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2007

Teacher Self-Efficacy of Graduate Teaching Assistants of French

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Chapter 11

Teacher Self-Efficacy of Graduate Teaching Assistants of French

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Introduction

One of the most important roles of a language program director (LPD) is to provide guidance and support for graduate teaching assistants (TAs) and to assist in the development of effective teaching practices. Although the focus of LPDs is often on carrying out appropriate teacher training through teaching observations, group meetings, and other collaborative efforts, the beliefs of the TAs about their own capabilities to bring about desired outcomes related to learning and engagement are an important consideration. Any LPD who has supervised novice teachers or observed teaching behaviors of language instructors has quickly realized that despite common teacher training experiences, instructional materials, and recommended classroom strategies, significant differences emerge among individual teachers and their course management, instructional strategies, and teaching practices.

Teacher efficacy or “the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance” (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977, p. 137) can be explored to provide valuable insights into teachers’ self-perceptions of competence in the classroom. The purpose of the current study was to extend inquiry on teacher self-efficacy (TSE) to the foreign language (FL) context and to explore the events and influences that contribute to native and non-native graduate TAs’ sense of teacher efficacy. The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What major sources contribute to the TSE of graduate TAs of French?
2. How do graduate TAs’ analyses of teaching task and assessments of personal teaching competence shape TSE?
3. What consequences of TSE emerge in terms of effort, persistence, and innovation?
4. Does native versus non-native speaker status relate to TSE in FL instruction?

Review of Literature

Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Efficacy

Bandura’s (1986, 1997) social cognitive theory is a theory of human functioning that subscribes to the notion that humans can regulate their own behavior. Individuals possess a system of self-beliefs that enables them to exercise control

over their thoughts, feelings, and actions. According to this theory of human behavior, “what people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave” (Bandura, 1986, p. 25). Individuals control their behavior by beliefs of self-efficacy, or “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Such beliefs influence individuals’ pursued courses of action, effort expended in given endeavors, persistence in the confrontation of obstacles, and resilience to adversity. Therefore, self-efficacious individuals approach challenges with the intention and anticipation of mastery, intensifying their efforts and persistence accordingly.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

TSE beliefs refer to teachers’ judgments of their capabilities to bring about desired outcomes related to student learning and engagement (Bandura, 1997). Researchers in other academic fields have found teachers’ sense of efficacy to be related to a myriad of student outcomes including achievement (Moore & Esselman, 1992), student motivation (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989), and students’ sense of efficacy (Anderson, Greene, & Loewen, 1988). Teachers’ classroom behavior also is influenced by TSE beliefs. Those teachers with a stronger sense of efficacy have been found to show increased planning and organization skills (Allinder, 1994) and a willingness to experiment with different teaching methods (Guskey, 1988; Stein & Wang, 1988). Increased persistence in the face of classroom challenges (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), greater enthusiasm (Allinder, 1994), and a stronger commitment to teaching (Coladarci, 1992) also were present among teachers with a stronger sense of efficacy.

Sources of Self-Efficacy

Knowledge of the sources of self-efficacy beliefs among teachers enables increased understanding of teachers and their classroom behavior. An individual’s self-efficacy is constructed from the information received from four primary sources: mastery experiences, verbal persuasions, vicarious experiences, and physiological states (Bandura, 1986, 1997). According to Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy (1998), the four sources of self-efficacy postulated by Bandura (1986, 1997) contribute to TSE.

According to Bandura (1997), the most influential source of efficacy information is mastery experiences. Whereas successful prior performances strengthen personal efficacy beliefs, failed performances undermine one’s sense of efficacy. Successful performances then contribute to the anticipation of future success. Therefore, information from mastery experiences provides the individual with a reliable foundation from which one can assess self-efficacy and predict successful performance of future tasks. Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy (1998) claim that positive and negative teaching experiences have the most powerful influence on TSE beliefs.

Efficacy beliefs also are partly influenced by vicarious experiences or the appraisal of one’s own capabilities in relation to the accomplishments of peers. By visualizing the successes of comparable peers, an individual can learn that a task is manageable and foster the belief that he or she might also possess similar capabilities. Conversely, observation of the failure of a comparable peer can greatly undermine an individual’s

perception of the ability to succeed. Vicarious experiences influence TSE through the influence on individuals' formation of ideas about teaching. Classroom observations, media and society images, and professional literature may be key vicarious components in the formation of teaching conceptions of TSE.

Bandura (1997) asserts that verbal persuasions, or people's judgments of another's ability to accomplish a given task, may be an additional influence on efficacy beliefs. Verbal persuasion such as performance feedback or encouragement in overcoming obstacles can provide specific information about personal competence and can often be a considerable source of efficacy information. Encouragement can contribute to successful future performances in leading one to initiate tasks, attempt new strategies, or exert continued effort. Negative persuasions, conversely, can hinder the development of self-efficacy. Verbal feedback in the analysis of TSE may include feedback from teacher supervisors, colleagues, or students (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

Finally, physiological indicators during task performance, such as stress, anxiety, or fatigue, can be an additional source of efficacy information. An individual's emotional state during teaching influences his or her perceptions of competence. Positive emotions and a relaxed physical state during teaching can strengthen efficacy beliefs and contribute to the expectation of future successful performances, whereas high levels of anxiety can debilitate performance.

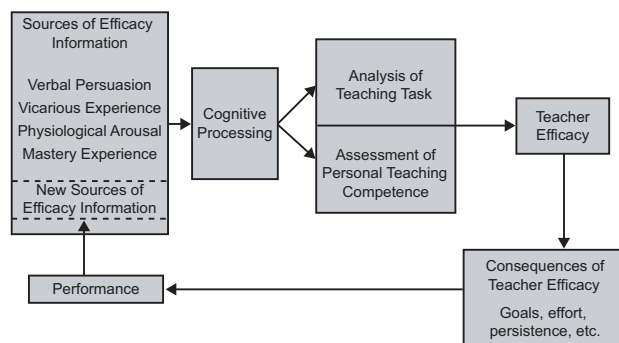
Analysis of Teaching Task and Assessment of Teaching Competence

The interpretation of these sources of information is critical in the teacher's analysis of the teaching task and assessment of personal teaching competence. Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy (1998) include Bandura's four sources of efficacy—cognitive processing, analysis of teaching task, assessment of personal teaching competence, and the consequences of TSE—in their revised model of TSE. Analysis of the teaching task and its context is defined as “the assessment of what will be required of them [teachers] in the anticipated teaching situation” (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 231) and include teacher considerations about the difficulty of the task. Such considerations could include access to teaching materials, school climate, teacher support systems, and potential teaching constraints.

Assessment of personal teaching competence is defined as “the individual's comparative judgment of whether his or her current abilities and strategies are adequate for the teaching task in question” (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 233). Such self-perceptions of teaching competence in the teachers' current context contribute to teachers' predictions of future teaching abilities. As both the analysis of the teaching task and context and the assessment of personal teaching competence contribute to TSE, the development of efficacy becomes a psychological construct of a cyclical nature (see Figure 1). Consequences of TSE, such as effort, persistence, and innovation, also contribute to higher or lower efficacy. These consequences, in turn, contribute to future perceptions of teaching competence.

Figure 1

The cyclical nature of teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998)



Teacher Self-Efficacy and Foreign Language Education

In addition to personal self-knowledge and beliefs, TSE also may be influenced by the impact of culture and society on teachers' expectations, roles, and social relations (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Research reveals that teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning tend to be culturally bound, formed early in life, and shaped through individuals' socialization into educational cultural practices (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). A cultural group's shared beliefs about educational practices and how languages are learned are claimed to pervade classroom actions through a process of cultural transmission (Pajares, 1992). For such reasons, questions about the TSE beliefs have been raised for teachers of different cultures and across national boundaries (Ares, Gorrell, & Boakari, 1999; Lin & Gorrell, 1999).

The evaluation of TSE in preservice teachers from different countries has revealed that preservice teachers possessing different cultural backgrounds vary in their beliefs of personal effectiveness as teachers (Gorrell & Hwang, 1995; Lin & Gorrell, 1998, 1999). As teaching is essentially a personal expression of the self (Williams & Burden, 1997) and one's cultural identity is closely associated with one's own sense of self, preservice teachers' perceptions of their efficacy as teachers can potentially reflect and transmit societal values.

In addition to cultural background, perceptions of self-efficacy may also be related to subject matter knowledge. Rath (1999) claims, "one of the basic tenets about teaching is that teachers must know their subject matter" (p. 104). With this claim, he highlights the emphasis on subject matter expertise in teacher education reform. He asserts that one of the main premises behind teacher education reform movements is the notion that effective teachers know more about their subject matter than ineffective teachers. In the field of FL and second language instruction, both linguistic proficiency and cultural knowledge of the target culture serve as the "subject matter." Lafayette (1993) has claimed that "among the components of content knowledge, none is more important to FL teaching than language proficiency" (p. 135). Lafayette (1993) further asserts that because language instruction often

implies the use of the target language as the vehicle for instruction, language proficiency of instructors becomes critical to teachers' perceptions of efficacy. Chacon (2005) claims that FL instructors need increased preparation in grammar, reading, writing, speaking, and listening so that they teach the language effectively and appropriately engage students. With this assertion, Chacon (2005) suggests that higher proficiency across the four skills will lead to a higher sense of efficacy. From this assertion, one could extrapolate that knowledge or mastery of target language culture as "subject matter" also would play a role in foreign and second language teachers' sense of efficacy.

This question of language proficiency has been most specifically addressed with the attempted implementation of communicative English language teaching in Asian contexts (Li, 1998; Penner, 1995). In a qualitative study of 18 Korean teachers of English, for example, all teachers reported their abilities in English speaking and listening to be inadequate for the instruction of communicative language classes (Li, 1998). Li (1998) claimed, "Deficiency in spoken English apparently prevented some teachers from applying communicative language teaching, but for others lack of confidence was more likely to have been the reason" (p. 686). Furthermore, instructors' perceived lack of fluency was largely associated with increased instruction of grammatical concepts in the native language and avoidance of target language communicative activities. The influence of language proficiency on confidence and self-perceptions of teaching competence is a research question that frames this study on TSE.

Methodology

A qualitative methodology was chosen for a more detailed investigation of the teaching beliefs, experiences, and TSE of 12 native and non-native French TAs.

Participants

Participants in this study were 12 TAs from a doctoral program in French at a competitive Southern university. The French department at this university offers a graduate program with a strong critical, cultural, and historical orientation and provides courses in philosophy, aesthetics, psychoanalysis, and post-colonial studies. All participants were required to teach French language courses in their second and third year of the doctoral program and participated in a university-wide 3 1/2 day teacher training program. In addition, all TAs participated in a required semester-long course on FL pedagogy. Participants for this study were 8 females (66%) and 4 males (33%). Of the 12 participants, 4 individuals were native French speakers (33%) and 8 individuals were non-native French speakers (66%). Three of the 4 native French speakers (25%) were French, and 1 native speaker (8%) was Canadian. The 8 non-native French speakers were American (71%). Of the 12 participants, 11 were enrolled in the PhD program in French literature (92%) and 1 participant was enrolled in the PhD program in French and Educational Studies (8%). Four participants were in their second year of the program (33%), 1 participant in her third year (8%), 1 participant in her fourth year (8%), and 6 students in the dissertation phase

of the program (50%). The average age of the 12 participants was 29. Six participants (50%) taught French at other institutions before attending the PhD program in French, whereas 6 participants (50%) had no experiencing teaching before beginning their doctoral studies.

Data Sources

The data sources for the present study were Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy's (2001) *Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale*, a background questionnaire, and a TSE interview protocol based on Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy's (1998) revised TSE model.

The Background Questionnaire was designed to collect additional personal information about the TAs. Previously researched predictors of TSE such as age, gender, and teaching experience were included in the questionnaire (Ross, Cousins, & Gadalla, 1996) as well as information about second language training and experiences.

The TSE Interview was a semistructured interview protocol based on Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy's (1998) new TSE model. The semistructured interview format included a mix of more and less structured interview questions which allowed the issues to guide the researcher to respond to the situation and to pursue relevant topics (Merriam, 2001). Researchers interviewed the TAs on their sources of efficacy information; their analysis of teaching tasks and contexts; the assessment of their personal teaching competence; and their goals, effort, and persistence as teachers (see Appendix).

To ensure the analysis of research-based conceptualizations of TSE, two researchers in the fields of self-efficacy and career efficacy reviewed the interview questions. In addition, the researchers developed an interview guide and discussed the interview protocol before the interview process to ensure parallel interview protocol between the two researchers.

The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001) was used to quantitatively evaluate the teachers' sense of efficacy. This scale reconciles the conceptions of teaching task and context with self-perceptions of teaching competence through the assessment of teaching capabilities including instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. The items on the questionnaire begin with "How much can you do . . ." "to what extent can you . . ." or "how well can you. . ." Responses are measured on a 9-point Likert-type scale with the notations 1 (Nothing), 3 (Very little), 5 (Some influence), 7 (Quite a bit), and 9 (A great deal). Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001) presented the Cronbach reliability alpha for this measure as $\alpha = .94$. The researchers totaled numerical responses to each question to obtain a TSE score for each respondent. The possible range of scores was from 1 (Nothing) to 9 (A great deal) for all questions. The mean TSE score for all participants was 7.3.

Data Collection and Analysis

After completing the background questionnaire and *Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale*, each participant took part in a face-to-face interview with one of the two

researchers, with each interview lasting approximately one hour. During the process of data analysis, one researcher listened to and transcribed the interview tapes verbatim. To ensure accuracy, one researcher proofread the transcriptions while listening and e-mailed the transcriptions to the TAs for confirmation and clarification.

Using inductive coding techniques described in Strauss and Corbin (1990), both researchers reviewed interview data line by line and generated categories and labels. The categories were then reviewed and revised, and more abstract categories were often established to further categorize the data. The researchers examined these first-level pattern codes for further pattern codes and then established recurring themes and triangulated the interview data with results from the *Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale*. Finally, the researchers computed scores from the TSE questionnaire and used demographic data from the background questionnaire to identify participant characteristics not discussed in the interview.

Reliability and Validity

Strategies used to address reliability in this research study include inter-researcher evaluation and verification of codes, triangulation of data, and an effective organization system for collected data. Strategies used to address internal validity in this research study included multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, member checks during the data collection phase, recording devices, and verbatim transcripts. Strategies used to address the external validity of the research findings included the use of rich, thick descriptions of findings as well as the description of the typicality of the participants' comments and beliefs.

Results

As mentioned earlier, Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy's (1998) proposed model of TSE combines the major sources of efficacy beliefs as described by Bandura (1986, 1997), the analysis and assessment of the teaching task, and the consequences of TSE. The researchers investigated TSE in this sample of graduate TAs of French through the components of Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy's (1998) TSE model. In addition, data from Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy's (2001) *Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale* was triangulated with the interview data to further the understanding of TSE in graduate TAs of French.

QUESTION 1: What major sources contribute to the TSE of graduate TAs of French?

The 12 graduate TAs of French identified various influences to which they attributed the development of their TSE. Their sources of information included mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, physiological arousal, and verbal persuasions (see Table 1). Through analysis of the interview data, 37% of the TAs' responses revealed that an influential source of information received about teaching was from teacher training. These teacher training experiences included FL methodology courses, teaching orientations, and university-wide teacher training programs.

Recently entering the field of language teaching, the TAs placed great importance on their teacher training and pedagogy course experience. Information received from the FL education researchers and professors in their department appeared to be particularly influential and received as “expert” information by the TAs.

Table 1

What have been your major sources of information about teaching French?

Response	Frequency		
	All participants	Native speakers	Non-native speakers
Teacher training	37%	31%	47%
Mentors	16%	19%	17%
Observation of teachers	16%	6%	13%
Previous teaching experience	14%	25%	10%
Scholarly sources	8%	13%	7%
Contact with LPD	8%	6%	3%
Teacher conferences	1%	0%	3%

Mastery Experiences

In addition to teaching experience and training, one of the major sources of information about teaching French found in this study was mastery experiences. Recall that teaching mastery experiences have one of the most direct influences on TSE (Bandura, 1986, 1997). If a teacher perceives his or her performance to be successful, efficacy beliefs are raised.

A total of 14% of the TAs' responses related to overall sources of information about teaching French were associated with previous teaching experience. Moreover, 10 of the 12 TAs mentioned positive feedback about their language teaching in the form of evaluations from students and feedback from colleagues, past teaching experiences, or the French LPD or the TA supervisor. A total of 45% of the TAs' comments related to teaching feedback was positive. One TA discussed positive feedback received from both French and American universities. Regarding her teaching feedback, she stated “In France, it was good. I had my *diplôme* (teaching degree), so that means I succeeded. [The LPD at the U.S. institution] was very happy about my teaching. She gave me an A or A+.”

Of the 12 TAs, 5 of them illustrated a similar validation of teaching competence in the mention of attainment of degrees, high grades, or jobs. Interestingly, those that mentioned mastery experiences reported moderately high TSE scores on average of $M=7.5$, whereas the remaining 7 TAs mentioning verbal persuasion as feedback reported lower scores on average, $M=5.9$.

Whereas 1 TA revealed that “getting a job” was the positive feedback she received about her teaching, another TA measured his TSE on teacher promotion. These mastery experiences validated his perception of his teaching abilities.

My students have always given me good evaluations. . . . At [the former institution], I really didn't get an evaluation because I was not really faculty. I never really got feedback on my teaching except for my colleagues who came to observe me. I guess they thought I was nice enough because the second year I was there they made me teach almost full-time.

Promotion to "almost full-time" status at the university was a mastery experience for this TA and provided him with his understanding that he was a "nice enough" or a capable teacher.

Verbal Persuasions

Verbal feedback provided about the nature of teaching or strategies and encouragement for overcoming teaching obstacles can also be a great source of information about TSE (Bandura, 1986, 1997). As previously discussed, 10 of the 12 TAs in this study described the verbal feedback from others as largely positive. However, some TAs mentioned both positive feedback and areas for improvement in the description of their teaching (12%) (see Table 2). When asked about feedback regarding her teaching, a non-native French TA with one year of teaching experience and a fairly high TSE score ($M=7.8$) stated

[m]ostly positive comments. One thing I don't do well is— [the LPD] teaches us this sort of "co-construction of the rule" with grammar rules. . . . I would say that is my weakest point in class—learning how to get the students to co-construct the grammar rule with me.

This TA mentions positive feedback from the LPD as justification of her teaching competence. She then immediately countered the positive feedback with a description of her inability to implement the "co-construction of the rule" methodology as emphasized by the LPD, a perceived "expert" in the field of FL pedagogy. Her initial impulse to express this perceived deficiency seems to suggest a questioning of her teaching competence despite the received positive feedback.

Within their self-appraisal of their competence, the TAs often revealed a similar type of "weighing" of their positive and negative attributes as teachers. As a result of feedback from others, these TAs' perception of themselves as teachers could be viewed as a combination of security and insecurity in their abilities or as a realistic evaluation of themselves as teachers. The realistic personal assessment of their faults and attributes did not necessarily reveal a harmful insecurity in all TAs, but a healthy insecurity that allowed for improvement and development in their teaching abilities. One native French TA with a high TSE score of $M=8.2$ revealed his aversion to satisfaction and security in his teaching development. He stated that "I'm not really . . . I don't really like all the satisfaction and stuff like that. . . . For me, it's a limit. To be satisfied is to be limited. So, I prefer to always be unsatisfied and go farther and farther." To this TA, the sentiment of dissatisfaction led to growth and progress in his capacity as a teacher.

Table 2

What types of feedback have you received from others about your teaching?
(Verbal Persuasions)

Response	Frequency		
	All participants	Native speakers	Non-native speakers
Evaluations	42%	50%	36%
Positive feedback (coordinator, students, colleagues, etc.)	41%	45%	36%
Comments of improvement /progress	12%	5%	20%
Negative feedback from students	3%	0%	4%
No feedback	2%	0%	4%

The participants also spoke in high frequency about the LPD, with 7 of the 12 interviewees citing her assistance and encouragement in providing encouragement and pedagogical strategies. The LPD appears to provide students with a great deal of encouragement and assistance in troubleshooting pedagogical issues. One TA discussed the LPD as her “only” support system. However, despite her initial claims that the LPD was the “only one” to provide her with encouragement, this TA later added that the TA supervisor was an additional contact for support. Other TAs followed suit in their mention of various types of contacts in their teaching support system. The TAs’ responses revealed a variety of support contacts, including fellow TAs (25%), other professors (14%), their TA supervisor (7%), their students (7%), and graduate students from other departments (7%) (see Table 3). In fact, following the support of the LPD, support from fellow TAs was mentioned in high frequency. Mentioning his extended and varied support system, 1 native French-speaking participant with a moderately low TSE score of $M=6.25$ claimed that

[a]lmost everyone . . . the whole environment at [the current institution] has been extremely encouraging. . . . On one hand, [the LPD] herself, and on the other hand, other teachers that are teaching the same section that I teach . . . we confer and we talk and we have those meetings with [the LPD]. Also, my roommate . . . who is in the philosophy department . . . and his girlfriend is also a language teacher . . . if I could add to that, even a few students of mine who have come to my office hours. I often ask them for feedback and ask them to give me the pulse of the class if they feel they can do it.

Ranging from fellow TAs to other graduate students to his own students, this TA sought and received support from a variety of sources, as did the 11 other TAs questioned.

Table 3

Who, if anyone, has provided you with encouragement and/or strategies for overcoming obstacles in your teaching? (Verbal Persuasions)

Response	Frequency		
	All participants	Native speakers	Non-native speakers
Language program director	32%	36%	33%
TAs	25%	18%	27%
Other professors	14%	1%	0%
TA supervisor	7%	18%	13%
Students	7%	18%	0%
Other graduate students (different departments)	7%	9%	13%
Student teacher mentor	4%	0%	7%
Family member	4%	0%	7%

Vicarious Experiences

Whereas a great number of TAs mentioned an extended support system, they also revealed that observing others was an additional source of information about learning French (see Table 4). According to Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy (1998), through vicarious experiences, “one begins to decide who can learn and how much, who is responsible, and whether teachers can really make a difference” (p. 230). Of the 12 participants, 11 of them mentioned teacher observations as a key factor in how others influence their teaching and 35% of the responses related to how the TAs were influenced by others. The TAs described teacher observation, an important component in the FL methods course taken by all TAs in the department, as “extremely useful,” “a wonderful source of information,” and “very helpful.” One native French TA with a high TSE score of $M=8.1$ spoke about how observations of various teachers allowed him to ascertain what characterized an “effective teacher.”

I observe a lot. I'm an avid observer. I try to grab what works for me and then I try to be curious about things. When I see people do new things that I think may be interesting, I try to engage with them on that. I try to be a sponge and absorb as much as I can. I figure that there are so many . . . if there were one way to teach, we would know by now. I think it's a matter of having a whole palette of tools at your disposal and an effective teacher is one who will identify which tools will be the most appropriate for a particular situation. It's all a matter of reading the situation. It's about applying recipes.

This TA's observation experiences allowed him to evaluate the context-specific nature of the teaching task, and their implementation of a varied “palette of tools” allowed him to personally assess his teacher effectiveness.

In addition to teacher observations, two TAs with overall average TSE scores of $M=7.4$ mentioned how mentors of successful teachers, comparisons to other teachers, and conversations with other teachers have affected their teaching. One non-native French TA with a high TSE score of $M=7.8$ revealed how her mentor, an English teacher from high school, had influenced her in her teaching and how she attempts to emulate that teacher's "caring" teaching style. Viewing the success and effectiveness of her former teacher, this TA compares herself to this teacher through emulation and strives for a similar form of efficacy in her teaching.

Table 4

How are you influenced by others in your teaching? (Vicarious Experiences)

Response	Frequency		
	All participants	Native speakers	Non-native speakers
Observing others	35%	40%	32.5%
Mentors of successful teachers	15%	0%	21%
Conversations with teachers	15%	20%	10.5%
Comparisons to others	12%	0%	10.5%
Different types of learners	7%	20%	5%
Philosophies of teaching	4%	0%	10.5%
Former teachers	4%	0%	5%
Media/society images	4%	20%	0%
Family members	4%	0%	5%

Physiological and Emotional Cues

Whereas vicarious experiences may play a large role in personal perceptions of teacher effectiveness, physiological cues are an additional source contributing to TSE (see Table 5). When asked about their emotional responses to teaching, 20% of all TAs' responses to the question revealed a perceived sense of "control." TAs mentioned terms such as *powerful*, *confident*, and *in control* when describing their feelings while teaching. As Bandura's (1986, 1997) social cognitive theory subscribes to the notion that individuals possess a system of self-beliefs that enables them to exercise *control* over their thoughts, feelings, and actions, the TAs' mention of perceived "control" was significant in understanding the influence of physiological cues on TSE.

The TAs also mentioned that they felt "happy" (13%) and "energetic" (13%) and that they "had fun" (13%) while they were teaching. The TAs made comments such as "I feel great . . . teaching is a lot of fun" and "I'm very, very happy when I'm teaching."

Table 5

How do you feel while you are teaching? (Physiological Indicators)

Response	Frequency		
	All participants	Native speakers	Non-native speakers
In control	20%	0%	27%
Energetic	13%	0%	18%
Fun	13%	25%	9%
Happy	13%	25%	9%
Depends	13%	0%	18%
Pressure	10%	25%	4.5%
Satisfied	4%	0%	4.5%
Unintelligent	4%	12.5%	0%
Challenging	4%	0%	4.5%
Disengaged	3%	12.5%	0%
Drained of energy	3%	0%	4.5%

However, two TAs with moderate TSE scores of $M=6.5$ mentioned that their feelings while teaching depended on the class and the teaching context. One TA described a class's contextual dynamics as follows: "It really depends. There is such a dynamic that happens, and it is different with every class. Every class has a different dynamic."

The description of TAs' emotional experiences while teaching in different contextual situations (successful and unsuccessful activities) was quite varied. When describing their feelings during a successful activity, similar physiological descriptions arose as with the noncontextual question "How do you feel while you teach?" The TAs mentioned adjectives such as *happy*, *good*, *great*, and *excited* in high frequency (41%). Some described these positive emotions as an adrenaline rush (14%). In describing this rush, 1 TA claimed the following:

The adrenaline rush is unbelievable. It's like when you make a great play at basketball. I remember this one game when we were down by one and there was 15 seconds to play and . . . the head coach says to me, "What should we run?" You have to make the call because he was out of ideas. We had position of the ball, we were down by one, the clock was ticking. I had to call a play that had to work. You call that play and it works and it's just like, "Yes!" . . . When you're in the middle of a successful activity you launch it and then your students start getting into it and it all comes together and everybody is on the same page.

Similar to this TA who described an intense rush of adrenaline while teaching a successful activity, some TAs not only felt “happy” but also experienced a more intense adrenaline rush or high during a successful lesson. The 6 TAs who perceived this intense adrenaline rush also reported, on average, fairly high TSE scores ($M=7.3$).

During an unsuccessful activity, however, the description of the physiological emotions differed. Some TAs mentioned adjectives such as *disappointed*, *sad*, and *unhappy*. Three TAs with moderate TSE scores on average ($M=6.8$) also mentioned more intense and potentially harmful physiological emotions such as “panic,” “stress,” and “detachment” (20%). One native French speaker claimed

Well, there’s a minor sense of panic . . . so you’re just thinking of how to get out of it, just finish that activity and move on to the next one. So emotionally it’s just you just get mildly depressed, but you have to fight that, I have to fight that.

Despite this potentially harmful feeling, this TA continued to say that you must “move on to the next one” and attempt to improve later lessons. Five of the 12 TAs with mean TSE scores on average of $M=7.2$ mentioned a similar reaction in their avowal that unsuccessful activities led to efforts in improving the lesson or future lessons. One native French TA claimed, “Thank God you can say that you’re going to see them tomorrow and I’m going to make it up to them somehow.”

QUESTION 2: How do graduate TAs’ analyses of teaching task and contextual factors shape TSE?

In addition to highlighting the importance of sources of efficacy information in their TSE model, Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy (1998) describe a further component entitled “the analysis of teaching task and context.” As TSE is context-specific, teachers do not feel equally efficacious in all teaching situations. Because courses in university French departments consist of French language and French literature classes, the graduate TAs were questioned on their contextualized perceived efficacy in teaching both language and literature. Their responses revealed that the participants did not feel equally efficacious in both tasks.

Analyses of Teaching Task

A number of participants explained how teaching language and literature varied. One native-speaking participant ($M=8.0$) offered an analysis of the difference between the task of teaching language versus teaching literature as follows:

Teaching literature means that you always have the possibility to make them discover something else, to make them progress in their intellectual process, in their thoughts. . . Teaching language is—you’re happy when the students succeed in doing very correct sentences and they can express their opinions. When you teach literature, it’s more about ideas, authors, things that touch you, they’re more from a personal point of view. I think it’s a more bizarre relationship, more intimate maybe.

For this TA, teaching literature is described as a complex process of personal discovery and intellectual development, whereas teaching language is a more concrete experience focusing on expression of opinions and use of appropriate grammatical structures. Two other participants also perceived important differences between teaching language and literature. One non-native speaker of French (M=7.0) described "the kind of energy that comes out of a language class" as distinct from the literature context. A native speaker of French (M=8.1) described teaching literature as "a different ballgame because the material is so different."

Native or non-native French status was influential in the TAs' perceived efficacy. Four of the TAs mentioned their native or non-native French status as being influential in their teaching effectiveness. For example, a French TA with a high sense of teacher efficacy (M=8.2) claimed, "I'm French and I'm teaching French so that's my language and that's nice, I presume." However, only 1 of the 4 native-speaking TAs expressed this opinion. A different native speaker of French (M=6.3) expressed feeling constrained in the language classroom by the need to speak only in French and imagined greater liberty in the literature context. He explained:

I don't really feel I have the freedom to let the students take over an exercise and really push it for as long as they'd like, whereas, I would imagine myself in a literature class . . . ideally moderating among my students, whether it's in French or English is irrelevant.

A non-native French speaker with a lower sense of efficacy (M=6.0), however, asserted her lack of confidence in teaching language. She stated:

Teaching language . . . is a little more difficult because I know that I'm not a native speaker and I feel insecure sometimes. . . . In French 101, I knew that they didn't know anything . . . I felt more confident because even if I did make a small grammar mistake, they wouldn't have noticed. In 102, the linguistic structures get more complex and if they ask me a question I don't always know how to answer it. I feel more insecure as far as the language goes in more advanced levels.

This non-native French speaker reveals a lack of confidence in her ability to teach language effectively because of her less advanced linguistic French skills. The same non-native speaker of French who described feelings of insecurity while teaching language perceived herself as being more comfortable teaching literature because it doesn't matter "if you make [linguistic] mistakes."

Twenty-five percent of the participants also explained what they viewed as a distinction between reading literary texts in the language classroom versus teaching texts in a literature class. One non-native speaker of French (mean TSE score=8.0) claimed, "I have not taught literature *per se*, although I've taught several poems and song lyrics . . . I can't say that I've really taught literature." Another participant explained "I don't have much experience teaching literature . . . just short pieces of text that we use with lower-level classes." Similarly, a third participant contrasted "teaching a reading passage in a language class" with "teaching a

whole literature course.” The TAs tended to disregard reading texts in lower-level language classes as “literature.”

Paradoxically, those students interviewed studying French literature at the doctoral level lack self-assurance in their abilities to teach literature courses. Because the TAs are required to teach language courses and are given the opportunity to teach literature courses only if awarded a fellowship, a sentiment of insecurity in their capacity to teach literature was expressed by 9 of the 12 TAs. Two participants explained that they were not very confident at the current time but relied on their past trajectories in teaching language and felt certain that their future endeavors to teach literature would be similar. That mind-set is echoed by a second participant in her first year of teaching who claimed:

I don't know. I used to think that I would never be able to teach literature.
 . . . I think that eventually I might be pretty good. I just don't know yet.
 This [language teaching] was hard when I started too.

The majority of the participants (7 of 12) responded with ambivalence, avoided answering the question, or made negative remarks about their current or future competence for teaching French literature. They gave responses such as “I think I would be really scared,” “I guess I don't feel all that confident about it,” “I can't answer that,” “I wouldn't be able to speak to that,” and “I don't really have a strong sense of how to plan that, organize that, how it would go. . . I'm not sure.”

Contextual Factors

For an efficacy judgment to be made, contextual factors also must be taken into consideration. These factors include school climate and the support teachers do or do not receive from others (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). Such factors have been shown to have important effects on individual teachers and on collective efficacy, or the extent to which perceptions of efficacy are shared among teachers in one context (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

Participants in this study were asked how well supported they felt in their teaching by the university and the department. The overwhelming majority of these TAs (11 of 12) spoke of the teaching support by the university and the department in positive terms, saying they were supported “very well,” “really well,” “pretty well,” “very much,” and “extremely supported.”

Two of the participants did voice concern about a perceived lack of training for teaching literature offered by the department and limited opportunities to teach literature. One first-year non-native French TA expressed his inability to gain experience teaching literature as a “catastrophic situation.” A similar expression of disappointment was voiced by an experienced teacher who described the lack of experience teaching literature as “a heart-break of mine.”

Another native French TA mentioned the university context and departmental structural limitations regarding teaching literature.

I'm a little bit disappointed that, and this is not [this institution's] fault, that by the time I'm gone, I will only learn how to teach language. Unless I'm very lucky and get a scholarship to teach my own course, I

am unlikely to get any practice at teaching literature. This strikes me as a kind of catastrophic situation in the literature programs. . . . That bothers me a little bit especially since teaching scholarships have to lead to greater experience in teaching literature are condition upon the grades we get and the evaluations that we get teaching language. I could very well imagine that I could be a very mediocre language teacher but be a great literature teacher but by some perverse logic, the fact that I can't teach language very well is going to impede me from experiencing teaching literature while I might be a born teacher of literature.

This TA asserts that French literature doctoral students are limited by the institutional structure of French literature graduate programs. With a lower sense of efficacy ($M=6.2$), this TA reveals his insecurity about literature teaching as a result of contextual factors and the institution's failure to provide the appropriate training and experiences.

QUESTION 3: What consequences of TSE emerge in terms of effort, persistence, and innovation?

The consequences of TSE result from the interaction of the sources of information about teaching and the analysis of teaching task and context. Three consequences of TSE, according to Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy (1998), are teachers' persistence in the face of difficulty, effort placed on the teaching task, and innovation. In this conceptualization of TSE, one can view the cyclical nature of TSE. A higher sense of TSE leads one to greater effort, persistence, and innovation. Greater effort, persistence, and innovation then allows for increased teaching performance, which, in turn, promotes higher self-efficacy.

Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy (1998) reveal that persistence is a significant consequence of TSE. When TAs were asked about their instructional techniques after detecting student confusion, they unanimously claimed that they provided further clarification through additional examples or reexplanation of the topic. Four TAs with overall average TSE scores of $M=6.5$ (3 of which were non-native French speakers), claimed to switch to English when confusion arose. Switching to English doesn't necessarily show less determination in their desire to clarify confusion; however, this technique could reveal less persistence on their part when faced with obstacles in the language classroom. This may be a result of linguistic breakdown in French language abilities or the realization of the ease of using English for clarification. TAs also may believe that using English as the explicative tool greatly reduces confusion encountered by native English-speaking students in a French classroom.

In the evaluation of persistence, the TAs were questioned on their effort in lesson preparation. Interestingly, the more experienced TAs recognized the contextual nature of the teaching task, with 6 participants responding that the time and effort was relative to the teaching task. They mentioned that their effort depended on the complexity of the lesson, the class level, the amount of experience teaching the course, and differences in language and literature lesson plans. Variation from class to class was key to 6 experienced TAs. Such description of effort variation was

not present, however, in the 3 less experienced TAs, who immediately responded with a time frame (on average of one to two hours).

There also were differences in the responses of the native and non-native French instructors related to effort and persistence. Whereas the non-native French instructors often claimed to devote one to two hours to lesson plan development (42%), fewer native French instructors mentioned the same time commitment (20%) and spent less time on their lesson plans.

Participants in this study were asked about their incorporation of experimental or different methods or tools in their teaching. The 12 participants indicated, in most cases, that they do incorporate novel methods and tools into their teaching. Two of the 12 teachers claimed not to do so, and one teacher explained she was not doing so at present but had done so in the past when teaching lower-level language courses. The 3 teachers who did not claim to use innovative methods in the classroom had the lowest total efficacy scores among the 12 participants. All of the TAs who claimed to incorporate novel teaching approaches expressed some degree of confidence in their efforts to do so.

Of the 3 participants who indicated difficulty incorporating novel teaching methods, 1 explained he had faced problems using technology in the classroom. This first-year native French-speaking TA ($M=6.3$) said, "I like having my hand near the board. I like having that very material sense of being. . . . I don't have much control over technology." Other reasons cited for not using technology or innovative tools in the classroom included "stick[ing] to what I know and what is tried and true" and a lack of a "better kind of [teaching] resource room" for instructors.

QUESTION 4: Does native versus non-native speaker status relate to TSE in FL instruction?

An examination of the 12 participants' responses for the *Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale* reveals that all instructors possessed a high sense of efficacy for teaching French. All 12 participants had total mean scores that ranged from 6.0 to 8.2 on a Likert scale of 1 to 9. However, 3 of the 4 highest total scores on the *Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale* were those of native speakers of French, whereas 3 of the 4 lowest scores were non-native speakers of French.

Native and non-native French TAs also expressed differences in their responses with regard to TSE. A discussion of language proficiency was found in 4 of the 8 non-native French TAs. For example, a non-native French TA ($M=7.0$) mentioned improvement in her language ability when discussing her competence in teaching language. She stated: "I think that I teach language pretty well. My time in graduate school has been very helpful to me in terms of my accent and my French skills." In coupling her discussion of her efficacy as a French language instructor with her perception that her linguistic skills have improved, it appears as if language proficiency played a key role in her determination of her efficacy as a teacher.

Another non-native French TA with one year of teaching experience, who reported a lower sense of efficacy ($M=6.0$), claimed to be insecure in teaching language as a non-native speaker. She stated, "Teaching language, I think, is a little

more difficult because I know that I'm not a native speaker and I feel insecure sometimes." In describing literature teaching, she also discussed the impact of her French language ability, noting "Everybody needs to speak French so it doesn't matter if you make, *I don't think* it matters if you make mistakes. I think I'd feel more comfortable teaching literature." Fearful of making linguistic errors while teaching, this TA may perceive herself to be less competent as a result of linguistic proficiency.

On the contrary, only one of the native French-speaking TAs mentioned language proficiency when discussing his language teaching competence. Possessing a high TSE score of $M=8.2$, he stated, "I'm French and I'm teaching French so that's nice I presume." The other 3 native French speakers, however, made no mention of language ability in their interviews and possessed a high average TSE score of $M=7.6$. Being proficient in the language of instruction, the TAs may feel more competent as instructors, thus supporting Chacon's (2005) previous finding that higher linguistic proficiency is associated with a higher sense of efficacy. TAs' perceptions of their own efficacy may be influenced by a perceived importance of subject matter knowledge, namely linguistic and cultural proficiency (Raths, 1999).

Discussion

The results of this investigation of 12 graduate TAs of French indicate that as a group, they possessed a moderately high level of TSE ($M=7.1$). Most of the participants professed to have received meaningful, positive feedback about their language teaching, found teacher training programs at their university to be highly influential, possessed a variety of contacts in their support network (namely the LPD), and believed that teacher observations were helpful in their own conceptualization of "effective" teaching.

In reference to school context factors, these TAs almost unanimously claimed to be well supported by the institution, professors, and peers. The perceived supportive context and varied support networks of the institution may have influenced the efficacy of these TAs positively, thereby creating a collective efficacy among them. Contextuality of the teaching task (specifically as it related to language and literature teaching) also played a large role in TSE. Generally, participants spoke of their perceived competence for teaching language in positive terms with only 2 participants negatively assessing their language teaching competence. However, comments related to perceived competence for teaching literature were more negative. Most of the participants did not have previous mastery experiences in teaching literature, which is claimed to be one of the most direct influences on TSE (Bandura, 1986, 1997).

What steps can language and literature departments take to enhance graduate students' feelings of efficacy for teaching both language and literature? In this study, 2 of the participants pointed to a need for more training in teaching literature and more experiences in the literature classroom for graduate TAs. To address those issues, departments may want to sensitize graduate students during teacher training to what language and literature teaching tasks have in common and what

important differences exist. Providing systematic opportunities for literature faculty to be part of teacher training and teaching support networks could also be effective in enhancing TSE. Finally, the availability of graduate seminars in teaching advanced literature, potentially co-taught by second language acquisition and literature scholars, could be a valuable resource for graduate students.

The results of this study suggest that native-speaker status does influence feelings of efficaciousness for teaching French. As measured by the *Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale*, native speakers of French responded with a higher score on average than non-native speakers. These results suggest that content knowledge plays a key role in language instructors' conception of their teacher efficacy and that steps should be taken to develop the TSE of non-native speakers. Such steps could include advanced language courses in graduate programs, partnerships between native and non-native instructors, and coordinator meetings that discuss linguistic and grammatical considerations as well as pedagogical and administrative issues.

Results such as those obtained through the current study can begin to offer responses to the types of questions posed by Hoy and Spero (2005) in relation to TSE.

[W]hat kind of support is most helpful in the early years of teaching? . . . Does mentoring provide the kind of support that protects and builds efficacy? . . . What structural features and supports make a difference in the formation of efficacy beliefs? (p. 354)

Responses from the current study reveal that the promotion of successful experiences in the early years of teaching, access to support from an extended network of resources, inclusion of vicarious experiences observing expert teachers, and creation of low-anxiety teacher training situations may assist in the development of strong TSE beliefs in graduate TAs.

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Appendix

TSE Interview

1. What have been your major sources for information about teaching French?
2. What types of feedback have you received from others about your teaching? Who if anyone has provided you encouragement and/or strategies for overcoming obstacles in teaching?
3. How are you influenced by others in your teaching (e.g., observation of others teaching, media/society images, mentors of successful teachers, comparisons to others)?
4. How do you feel while you are teaching?
5. Describe how you feel just before you begin/during a successful activity/during an unsuccessful activity/when class ends.
6. How well do you believe you teach language/literature?
7. How well do you feel supported by the French department and by [Institution X]? (Are there any constraints you feel as a teacher? Explain.)
8. What are some strategies you use to engage students in language learning? How much do you do toward engaging students in language learning?
9. What do you do when you sense confusion on the part of a student or students while you are teaching? How do you react? How well do you believe you can clear up any confusion?
10. How do you attempt to use experimental or different methods or tools in your teaching? How well do you believe you use these methods/tools?
11. How do you communicate your expectations about classroom rules and behavior to your students? To what extent do you believe your management affects their behavior?
12. What do you do when you have a student who is failing your class?
13. How much time do you spend preparing your lessons? Do you believe there is a relationship between the effort you make in preparation and the effectiveness of the lesson? Explain.