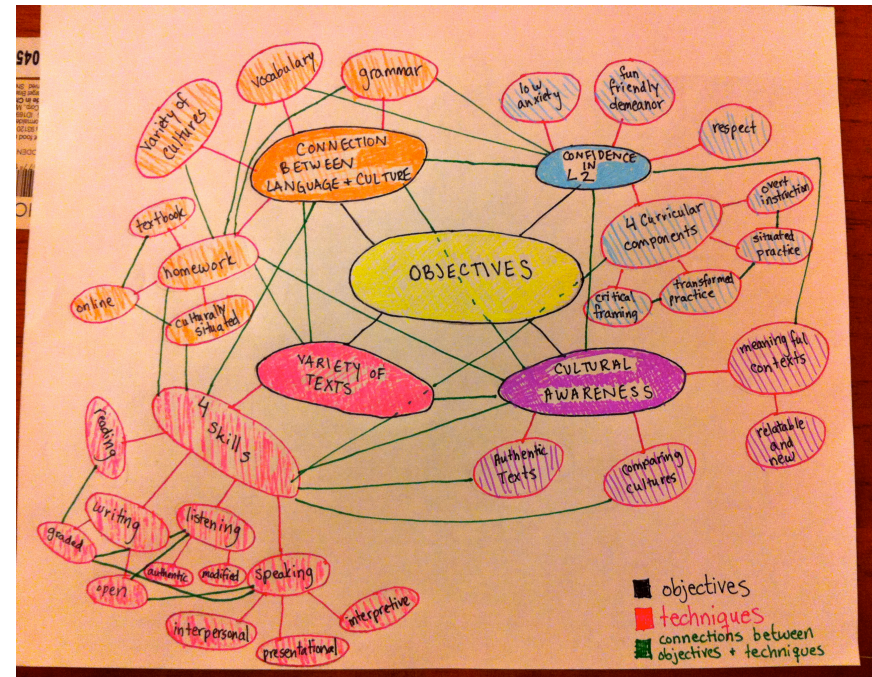
- **Goals:** To demonstrate and assess growth in understanding of a concept; to encourage TAs to get more involved in their learning process
- **Components:** an overarching concept at the center of the map and interrelated elements: nodes, directed lines and labels
- **Role of FL TAs:** draw map based on their own understanding, revisit and edit map to reflect new understanding
- **Role of teacher supervisor:** review map with TA, ask probing questions to push reflection further along

# Example of concept mapping


Amanda - Midterm



Amanda – End of the semester



## IV. Articulating professional development practices over a long-term teaching trajectory



# Key questions to ask yourself

- What conceptual tools will be needed to teach in your context? What resources will be used to introduce these?
- What pedagogical tools will be needed to carry out instruction consistent with framing concepts? What resources will be used to introduce these?
- In what order will new teachers be introduced to these tools?
- What types of activities will be used to facilitate development?
  - Formal/group (e.g., coursework, workshops)
  - Non-formal/individual (e.g., informal discussions, individual reflections, teacher observations)
- How will the needs of novice and experienced teachers be jointly addressed in group activities?
- How can experienced teachers assist with novices?

# V. Workshop

# Overview

- INTRODUCTION (group work, 10 minutes)
- PLANNING THE FOCUS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TA LEARNING GOALS (individual, pair and group work, 45 minutes)
- ALIGNING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES WITH THE GOALS (group work, 30 minutes)
- Q & A (5 minutes)

## VI. More information



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## Welcome to the PERCOLATE project

### What is PERCOLATE?

The Professional dEvelopment for College fOreign LAnguage TEachers (otherwise known as PERCOLATE) project at the [University of Arizona's Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language, and Literacy \(CERCLL\)](#) is dedicated to developing a set of professional development materials to be used to prepare foreign language teaching assistants (FL TAs) for teaching in a four-year multidisciplinary and multi-literacy curriculum. On this website, we will be posting modules and related webinars and bibliographies. We will also be announcing workshops and conferences where we will be presenting the project and its outcomes. We will be watching for other resources related to the professional development of foreign language teaching assistants and adjunct instructors and bring them to your attention as they become available. So stay tuned and drop us a note using the contact form if you have any questions!

## Sample Module Topics

- Rethinking the teaching of reading: Designing meaning
- Rethinking the teaching of writing: The role of genre
- Orality in the classroom: Scaffolding participation
- Listenability: The features of highly listeneable texts
- Integrating online interaction
- Designing assessment and evaluation in a literacy-oriented approach
- Visual literacy: Supporting learners to discriminate and interpret visual objects, images, and symbols.

<http://www.percolate.arizona.edu>

P E R C O L A T E

## Related Publications

- Allen, H. W. (2011). Embracing literacy-based teaching: A longitudinal study of the conceptual development of novice foreign language teachers. In K.E. Johnson & P. R. Golombek (Eds.), *Sociocultural Research on Second Language Teacher Education: Exploring the Complexities of Professional Development* (pp. 86-101). New York: Routledge.
- Allen, H.W., & Dupuy, B. (in press). Evolving notions of literacy-based foreign language teaching: A case study of graduate student instructors. In H.W. Allen & H.H. Maxim, (Eds.) *Educating the Future Foreign Language Professoriate for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Boston: Heinle Cengage.
- Allen, H.W., & Paesani, K. (2010). Exploring the feasibility of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in introductory foreign language courses. *L2 Journal*, 2, 119-142.