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Appropriating Conceptual and Pedagogical Tools of Literacy: A Qualitative Study of Two Novice Foreign Language Teaching Assistants

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Although the professional development of foreign language (FL) teaching assistants (TAs) has become increasingly relevant given their significant role in the undergraduate curriculum, little research has investigated the development of their teaching expertise or the outcomes of their involvement in professional development. Guided by a sociocultural theory perspective, this study explores concept development and the evolution of teaching practices for two novice FL TAs during and after a teaching methods seminar focused on literacy as an overarching concept. Findings demonstrate the role of participants' histories and beliefs in shaping how literacy-related concepts and pedagogical tools were appropriated. Both participants struggled to reconcile the goals of literacy-based FL teaching with curricular constraints and lack of time to find appropriate instructional materials. These findings support the need for expanding FL TA professional development beyond the introductory methods seminar.

In 2007, the Modern Language Association (MLA) issued a challenge to U.S. collegiate FL (foreign language) departments, urging them to “transform their programs and structure . . . [r]eplacing the two-tiered language-literature structure with

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a broader and more coherent curriculum in which language, literature, and culture are taught as a continuous whole" (p. 3). Whereas the 2007 MLA report contained strong statements regarding needed changes in the *undergraduate* FL curriculum, the implications of such changes for *future professors'* professional development as teachers were only minimally addressed. In fact, the report's only related comments were the following: "graduate studies should provide *substantive training* in language teaching and in the use of new technologies" (p. 7) and should "enhance and reward graduate student training ... in language teaching" (p. 8). Nowhere did the report make specific recommendations as to what the actual content or forms such "substantive training" should entail.

In the wake of the 2007 MLA report, several publications emerged (Allen & Negueruela-Azarola, 2010; Pfeiffer, 2008; Schectman & Koser, 2008) in which the lack of specificity regarding the substantial professional development needed to implement the curricular changes it recommended was discussed. Among those publications, Pfeiffer aptly underscored that FL departments granting Ph.D. degrees are sites where "future faculty is trained and socialized into a mode of professional thinking that will have repercussions long after the current professoriate has retired," meaning any planned transformations of undergraduate FL curricula require an "immediate effect on the education and professional training of graduate students" (2008, p. 296).

Unarguably, the professional development of FL graduate students as teachers is increasingly relevant given the significant role of teaching assistants (TAs) in staffing U.S. collegiate FL courses, particularly for Ph.D.-granting departments, wherein they teach 42 percent of undergraduate courses overall and 57 percent of elementary-level language courses (Laurence, 2001). While advances in TA supervision have been made since the early 1990s, what has remained unchanged, despite new calls for curricular transformation including the 2007 MLA report, is the dominant model of FL TA professional development, consisting of a pre-service pedagogy workshop followed by an in-service FL teaching methodologies course (hereafter referred to as the "methods" course, its common name) focused on "immediate survival needs of new TAs" (Lalande, 1991, pp. 153-154) and "a

general sense of what rudimentary communicative language teaching should be about" (Rankin, 1994, p. 25), often complemented by departmental workshops that novice TAs attend during their first year of teaching.

Over the past decade, this model of TA professional development and its core focus have come under increased scrutiny as they reflect Freeman's (1994) notion of "front-loading," which assumes that new teachers "can be fully equipped with the knowledge and skills to last a career" (Freeman, 2002, p. 11). By focusing almost exclusively on communicative language teaching in elementary, and to a lesser extent, intermediate courses, and seldom addressing how techniques and strategies for teaching lower-level courses can be adapted for advanced cultural-literary courses or which additional techniques would apply to the latter, the methods course in its current form does not reflect the long-term needs of graduate students (Bernhardt, 2001; Byrnes, 2001; Chaput, 2001; Debicki, 2001; Goglewski & Penningworth, 1998; Gorell & Cubillos, 1993; Guthrie, 2001; Katz & Watzinger-Tharp, 2008; Pfeiffer, 2002; Ryan-Scheutz & Rustia, 1999; VanValkenburg & Arnett, 2000).

Although documents like the 2007 MLA report suggests that what future FL professors need to know and how they should teach must evolve, how FL TAs learn to teach is stymied by a model of professional development, limited in both its scope and focus, that has not changed since the early 1990s (Allen & Negueruela-Azarola, 2010) and for which research has largely failed to document its outcomes. Among the many critical questions to answer is how professional development experiences should be structured to establish connections between theoretical knowledge and teaching practice and to integrate linguistic and literary-cultural content.

Research Design

Responding to these limitations, this qualitative study builds on earlier studies (Allen, 2011; Allen & Dupuy, 2011) and explores how conceptual development and teaching practices related to *literacy* (Kern, 2000; New London Group, 1996) evolved for two novice FL TAs during and after an in-service methods seminar. Two reasons guided our selection of this teaching population. First, previous empirical research on novice FL TAs has demon-

strated that they face significant challenges translating theoretical concepts introduced during professional development (e.g., the methods seminar) into classroom practice in their first years of teaching (Allen, 2011; Brandl, 2000; Dassier, 2001; Rankin & Becker, 2006). Second, in a previous study (Allen & Dupuy, 2011), we found that theory-practice connections were facilitated by participation in a pedagogy seminar focused on literacy taken later in TAs' teaching trajectories. Therefore, we wanted to determine whether focusing on literacy as an overarching concept for FL teaching would enhance novice TAs' learning outcomes in an introductory methods seminar.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the perspective of Vygotskian cultural-historical psychology, better known as sociocultural theory (SCT). Not only has SCT been used as a framework for researching language learning processes, it has also been used for studying teacher cognition and professional development in a range of contexts (e.g., Johnson & Golombeck, 2011). Explaining what an SCT-based view of L2 teacher education entails, Johnson (2009) argued that it "is, at its core, about *teachers as learners of teaching*" (p. 2), not performers of teaching. Johnson outlined SCT-based principles that should inform the content, structure, and processes of teacher professional development. These are summarized below:

1. Learning to teach is a dynamic process of social interaction wherein teachers appropriate, reconstruct, and transform existing social practices of teaching based on individual and local needs.
2. Teacher learning is both an internal and collective activity that shapes not only teachers' own actions and thoughts but also student engagement in learning and their learning outcomes.
3. Professional development is a conceptual process, wherein L2 teachers' own everyday concepts of language, language learning and teaching (i.e., their deeply ingrained notions about what language is, how languages are learned and should be taught based on their own lived experiences) encounter scientific concepts (research and theory that they are exposed to

in academic coursework and their professional settings) about these subjects, creating the potential for reorganization of experiential knowledge and formation of new knowledge.

As such, professional development should “present relevant scientific concepts to teachers ... in ways that bring these concepts to bear on concrete practical activity, connecting them to their everyday knowledge and the goal-directed activities of teaching” (Johnson & Golombek, 2011, p. 2). Johnson (2009) further explained that teachers’ conceptual development depends on the availability of “multiple and sustained opportunities for dialogic mediation, scaffolded learning, and assisted performance as they participate in and learn about relevant aspects of their professional worlds” (pp. 4-5). Thus, SCT-oriented professional development does not subscribe to a model of knowledge transmission but instead views knowledge as developing through social interaction between less experienced teachers and their peers, and more experienced counterparts responsible for their professional development. Implementing these recommendations is of critical importance if professional development is to overcome the inertia of FL teachers’ everyday concepts, particularly regarding the separation of language and content, and the notion that “grammatical accuracy is a precursor to successful communication” (Lantolf & Johnson, 2007, p. 884).

Literacy as overarching concept. Beyond making connections between teachers’ everyday concepts and new scientific concepts in during professional development, Lantolf and Johnson (2007) proposed that professional development should foreground one overarching concept to challenge teachers to reframe everyday concepts related to instruction and to unify curricula and provide teachers with coherent notions of teaching and learning (Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003). Literacy (Kern, 2000) was chosen as the central concept for this study because it is consistent with both immediate and future professional development needs of FL TAs, and it could challenge them to rethink traditional perceptions of language versus content and “productive skills” versus “receptive” skills. Kern defined literacy as follows:

[T]he use of socially-, historically-, and culturally-situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts. It entails at least a tacit awareness of the relationships between

textual conventions and their contexts of use and, ideally, the ability to reflect critically on those relationships . . . literacy is dynamic – not static – and variable across and within discourse communities and cultures. (p. 16)

According to Kern, literacy-based instruction offers a means of narrowing the pedagogical gap between lower-level language instruction and more advanced, content-centered instruction by reconciling the teaching of communication with that of textual analysis. Mindful of the difficulty of translating such a definition into the concrete realities of teaching and curricular design, Kern further elaborated seven principles of literacy to guide teaching practice including: Interpretation, Collaboration, Conventions, Cultural knowledge, Problem-solving, Reflection and Self-reflection, and Language use. Whereas language use, conventions, and cultural knowledge represent core elements of literacy-based instruction, they are taught in conjunction with the processes of interpretation, collaboration, problem solving, and reflection. Keeping in mind the varied instructional needs of learners, the New London Group (1996) articulated four types of nonsequential activities to include in literacy-based instruction – situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice, which provide a pedagogical structure to organize instruction and engage learners in acts of meaning design.

Conceptual and pedagogical tools. Two other key sociocultural theory (SCT) notions in this study are conceptual and pedagogical tools. Conceptual tools mediate decision making for planning, instruction, and assessment and include broadly applicable theories (e.g., socioconstructivism, sociocognitivism), theoretical principles and concepts (e.g., literacy, communicative competence, available designs, design of meaning), and frameworks (e.g., literacy-based instruction; content-based instruction). Pedagogical tools have more local, immediate utility and include instructional practices (e.g., reading matrix, semantic map), strategies (e.g., previewing main ideas and concepts, visually organizing information) and resources (e.g., textbook, Powerpoint presentation)(Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). The distinction between the two types of tools is significant, as it is often difficult for novice teachers to instantiate pedagogical applications of theoretical concepts and frameworks in classroom

teaching. Systematic opportunities for dialogic mediation, scaffolded learning, and assisted performance (key elements of SCT) are essential for alignment to take place between conceptual and pedagogical tools.

Appropriating conceptual and pedagogical tools: A process. One other central concept of SCT germane to this study is appropriation (Leont'ev, 1981; Newman, Griffin, & Cole, 1989; Wertsch, 1991). Grossman et al explained that "appropriation refers to the ways in which a person adopts the conceptual and pedagogical tools available for use in particular social environments" and that "[t]he extent of this adoption depends on the congruence of a learner's values, prior experiences, and goals with those of more experienced members of a culture" (1999, p. 13). They further posited five degrees in the process of appropriation, each representing a depth of understanding of a tool's functions: 1. lack of appropriation (due to incomprehension, resistance, or rejection of the tool); 2. appropriating a tool's label but not its features; 3. appropriating surface features of a tool yet not understanding how the features contribute to a conceptual whole; 4. appropriating conceptual underpinnings and being able to use the tool in new settings; and 5. achieving mastery in the tool's use. These levels of appropriation are particularly relevant for this study as they can help explain how FL TAs' conceptual development evolves over time.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What were the TAs' conceptual learning outcomes of participation in a one-semester seminar on literacy-based FL pedagogy?
2. In what ways were the TAs' everyday concepts of language learning and teaching evidenced in their reactions to literacy-based FL pedagogy and its application in their local context?
3. According to the TAs, which activities and tools from the seminar contributed most to their conceptual development in relation to literacy-based FL pedagogy?
4. What difficulties did participants encounter when attempting to instantiate conceptual and pedagogical tools of literacy in teaching?

5. How were their efforts to carry out literacy-based FL teaching constrained or supported within their local context?

Method

Participants

Elena and Armando (both pseudonyms), two participants among a larger pool of seventeen FL TAs, were selected for analysis in this chapter. Criteria for their selection included a number of shared characteristics, including teaching experience, time spent as a graduate student in the U.S., and academic status. They were both second-year Ph.D. students, and thus, had time to adjust to graduate student life in their department. They were also first-year TAs, teaching Spanish 101 in the same program. Elena, 39, was raised in Cuba and completed a Master's program in International Relations in the southern U.S. before pursuing a Ph.D. in Romance Studies (Spanish) at a different institution in the same region. Armando, 23, was raised in Peru and completed a Master's degree in Latin American Studies at the same institution in the southern U.S. where he later enrolled in the Ph.D. program in Romance Studies (Spanish).

Elena and Armando came to Spanish 101 with no previous experience in FL teaching or familiarity with second language acquisition (SLA) research. However, when it comes to teachers and teaching, there is no such thing as a blank slate, as is reflected in the participants' histories learning FLs. As an undergraduate, Elena studied English for five years, French for two years, and Portuguese for one semester, and Armando studied English for seven months, Portuguese for four months, and Quecha (an indigenous South American language) for two months. Both still remembered their language teachers and had vivid memories of classroom techniques that they had used. Further, they indicated that they liked how these teachers had taught, finding them effective, and made reference to them in questionnaires, journal entries, and interviews. Thus, despite a lack of previous formal teacher learning or experience teaching FL students, Elena and Armando brought to the classroom "strong beliefs about teaching and learning, subject matter and students ... beliefs [that] powerfully influence what prospective teachers learn during

teacher preparation and what they do as teachers” (Featherstone & Feiman-Nemser, 1992, p. 4; see also Lantolf & Johnson, 2007; Johnson, 2009).

Data Collection

Sociocultural theory (SCT) and qualitative research methods informed this study’s data collection. Multiple data sources were collected before, during, and after the 15-week methods seminar, in which this study’s participants were enrolled during their first semester of FL teaching. The seminar met weekly for two and a half hours. A 30- to 45- minute “workshop” was included in each weekly session wherein students collaboratively prepared part of a lesson using a literacy-based model for an instructional sequence.

Conceptual tools introduced in the methods seminar included design of meaning, available designs, the four curricular components and the seven principles of literacy(see discussion above)(Kern, 2000; New London Group, 1996). Examples of pedagogical tools of literacy introduced were reading matrix, journal writing, graphic organizer, and semantic mapping (Kern, 2000; Swaffar & Arens, 2005). Linking theory (understanding of conceptual tools) to practice (understanding and applying pedagogical tools) through activities consistent with a SCT perspective on language teacher professional development (Johnson, 2009) was at the core of the course. Course activities were the main source of the data for this study.

Four data sources were collected – questionnaires, interviews, written narratives, and teaching artifacts – to gain insight into the participants’ thoughts, feelings, and challenges and practices related to literacy-based FL instruction. A pre-seminar questionnaire (Appendix A) was completed by participants and included a demographic and language learning profile, participants’ views of the most important elements of FL learning, their teaching priorities in the U.S. collegiate context, and challenges that they anticipated as novice FL TAs. Participants also completed a pre-seminar literacy survey (Appendix B) wherein they were asked to define the term literacy, to explain their understanding of what being literate means, and to list the essential elements of FL instruction to move college students toward literacy. Another data source was a semi-structured interview

(Appendix C), digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim, and conducted at the methods seminar's end. Questions in the first part of this interview focused on concepts of literacy, whereas the second part targeted how concepts could be translated into classroom teaching techniques and strategies. Written narratives were a third source of data. They included bi-weekly reflective teaching journals (Appendix D) in which participants were prompted to document their experiences, thoughts, questions, and ideas related to their classroom teaching experiences with literacy-based approaches. The written narratives also included three concept maps², requiring participants to visually organize their understanding of the concept of literacy at three different points during the semester; and a professional development plan (Appendix E) completed during the first week of the semester following the methods course. In their professional development plan, participants were asked to explain their goals for the semester ahead in relation to classroom teaching, student learning, and teaching effectiveness as measured by formal student evaluations of teaching. The final data source, teaching artifacts, included materials developed in the methods seminar such as an instructional unit (a sequence of literacy-based instruction related to one chapter in their textbook) and lesson plans developed during three cycles of lesson study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with a close reading of written narratives and transcribed interviews, during which we looked for patterns and themes related to the study's research questions. We coded each reference in interview and narrative data to either conceptual tools (four curricular components, seven principles of literacy) or pedagogical tools of literacy (e.g., reading matrix, semantic maps, four-step reading model) as one unit of meaning and labeled each with a code name related to the theme expressed (Research Question 1). Besides focusing on mentions of concep-

²Concept maps are defined as a tool "for capturing and graphically representing concepts and their hierarchical relationships" (Meijer, Verloop & Beijards, 1999, p. 62). Mergendoller and Sachs (1994) argue that using concept maps with language teachers can be "useful for measuring cognitive change resulting from participation in academic courses" (p. 589).

tual and pedagogical tools of literacy, we also coded participants' perceptions of affordances and/or constraints to literacy-based instruction and everyday concepts about teaching and learning (Research Questions 3, 4 and 5). Five coding categories were used in the final analysis and included: conceptual tools, pedagogical tools, language teaching and learning beliefs, affordances, and constraints. Next, we analyzed teaching materials created as part of the lesson study cycles and instructional unit, looking for ways in which participants attempted to instantiate conceptual and pedagogical tools of literacy in comparison with their narratives (Research Question 2). We sought to establish whether there was alignment between what participants said regarding conceptual tools guiding their teaching practices and whether their conceptual understanding was translated into their teaching artifacts. In doing so, we attempted to go beyond relying solely on "subject reality" (Pavlenko, 2007). We wished to know the participants' thoughts and feelings about teaching and professional development, and the curriculum and language program, in order to achieve a deeper understanding of how they appropriated, reconstructed, and transformed their teaching activity in light of affordances and constraints present in their local context.

Findings

Findings are reported for each participant separately below, focusing first on the conceptual development of literacy during and after the methods seminar (Research Questions 1 and 3) and the activities and tools that each participant said contributed most to the development of conceptual understanding. Next, we present findings as to how each participant applied conceptual and pedagogical tools of literacy in instructional design, looking specifically at how everyday concepts of language learning and teaching interacted with instantiations of literacy-based pedagogy in the participants' local context (Research Question 2). We also describe the affordances and constraints these two novice FL TAs faced as they tried to carry out literacy-based FL teaching (Research Questions 4 and 5).

Elena

Developing conceptual knowledge of literacy during and after the methods seminar. In her pre-seminar questionnaire, Elena underscored that “consistency, organization, and choosing the right method” were important elements of FL teaching and her most important teaching priorities. Her biggest anticipated challenges were not pedagogical in nature, which was not completely unexpected since she was a novice FL TA. Instead, Elena indicated that she wanted to meet the expectations of her department and students. Although she did not posit a preferred teaching approach, Elena anticipated that the methods seminar would familiarize her with methodology and technology that would “support a more interactive and captivating way of teaching [a] foreign language” (pre-seminar questionnaire, 8/19/2010). Apparent in this pre-seminar questionnaire comment was the fact that Elena was writing about language learning and teaching based her own lived experiences, thus relying on her own everyday concepts of teaching and learning.

At the beginning of the methods seminar, Elena understood literacy as “the acquisition of minimal education requirements, which allow persons to navigate in an educational and/or culture system” thus equating the concept to basic reading and writing knowledge. For Elena, to be literate in a FL meant “to not feel intimidated to produce [...] despite the mistakes (grammatical or others) that you would eventually do” (pre-seminar literacy survey, 8/26/2010). In this response, the perspective on language learning displayed is one that hinges on production and linguistic accuracy, a focus that was repeated and more clearly articulated in a reflective teaching journal (RTJ) entry four weeks later in which participants were asked to reflect on the activities occurring on a regular basis in their class. In it, Elena wrote:

So far the activities that are occurring more regularly are the performing of dialogues in pairs, and I am progressively introducing other activities with more emphasis in meaning comprehension and the developing of writing abilities ... For example, last week I presented students with a poem of Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén, “Tengo lo que tenía que tener,” to introduce more abstract uses of the verb “Tener” (to have). After making them identify some of the uses of this verb in

the text (without focusing on the whole meaning of the poem), I requested them to write and read a poem using the verb “Tener”. The result was very good and surprising for me. In general some students produced very nice poems showing they grasped the use of the verb “Tener” in different ways, and they even incorporated some of the vocabulary and grammatical forms introduced in previous classes. At the same time they were using the grammatical points, they connected the poems with their personal life experiences, which I think also shows they were acquiring the meaning of the verb and were able to apply it to their social contexts. (9/12/2010)

At this point of the semester, Elena’s classroom instruction focused primarily on oral work and acquisition of grammatical knowledge. In a sense, the answer as to why she chose to focus on these elements may be found in her pre-seminar questionnaire wherein she indicated that she “received a nice training, with particular emphasis in oral interaction, grammar, etc.” and that she “liked the techniques used.” Her positive view of the language instruction that she had received, in which oral interaction and form were the focus, might explain why she would choose the pedagogical tool of performing dialogues, which had not been suggested in the methods seminar. Elena’s reflective teaching journal comments above also indicate that she had used texts to frame her lesson, an important component of literacy-based instruction. However, the text was selected to teach a grammar point (rather than to analyze its meaning) and re-use the grammatical structure introduced in a writing assignment. Thus, Elena’s text-based instruction did not align with literacy-based usage of texts insomuch that the meaningful and culturally situated elements of the poem were clearly secondary to the linguistic element *tener*.

At the midpoint of the methods seminar, naming and defining literacy-related concepts introduced in the first half of the semester proved difficult for Elena. She could not name the seven principles of literacy and was only able to name two of the four curricular components, overt instruction and situated practice, which she respectively equated as “a presentation of the main vocabulary and grammar aspect to the class” by the professor and “activities where you apply the structural aspects of the class

to, for example, an interactive exercise.” While Elena was able to label two literacy-related tools, most, if not all, of their features evaded her. It is also interesting to note that she recalled those curricular components most in line with her own focus on orality and grammar while omitting critical framing and transformed practice, curricular components not typically addressed in more traditional approaches to FL learning.

In a midterm reflective teaching journal entry, Elena used a concept map to visually organize and represent the major concepts guiding her teaching and the techniques she was using to address her classroom objectives. She identified the following teaching objectives: “Familiarization with the Target Language, Cultural Literacy, Communication, Vocabulary, Grammar, Communication and Progressive Text Comprehension.” In her explanation of the concept map, she stated that her objectives were in line with a literacy-based approach, yet they clearly separated language use, comprehension and use of available designs, and cultural knowledge, rather than integrating them through textual content in accord with principles of literacy-based teaching. Although Elena did use texts in her class, her comments suggested that rather than appropriating a literacy-based understanding of their role, she continued to view them as props for helping her “students establish a basis of the target language” and as springboards for language practice. She indicated that she had been “progressively presenting students with different kind of texts like poems, fragments of literary stories, personal calendars, TV guides, city guides, etc., to relate them with the use of vocabulary and grammar introduced in class at the same time that she was exposing them to the cultural elements [in the texts]” (reflective teaching journal, 10/14/2010). Thus, instruction in Elena’s class remained focused on grammar and vocabulary acquisition and learning the rules of language use before “meaning creation and production,” and showed her continued reliance on her own beliefs and everyday notions of language learning eight weeks into the methods seminar.

At semester’s end, despite Elena’s claim that there had “not been any substantial changes in the main concepts that [were] guiding [her] teaching practice,” (reflective teaching journal, 11/30/2010) we witnessed a shift in what she indicated her peda-

gogical objectives were at term's beginning and at its end. In a final reflective teaching journal entry, as she walked us through her final concept map, Elena wrote that she had progressively become more aware of "the importance of incorporating the literacy approach" in her teaching. She further explained that she had realized that "the introduction of vocabulary and grammar [were] not necessarily ends in itself, but ways to promote, for example, more effective language use and cultural knowledge to make students more familiar with the target language." Finally, to sum up, Elena wrote that "the concept of Communication" was now guiding her teaching and that "Language Use, Conventions, Problem Solving, Cultural Knowledge, Interpretation and Reflection and Self-Reflection [were] all equally important as [her] teaching objectives" (11/30/2010). She went on to describe how she would go about helping her students understand conventions in Spanish and said:

The introduction of conventions could be effectively done not only through isolated presentations, but also through exposing [students] with cultural texts like videos and websites, which with the adequate contextualization, scaffolding and modeling could lead to the comprehension of those conventions and the additional familiarization with cultural elements that could deepen student's understanding of the L2. (reflective teaching journal, 11/30/2010)

At the close of the semester, Elena demonstrated a much more substantial level of understanding and described a more integrated notion of literacy-based instruction in which she highlighted not just its linguistic (e.g., lexical and syntactic knowledge, conventions) but also its cognitive (e.g., problem-solving), and sociocultural (e.g., language use) dimensions. Elena had appropriated surface features of the tool of literacy (appropriation level three on Grossman et al's five-level scale described above) and was now demonstrating a budding grasp of the conceptual underpinnings of this tool and how she could possibly use it in her class, thus moving to appropriation level four.

In her post-seminar interview, as Elena was reflecting on which activities and tools from the methods seminar contributed the most to her conceptual understanding of literacy-based FL

pedagogy, she indicated that Maxim's (2006) four-step reading model was most instrumental in helping her understand the literacy-based approach. Elena explained that the model presented "a very original and completely, you know, unexpected way of approaching a text." She further elaborated that it was not Maxim's article per se that helped her, because, as she put it, an "article is nice but it provides a lot of information so you get confused" but rather the handouts with sample lessons and the lesson study cycle in which she had to plan and carry out a reading lesson using the model. Elena mentioned that "when you see the actual model, it helps you understand how it works," thus suggesting that course readings contributed to a limited extent to her conceptual development. More importantly, hands-on activities of designing literacy-based lessons during the seminar were of more significant value in making connections between theoretical knowledge and classroom instructional practices. Further, this finding points to the positive contribution of forms of professional development based on sociocultural theory (STD) that include opportunities for dialogic mediation, scaffolded learning, and assisted performance with TAs' peers and instructor.

Applying conceptual and pedagogical tools of literacy in instructional design. During and after the methods seminar, the ways in which Elena claimed to use conceptual and pedagogical tools and resources related to literacy in her teaching remained incoherent. From the beginning until almost the end of the semester, Elena never mentioned in her reflective teaching journal that she used a literacy-based framework to plan instruction, nor did she indicate that she used specific pedagogical tools related to literacy-based instruction. It appeared that for Elena, using texts as springboards for the production of oral and written output related to particular grammar and vocabulary points was a sufficient strategy to instantiate literacy-based instruction. In other words, she was not able to align literacy-based conceptual tools with related pedagogical tools (i.e., classroom strategies and techniques) in constructing her teaching practices.

By the end of the semester, however, while explaining a lesson plan that she had designed for her class, Elena stated that she felt increasingly comfortable with the four curricular components

and designing overt instruction and situated practice activities. But unlike earlier in the term when she only focused on those curricular components, she now continued by highlighting that she was also:

...incorporating Transformed Practice and Critical Framing activities, recognizing the advantages of the introduction of cultural components as an integral part of foreign language learning; and also of the use of texts of diverse kinds (visual, literary, media, etc.) as a useful and challenging tool in this regard. (reflective teaching journal, 11/10/2010)

However, Elena also added that “Transformed Practice and Critical Framing proved difficult for students,” which likely strengthened her belief that overt instruction and situated practice were not only the most important components of the framework, but also those that could be most readily applied in the elementary Spanish class she taught. Thus, Elena’s comments suggest a shift in her instructional practices, but they also demonstrate how her own beliefs led her to prioritize certain curricular components, acting as a filter in how she constructed her teaching practices in her Spanish 101 class. At semester’s end, as Elena reflected on the appropriateness of a literacy-based approach for first semester Spanish, it is evident that whereas she claimed to accept the approach, she also had doubts about its suitability for beginning and intermediate learners, and thought it would be more appropriate for advanced students:

I guess overall the concept of Communication is my guiding teaching principle, as a progressive process of making students develop their listening, reading and writing skills in the L2, but also as a framework which allows students to go a step further in order to create meaning, and to start thinking on how it is produced and could be transformed into their own performance of L2. *I think that last part is a long-term approach, especially considering that we are teaching a beginner class level.* However, through the introduction of for example controlled activities to approach different kind of texts, as well as with the introduction of cultural elements in different forms, I am creating a basis to implement that long-term objective in my class. (final reflective teaching journal, 11/30/2010; *our emphasis*)

Evidence from teaching artifacts and post-seminar comments. The difficulty of instantiating conceptual and pedagogical tools of literacy when planning instruction and designing instructional materials was evident in Elena's teaching artifacts and post-seminar comments. Two challenges demonstrated were articulating learning objectives and goals in a manner consistent with a literacy-based teaching framework and designing activities leading students to explore form-meaning connections. In relation to the first challenge, Elena struggled to integrate linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural aspects of literacy development when writing lesson objectives and goals, instead falling back into a traditional "four skills" orientation. For example, Elena designed a lesson on routine activities for her instructional unit, using the song *Contaminame. Mucho mas de Dos* by Ana Belen as her main text. She stated that the global objective of the lesson was to "familiarize students with verbal forms in present tense like "venir," "contar," and "dar" and one specific goal of the lesson was for students to "be able to incorporate in their vocabulary the use of formal forms in the present tense to describe daily routines." Elena used a text to frame her lesson, an important component of literacy-based pedagogy. However, the song was first and foremost selected to introduce and teach a grammar point (rather than for analysis of its meaning) and reuse the grammatical structure introduced in an oral assignment in which students were expected "to use at least six regular and/or irregular verbs in present tense – including the verbs studied in the song's lyrics." Thus, Elena's text-based instruction did not align with literacy-based usage of texts insomuch that the meaningful and culturally-situated elements of the song were clearly secondary to the teaching of verbs like *venir*, *contar*, and *dar* in the present tense.

The second challenge concerned the development of activities that focused students' attention on language use. All four curricular components were included in the lesson plans Elena designed for her instructional unit; however, overt instruction activities were limited in scope, focusing seldom, if ever, on language use, or why certain words or tenses are used and the effects produced as a result. For example, Elena created a lesson around a video clip entitled "*Historia de la Música Cubana*" by

Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón in which students were guided from pre-viewing to two separate viewings of the video and collaborative “reading” of the video including a historical comparison of jazz and Cuban music. For the second viewing, she used a listening matrix as a pedagogical tool but focused students’ attention only on vocabulary words and their matching terms with their definitions. Elena indicated that an initial focus on vocabulary and grammar were an essential first step before students could engage in “meaning creation and production” and this matrix-based listening activity, by focusing on word and word definition rather than word choices and their attendant effects, is in alignment with this belief.

To summarize, Elena’s teaching artifacts developed in the methods seminar revealed two challenges with a common element. That is to say, attempting to integrate a focus on linguistic development into text-based instruction consistent with a literacy-based approach, even with the explicit intent to do so, remained elusive for her.

Constraints to instantiating literacy-based teaching. In a reflective teaching journal entry at semester’s end, Elena was prompted to reflect on implementing literacy-based instruction in her class and describe the challenges she faced while trying to implement it or the impediments that might have held her back from trying. Lack of time and available materials, both of which are closely related, were the first challenges Elena mentioned. She wrote:

I tried to incorporate a literacy-based lesson in my classes as much as I could, to make it part of my teaching philosophy as well as of the student’s learning philosophy. One of the main challenges I face in this regard is in the selection of materials, and more specifically due to the amount of time required for this versus the limited time we usually have as teacher/students. (11/10/2010)

In her post-seminar interview, she revisited this issue and made a suggestion, saying:

My only problem with the literacy approach is the time, and I’ve said that in my journals, I think in the part of materials, it would be very helpful if there was a way to have like a, how

you would say that ... a database of materials already proposed by other colleagues ... or being used, you know, because that would save time. (12/8/2010)

Juggling teaching duties and graduate studies can be very challenging for TAs. Unless literacy-based materials are readily available for use in the classroom, TAs may choose to primarily rely on their program's textbook. Searching for appropriate instructional materials and designing activities that align with a literacy-based approach can be time-consuming and make the approach appear daunting. As Elena stated:

You want to give them the very best materials and that makes it extremely long that part. The design of course is challenging too ... it has these two parts, you have to be creative ... sometimes you have the model and it's not enough (post-seminar interview, 12/8/2010)

The second constraint encountered by Elena was curricular in nature. She indicated that the textbook and the contradiction between its approach and the principles of literacy-based teaching combined with the fast-paced syllabus and just three weekly class meetings in Spanish 101 were hurdles to instantiating a literacy-based pedagogy.

Many factors appeared to impede Elena's ability to instantiate a literacy-based approach in her class. Her experiences accrued through years of being a language learner had impacted her beliefs and classroom practices, but so did the local context in which she was teaching. Lack of ready-made literacy-based materials and lack of time were experienced by Elena as impediments to implementing the approach focused on in her methods seminar.

Armando

Developing conceptual knowledge of literacy during and after the methods seminar. At the start of the semester, in both his pre-seminar questionnaire and literacy survey, Armando underscored the importance of "link[ing] culture and language" (08/20/2010) in collegiate FL study and explained that his biggest challenge would be to "use the language as a tool to make

[his] students get into new cultures" (08/26/2010). Much like Elena, Armando did not posit any preferred approach to teaching but expressed a desire to learn more about group dynamics (pair, group, or whole class work) in the methods seminar, an interest that would come up repeatedly in his reflective teaching journal entries.

At the beginning of the methods seminar, Armando defined literacy as "the capacity (or ability) to read and understand a language and also be able to interact with others," or, in other words, "to share (written / spoken) knowledge." He further indicated that connecting language and culture was an essential element of FL instruction for moving students toward literacy in the FL (pre-seminar literacy survey, 8/26/2010). Interestingly, the use of texts as a means of connecting language and culture, despite being a focus during the early weeks of the seminar, did not loom large in Armando's instruction in the first month of the term according to his reflective teaching journal. Four weeks into the semester, as participants were asked to reflect on the activities occurring on a regular basis in their class, Armando's first priority seemed to be teaching structural aspects of Spanish and vocabulary. He wrote that he taught grammar both inductively and deductively and claimed that "sometimes [he] must explain what [he is] doing in grammar since this is a beginners' class and they are not able yet to find the 'why' of some rules" (reflective teaching journal, 09/15/2010). He also explained that for teaching new vocabulary, he relied on the use of cognates, thus likely conveying to his students that a one-on-one correspondence between words in their L1 and words in their L2 always exists, rather than focusing on the multidimensional knowledge of words and guiding students to understand how the meaning of words is contingent on actual use, a process that is best facilitated by working with texts, as discussed in the methods seminar. Thus, in these comments, it is evident how Armando relied on everyday notions of language learning to inform how instruction was constructed in his class.

At mid-semester, Armando had difficulty naming and defining conceptual tools of literacy that had been introduced in the first half of the methods seminar. Similar to Elena, Armando could not name any of the seven principles of literacy but was

able to identify three of the four curricular components (critical framing, situated practice, and overt instruction) although he could not provide coherent explanations for them. At this point in the term, Armando had appropriated the labels of a few tools but none of their features (appropriation level two on Grossman et al's five-level scale described above). In other words, he was not aware of any specific practices related to the tools he had named or their conceptual underpinnings. In a midterm journal entry, as Armando explained by way of a concept map that represented visually the major concepts that were guiding his teaching and the techniques he was using to reach his classroom objectives, language was used in his class as "a gateway to provide new perspectives of the world." He focused on language immersion (i.e., use) and cultural awareness (i.e., knowledge), which are consistent with two principles of literacy; however, he did not show a coherent notion of literacy-based pedagogical tools to carry out those two concepts. While Armando indicated that he used texts in his class, there was no evidence that they were used to frame instruction; rather, it appeared that they were used as add-ons as suggested by the following comment:

During the last week I *briefly showed them news* about Vargas Llosa Nobel prize and also about the Chilean Miners rescue. They were very interested about those issues. *The use of real news provide them the sensation that they are learning a 'real language.'* (reflective teaching journal, 10/15/2010; *our emphases*)

As was seen in Elena's case, there was no evidence that Armando used specific pedagogical tools to which he had been introduced in the methods seminar (e.g., text matrix or scaffolding) to guide students' interaction with the texts that he had selected. In this regard, he seemed willing to incorporate texts into his teaching but was not able to display alignment in conceptual and pedagogical tools used to carry out literacy-based instruction.

Toward the end of the semester, Armando seemed to possess a more integrated notion of literacy that included not only its linguistic but also sociocultural dimensions. He wrote, "In my last map, I put in two different sections 'Cultural Awareness' and 'Language Immersion.' Now I put them together since they

actually go together in my class" (reflective teaching journal, 11/30/2010). He explained this evolution further in his post-seminar interview, saying:

Literacy is a way, an approach, that involves not just to learn a language like words and vocabulary but also something that implies a cultural awareness and all the manifestations that allow to make the student be involved with the discourse ... that means culture but also expressions and interactions that make the learning process useful. (12/8/2010)

However, his understanding of the conceptual tool of literacy was still not a coherent notion complete with conceptual underpinnings. For example, Armando could not explain the elements of literacy-based instruction. When asked what these included during his post-seminar interview, he mentioned having a lesson plan, being aware of assessment issues, using technology, cultural awareness, videos, and authentic readings rather than naming the principles of literacy, the four curricular components, or specific pedagogical tools to instantiate literacy-based instruction. Armando thus showed little to no evidence of alignment between conceptual and pedagogical tools of literacy. At the beginning of the semester in his pre-seminar questionnaire, Armando mentioned that when he was a learner, his English teacher used a lot of games, and so did Armando throughout his first semester of teaching. In this final reflective teaching journal entry, he wrote, "My technique is also based on the use of games," suggesting that at term's end, even after being exposed to many new scientific concepts related to teaching and new pedagogical tools to carry out literacy-based teaching and using those to in planning lessons and creating instructional materials for the seminar, everyday concepts were still prevalent in guiding his teaching practices.

In his post-seminar interview, when asked to reflect on which activities and tools from the methods seminar contributed most to the development of his conceptual understanding of literacy-based pedagogy, Armando indicated that a workshop conducted by Richard Kern at his home institution and the demonstration Kern did of a literacy-based lesson proved to be very useful. Similar to Elena, Armando felt that having a firsthand, concrete

experience of the approach was critical to understanding it. Further, Armando indicated that planning with other seminar members for the lesson study had also been very useful because “there’s nothing better than sharing ideas” (post-seminar interview, 12/8/20100). He explained that “working with a person who had, who had another experience teaching was very helpful because [this person] already knows... he already... well, he has more experience, he might know how the students may react.” Armando’s comment highlights the importance of including opportunities for dialogic mediation, scaffolded learning, and assisted performance with experts such as TAs’ senior peers, course instructor or supervisor in all forms of teacher professional development. He also thought that some of the course readings had been helpful, especially those on scaffolding.

Applying conceptual and pedagogical tools of literacy in instructional design. The ways in which Armando appropriated and used conceptual and pedagogical tools of literacy in his teaching throughout the semester remained incoherent. Much like Elena, Armando did not mention use of a literacy-based framework when planning lessons or selecting pedagogical tools for classroom instruction in his reflective teaching journal until almost the end of the semester. At midterm, Armando mentioned bringing two news articles to class, but, as previously explained, he gave no detail on how he used them, and we can infer that Armando did not use the texts to frame his lesson that day but rather used them as props to convey a sense of Spanish as a language that people use beyond the walls of the classroom.

At semester’s end, in a journal entry, Armando described a literacy-based lesson that he had designed using a song entitled “*Contigo me voy de party vacilando por la calle*” by a Panamanian artist. According to Armando, the lesson included three of the four curricular components: overt instruction, situated practice, and critical framing; however, in his description of the lesson, no links were drawn between the features of those components and how he used them to frame instruction. He had students listen to the song and proceeded to quickly check comprehension. He then gave students a word bank and “explained to them some expressions or cultural information.” He also had “an activity to reinforce grammar and orthography” in which he asked

students “to look for the indirect object pronouns forms in the lyrics” as well as instances in which “the word Tu required a stress.” Finally, he asked their opinion about the song (reflective teaching journal, 11/10/2010). It can be interpreted based on this instructional sequence that rather than appropriating a literacy-based understanding of the use of texts, Armando appeared to view them primarily as springboards for practice (i.e., vocabulary and grammar) and output production (i.e., answering comprehension questions and offering opinions) as this comment seems to further indicate: “Instead of just making a regular review, I thought that the use of a song would be nicer for them” (*our emphasis*). He discussed this lesson again in the final interview but had difficulty naming which specific instructional model he had followed to frame his lesson. He said that he “used uhhhhh ... without, let’s say, it’s like based on the reading plan, the pre-reading, first reading ... but ... also include[d] the part of not giving them the lyrics.” Armando appeared to pick and choose some parts of an instructional model (i.e., a type of pedagogical tool) while leaving others out. In the final interview, as Armando reflected on the feasibility of a literacy-based approach for first semester Spanish, he volunteered that “well, it’s challenging of course, but it’s possible” and then went on, stating:

[M]aybe a good challenge would be to even think more about the vocabulary used by the professors during the class because we haven’t focused much on that issue ... but I think it would be a really nice idea to look at which words to use to make even more literacy-based and avoid the use of English as much as possible. (12/08/2010)

Immersing his students in Spanish had been a concern for Armando from the very beginning of the term when he listed “language immersion” as one of his goals in his pre-teaching survey. In his post-seminar interview, Armando indicated that this was something his former English and French teachers strove for and were able to achieve, and Armando wanted to emulate them. He said:

I remember my teacher, my English teacher who never used a word in Spanish, so of course, he had a really good strategy and because I was able to understand everything he was talk-

ing about, the same one with French ... I remember that my teacher said once: "Well, welcome to French class!" and then he started talking in French, and it was my first class in French, and I was able to understand everything he was saying. ... So that would be with me the challenge. Of course, I don't think I am gonna get ... make it for next semester, so it's like a goal, I mean...(final interview, 12/08/2010)

Although language immersion is consistent with 'language use,' one of the principles of literacy, Armando still did not demonstrate a coherent notion of literacy and how it is carried out through instruction.

It proved difficult for Armando to instantiate conceptual and pedagogical tools of literacy when planning instruction and designing instructional materials for his instructional unit. Articulating learning objectives and goals consistently reflective of a literacy-based approach in his lesson plans, and designing activities in which meaning is shaped by linguistic and schematic choices were a challenge for him in two ways.

First, Armando had difficulty writing lesson objectives and goals consistent with a literacy-based approach. His attempts at integrating linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural aspects of literacy development were in large part unsuccessful. Instead, he fell back into a traditional "four skills" orientation. For example, in a song-based lesson (*La Melodia*), his objectives were to "make students interact with contemporary lyrics in Spanish and reinforce the use of vocabulary and discuss about the lyrics with the use of the grammar information from the chapter." Similarly, in a news article-based lesson (*Los niños quieren un iPad por Navidad*), his objectives were for students to "recognize and practice the vocabulary learned and expressions about desires" (in the conditional form).

Second, designing activities focused students on language use consistent with a literacy-based approach proved difficult. For each lesson plan included in his instructional unit, Armando included activities labeled as one of the four curricular components, however, only rarely did these activities reflect the characteristics of the curricular component identified. For example, in one instructional unit activity related to the theme of studies and careers and labeled overt instruction, students were asked to think about which

information should be included on a university website. Nowhere in this activity was learners' attention focused on linguistic and schematic resources and their use. At other times, overt instruction activities were very narrow in their scope and language use was not even considered. For example, Armando directed students to do the following: "Using the book *Dos Mundos* (p. 186) with clip-art images of situations where use of the *pronombre de complemento indirecto* is relevant, students will create sentences that include this pronoun to describe what they see."

Thus, in designing teaching artifacts for his instructional unit, Armando appeared to struggle with integrating a focus on linguistic development into content-oriented instruction, even when he intended to do so.

Constraints to instantiating literacy-based teaching. When prompted to reflect on implementing a literacy-based approach in his class and describe the challenges he encountered in trying to implement it, Armando, although less explicitly than Elena, indicated that a dual lack of materials and time was an issue for him. For example, in his post-seminar interview, Armando explained that he had not implemented the Swaffar and Vlatten (1997) model of sequential video viewing "because [he thought] that we just cannot show any video, we have to have a really good story to use this" (12/08/2010). When materials are not readily available and time is in short supply, TAs will understandably take the path of least resistance. Armando, like Elena, also mentioned the Spanish curriculum as another constraint. He saw the fast-paced syllabus and three weekly sessions as hurdles to instantiating a literacy-based pedagogy in his class.

A final constraint for Armando was related to being a first-time teacher. In his professional development plan, he underscored that he was a novice TA, and as such, "[he] had to get used to plan his lessons, and be aware of simple details" e.g., timing his lessons, getting used to the textbook, and finding a method to check students' homework. All of this took significant time and Armando indicated that for the following semester "he wanted to be more organized since the beginning" (professional development plan, 1/15/2011). Armando's comments suggest that he might have made certain classroom choices (i.e., not implementing a literacy-based approach) because his attention was elsewhere.

Similarly to Elena, a number of factors appeared to impact Armando's ability to instantiate a literacy-based approach in his class. His previous experiences as a language learner influenced his beliefs and classroom practices, as did his teaching context. He was a novice TA and, as such, was absorbed by many issues related to what Leinhardt and Smith (1985) call "lesson structure knowledge." Further, the lack of ready-made literacy-based materials and lack of time were additional impediments to implementing the approach focused on in the methods seminar.

Discussion

Findings from this study lend credence to the notion that a front-loaded model of teacher professional development with just one introductory methods seminar during the first semester of FL TAs' teaching career is inadequate. This is the case even when it foregrounds an overarching theoretical concept, links that concept to related pedagogical tools for classroom teaching, and provides multiple opportunities for sustained dialogic mediation, scaffolded learning and assisted performance as our seminar did. In this regard, this study validates previous research on FL TA professional development identifying challenges of novice teachers' conceptual development and integration of theoretical knowledge into teaching practice (Allen, 2011; Brandl, 2000; Dassier, 2001; Rankin & Becker, 2006). This study also demonstrates the usefulness of adopting the perspective of sociocultural theory (SCT) for tracing conceptual development, and provides evidence of how such development can be captured by analyzing which conceptual and pedagogical tools are present in TA's discourse on instruction (what teachers *say*) and the transferability of theoretical and pedagogical tools introduced through formal instruction into classroom practices and teaching artifacts (what teachers *do*).

Research Question 1

Conceptual development was gradual for Elena and Armando, who both struggled to reconcile their own everyday concepts of language learning and previous experiences related to other instructional approaches that they experienced as language learners with literacy-based concepts introduced in the seminar and

their application to FL teaching. For example, recurrent use of pedagogical tools such as performing dialogues (for Elena) and using games (for Armando) had been used in their previous FL learning experiences, and they continued implementing those tools in teaching Spanish 101, despite the fact that neither pedagogical tool was introduced as part of a literacy-based teaching framework. By term's end, Elena had reached appropriation level three (appropriating surface features of conceptual and pedagogical tools) on Grossman et al's five-level scale and was tentatively moving toward appropriation level four. On the other hand, Armando had reached appropriation level two (appropriating the label of conceptual and pedagogical tools but not their features) at midterm and stayed there until the end of the semester.

Allen (2011) noted that the ability to think through concepts of literacy in structuring teaching practices (level four on Grossman et al's scale) did not emerge for either participant in her study until four semesters after they started teaching. Her finding confirmed results from an earlier study by Brandl (2000), who pointed out that "it is usually not until TAs have become more experienced that they begin to see how theoretical frameworks can be applied in their teaching" (p. 366). Allen and Dupuy (2011), however, concluded in a study focusing on advanced FL TAs that several years of teaching experience did not in and of itself facilitate their participants' capacity to both understand and apply concepts of literacy. Rather, they underscored the need for multiple, sustained opportunities for dialogic mediating, scaffolded learning, and assisted performance throughout FL TAs' teaching trajectories and the fact that TAs' struggles to reconcile personal notions of language learning and concepts related to other instructional approaches with literacy-based concepts is typically an ongoing one.

Research Question 2

Although both Elena and Armando claimed to use at least one conceptual or pedagogical tool of literacy in teaching, neither demonstrated alignment in constructing their teaching practices through conceptual and pedagogical tools of literacy. They seemed to pick pedagogical tools without explicitly grounding

their choices in a literacy-based framework. Furthermore, their teaching artifacts evidenced their difficulty to integrate a focus on language use with content-oriented instruction. When such a focus was present, it was conceived narrowly, typically examining definitions of words or expressions rather than exploring form-meaning connections. Thus, despite a professed belief that fostering literacy in a FL entails a focus on language as a means of meaning making anchored in literary or cultural texts, both Elena and Armando had difficulty instantiating that notion in their teaching. Similarly to findings in Fox (1993), Dassier (2001), and Rankin and Becker (2006), our findings underscore the reality that novice TAs do not simply accumulate theoretical knowledge and put it in to action in their classroom. Rather, it was evident that teaching practices were filtered by the two participants' everyday concepts of language learning, beliefs about language teaching and learning, and previous experiences as language learners.

Research Question 3

Elena and Armando both reported at the conclusion of the methods seminar that what contributed most to their conceptual understanding of literacy-based pedagogy were practical applications (e.g., lesson study) and concrete examples (e.g., demonstrations in workshops), whereas reading and discussing the research were less positively perceived. This finding echoes those previously reported by Allen (2011), Allen and Dupuy (2011), and Brandl (2000) and suggests that reconsideration should be given to the roles of reading and discussing published research in introductory-level FL pedagogy courses. Future research would be well served to explore how those two elements, typically cornerstones of graduate seminars, could be complemented by more hands-on professional development activities.

Research Questions 4 and 5

Participants encountered two primary constraints in instantiating literacy-based pedagogy. The first was lack of time and materials, elements that are connected. Searching for appropriate instructional materials can be time-consuming for novice TAs trying to balance teaching duties and graduate studies. The second

constraint was curricular. Both Elena and Armando indicated that the textbook and the contradiction between its approach and the principles of literacy-based teaching, combined with the fast-paced syllabus and only three weekly class meetings of their course, were hurdles to instantiating a literacy-based pedagogy. These findings expand on those reported in Allen (2011) and Allen and Dupuy (2011) inasmuch that grappling with a lack of materials and time to find or create them along with curricular limitations can significantly limit TAs' potential to instantiate literacy-based teaching practices.

Several practical implications emerge from this study's findings in relation to articulating professional development practices for TAs in collegiate FL departments. Although the methods seminar at the center of this study proved insufficient for the two participants to appropriate conceptual underpinnings of literacy or mastery of literacy-based classroom teaching techniques, it served as an introduction to both, and elements of the seminar such as lesson study and other hands-on collaborative activities were highly valued by participants as contributing to their conceptual development. Thus, future research should investigate how the activities included in early in-service professional development (both within and beyond the methods seminar) can best support novice TAs' conceptual understanding related to the pedagogical framework of the language program in which they teach. Further, those FL faculty members charged with the professional development of novice TAs should anticipate that these new teachers will draw heavily on everyday concepts of teaching and learning during their first semesters in the classroom and may rely on teaching techniques inconsistent with their program's pedagogical approach yet firmly rooted in their own previous experiences as language learners. It is not enough to attempt to "reprogram" TAs with new techniques and strategies; rather, dialogic mediation and explicit discussion of the need to align one's conceptual and pedagogical tools are necessary to encourage TAs to evolve in their teaching practices beyond how they learned languages themselves in the past.

Finally, this study's findings support the need for formal professional development stretching beyond the first methods seminar, particularly in relation to understanding and imple-

menting FL instruction based on a sophisticated theoretical framework such as the one at the center of this study, literacy-based teaching. Previous studies (Allen, 2011; Allen & Dupuy, 2011) have demonstrated the value of a second FL pedagogy seminar offered to more advanced TAs to both review and expand on conceptual and pedagogical tools introduced in the initial methods seminar. There is little doubt that this study's novice TA participants would profit from an extended sequence of professional development to deepen the conceptual learning and fine-tune the teaching techniques to which they were first introduced to in the methods seminar.

Conclusion

This study's findings demonstrate both how difficult the process of conceptual development is for novice FL TAs, and how critical the task is for FL faculty to put in place professional development activities that maximize graduate students' development as teachers. Although Elena and Armando did appropriate some surface features of the conceptual tools of literacy as novice TAs through participation in the methods seminar, neither seemed to have appropriated conceptual underpinnings in a way that would allow them to apply those tools consistently in classroom instruction. Developing instructional materials and practices consistent with a pedagogy of literacy was a tremendous challenge throughout the participants' first semester of teaching due to both their own beliefs about language teaching and learning, and perceived curricular constraints. It is our hope that continued empirical research of best practices in professional development and of conceptual learning outcomes will serve as a valuable tool for transforming TA professional development in collegiate FL departments.

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Appendix A

Pre-seminar Questionnaire

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Nationality:
4. Brief description of college-level education and any graduate-level education (area of study, academic institution):
5. Do you have previous experience teaching a foreign language or any other subject? Please explain.
6. What foreign languages have you studied in a formal (classroom) context?
7. How were you taught these languages? What approach(es) and techniques were used? What is your opinion of the approach(es) and techniques used?
8. What do you think are the most important elements of foreign language learning for the learner himself or herself?
9. What do you think your priorities will be in teaching a foreign language in the U.S. university context?
10. What do you think your biggest challenges will be as a new foreign language instructor?

Appendix B

Pre-seminar Literacy Questionnaire: Notions of Literacy

Please take a few moments to reflect on the following questions and answer them based on your personal experiences.

1. How would you define literacy?
2. For you, what does it mean to be literate in a second or foreign language?
3. For you, what are the essential elements of second or foreign language instruction to move university-level students toward literacy in the language of study?

Appendix C

Final Interview Protocol

1. What is your current definition of *literacy* as it relates to FL teaching and learning?
2. What are the general elements of carrying out literacy-based FL instruction? Can you describe/define each? What does it mean to orient your teaching toward addressing *available designs* related to the FL (and, for that matter, the L1) rather than focusing only on grammar and vocabulary?
3. What does it mean to teach culture in a literacy-based approach to FL instruction? Can you describe how culture and language interrelate?
4. What role does *genre* play in a literacy-based approach to reading and writing in a FL?
5. What resources/activities/readings contributed most to your understanding of concepts related to literacy-based instruction?
6. How can grammar be taught inductively in a literacy-based approach? In concrete terms, how would you do this?
7. *Scaffolding* is key to the successful implementation of many literacy-based activities. In concrete terms, how would you go about providing scaffolded help for a reading you have chosen for your class?
8. Imagine that you have been asked to demonstrate the literacy-based approach to a group of new TAs who observe you teaching elementary-level (specify language) learners. You are working in the textbook chapter on food and the general objective of the lesson is explaining likes and dislikes related to eating. How might you go about fashioning a literacy-based lesson? What would be the key tools or techniques you might incorporate?
9. Do you perceive that your own reaction or perceptions of literacy-based instruction has changed over the course of the semester?
10. Which literacy-oriented techniques did you incorporate in your teaching this term? Why did you choose these? Were there any techniques that you were too unsure to try? Why?

Appendix D

Reflective Journal Prompts

RJ1 prompt: In your reflective journal, you will write down a description (focusing on the most significant aspects) of an event that took place this week or last in one of the classes you teach. What feeling emerged from the event? What pedagogical action(s) or approach(es) did you take? What influenced your decision on taking this (these) action(s) or approach(es)?

RJ2 prompt: In last week's reading (Hall, 2000), we read that in effective learning communities "the classroom is organized around familiar, regularly occurring and consistently enacted activities that students can easily recognize" (p. 48). For this week's journal entry, please reflect on these questions: What instructional patterns are emerging in your classroom? What types of activities are regularly occurring? What is your role in those activities? How are your students responding to the pedagogy you are carrying out? What are your main challenges in the classroom right now?

RJ3 prompt: The topic of this week's reflective journal entry is a self-evaluation of your participation in the process of lesson study. In your entry, include reflection on the following questions: What did you (individually) learn from this first experience of lesson study in regard to teaching and learning? In what ways did working as a group contribute to what you learned and/or challenge your ways of thinking about teaching and learning? What aspects of engaging in the activity of lesson study do you seek to improve going forward (keeping in mind that you will engage in two more lesson studies this semester)?

RJ4 prompt: You are now approximately half way through your first semester of teaching. In this reflective journal, use a concept map to visually organize and represent the 1) major concepts that are guiding your teaching (asking yourself, "What am I trying to accomplish in terms of my students' learning?") and 2) the techniques that you are using in the classroom to address your teaching objectives. In addition to the concept map itself, please include an explanation of your concept map and reflection on how your objectives as a teacher and the techniques that you are using in the classroom have evolved since the beginning of the semester. You are welcome to mention any challenges or difficulties that you are facing in the classroom.

Appendix D (continued).

RJ5 prompt: The topic of this week's reflective journal entry is a self-evaluation of your participation in the process of lesson study 2.

In your entry, include reflection on the following questions: What did you (individually) learn from this second experience of lesson study in regard to teaching and learning? In what ways did working as a group, this second time around, contribute to what you learned and/or challenge your ways of thinking about teaching and learning? What aspects of engaging in the activity of lesson study were you able to improve this time?

RJ6 prompt: Have you recently developed a literacy-based lesson (other than the one you developed for your lesson study #2) and implemented it in your class?

-- If yes, describe the challenges you faced in selecting materials, in creating activities representing each of the 4 curricular components, in getting students involved.

-- If no, why not? Please explain why you see as the main impediments to implementing a literacy-based approach in your class.

Do you see any potential uses of a literacy-based approach in the undergraduate curriculum, why/why not?

RJ7 prompt: You are now at the end of your first semester of teaching. In this reflective journal, you will use a concept map to visually organize and represent the 1) major concepts that are guiding your teaching (asking yourself, "What am I trying to accomplish in terms of my students' learning?") and 2) the techniques that you are using in the classroom to address your teaching objectives. [Please go back to the concept map you created for Reflective Journal #4, update it or redraw it completely.]

In your journal entry indicate how the concepts guiding your teaching practices have evolved since mid-semester? If so, in what ways? If not, what concepts remain the most important? You are welcome to mention any challenges or difficulties that you are still facing in the classroom at the end of the semester.

Appendix E

My Professional Development Plan

1. **Your own classroom teaching** – What goals do you want to achieve related to *how* (the pedagogy) and *what* (the content) you are teaching? What more do you strive to do or how might this differ in relation to your teaching in Fall 2010?
2. **Your students' learning outcomes** – What goals do you want your students to achieve (e.g., linguistically, culturally, or in terms of reflection on the process of language learning)? How do these learning goals differ if at all from the learning goals you had envisioned in Fall 2010?
3. **Your effectiveness as a teacher** – as measured by formal evaluations of your teaching by your students and your Language Program Director. For student evaluations, quantitatively (state numbers for student evaluations), where do you want to make improvements and in relation to what criteria? For LPD evaluation, what do you want to improve in relation to LPD feedback from Fall 2010?

