Teaching assistants' self-efficacy in teaching literature: Sources, personal assessments, and consequences

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Byrnes (2001) has suggested that the disconnection between language and literature instruction within many foreign language departments has consequences on the professionalization of graduate students. These structural issues lead to questions about graduate students’ development. How do teaching assistants (TAs) perceive their competency as “language” and “literature” instructors? What are the sources and consequences of their self-beliefs? Teacher self-efficacy (TSE), or a teacher’s perception of his or her capabilities to bring about desired objectives in student engagement and learning (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001), was explored to gain insight into TAs’ perceptions of teaching competence. This qualitative study evaluated 10 French literature doctoral students’ TSE beliefs to teach literature and their accompanying sources, personal assessments and analyses, and consequences. Results revealed that although the TAs found the graduate program to be highly effective in its formation of literary scholars and language instructors, they found that the pedagogy of literature “falls in a gap between these two holes” (teaching assistant, study data excerpt).

IN 2007, THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION (MLA) Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages produced a report proposing recommendations for higher education foreign language (FL) study in today’s changed world. Among the varied suggestions included transforming academic programs and the standard configuration of university FL curricula. The report suggested that the standard sequence of higher education FL courses that focuses on language in the early levels of instruction and literature in the advanced levels creates a narrow model of FL education. The committee claimed that a two-tiered structure impedes the development of a unified curriculum in which language and content may be taught coherently at the upper and lower divisions of the university FL sequence.

The committee suggested that diverse beliefs about appropriate practices, goals, and content within FL instruction have developed within FL departments. Scholars have proposed greater articulation of the undergraduate language program and collaboration among all members of the faculty to develop a “seamless relationship” (Donato & Brooks, 2004, p. 196) between language proficiency goals and the acquisition of content, culture, and analytical skills. Despite such recommendations, some suggest that the two-tiered system continues to be present in many FL departments (Zyzik & Polio, 2008).

Byrnes (2001) has indicated that this disconnection, which is problematic for undergraduate FL learning, also has consequences on the professionalization and socialization of graduate students. Within doctorate-granting FL departments, graduate students often perceive literary study and instruction as distinctly different from language pedagogy. As graduate students become future professors, Marshall (2000) suggested that
The configuration within a graduate institution may influence graduate students as they attain positions at other institutions and continue to advocate the model of FL learning practiced at their graduate institution.

The structural issues within many FL departments lead to questions about other aspects of graduate students’ development. How do teaching assistants (TAs) perceive themselves as teachers of “literature”? How do they perceive their competency as “language” and “literature” instructors? What are the sources and consequences of their self-beliefs? Teacher self-efficacy (TSE) or “the extent to which a 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 TAs’ beliefs and their perceived competence in teaching both literature and language. The purpose of the current study was to extend inquiry on TSE to the context of FL literature instruction and to explore the events and influences that contribute to graduate TAs’ socialization and sense of teacher efficacy.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Socialization of Doctoral Students

Graduate student socialization has been described as “the process through which individuals gain the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for successful entry into a professional career” (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2000, p. iii). Through this developmental process, graduate students acquire the values, codes of conduct, and modes of thought needed for membership in a professional group (Levine, 2001). Gardner (2007) suggested that socialization in doctoral education exists within five cultures: the institution, the graduate school, the discipline, the department, and the individual. The department and discipline, however, are claimed to be the locus of control for doctoral student socialization (Golde, 2005), and departmental practices create a distinctive culture that influences graduate student experiences (Golde, 1996). The graduate faculty, moreover, have been described as the “critical agent” of the socialization process (Weidman & Stein, 2003). As the faculty defines the knowledge, disciplinary values, and norms for academic roles, graduate students observe and internalize their norms of behavior (Baird, 1992; Weidman & Stein, 2003). The MLA Ad Hoc Committee on the Professionalization of PhDs (2002) claimed that the professionalization of new graduate students in FL programs is a complex acculturation process that is a collective departmental responsibility. The committee proposed that the value that FL departments place on research, publication, and teaching practices may influence graduate student professionalization and beliefs.

Teachers’ Beliefs and Knowledge

Beliefs may be affected by the socialization experience as well as a variety of other influences. Barcelos and Kalaja (2003) claimed that beliefs are context dependent, dynamic, experiential, and contradictory. Despite beliefs’ ambiguous designation as a “messy construct” (Paarjes, 1992, p. 307), researchers claim that beliefs play a key role in many aspects of teaching with their influence on teaching performance and instructional choices (Barcelos, 2003; Woods, 2003).

Researchers also acknowledge the overlap among FL teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, and cognition (Andrews, 2003; Tsui, 2003). In an attempt to define the necessary teacher knowledge for effective instruction, Shulman (1987) identified a variety of categories of knowledge, including content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge. Content knowledge is teachers’ knowledge of the subject matter, whereas general pedagogical knowledge refers to teachers’ knowledge of distinctive bodies of knowledge for teaching.

Shulman (1987) suggested, however, that pedagogical content knowledge is a key subset of teacher knowledge and a necessary component of teacher education programs. Pedagogical content knowledge represents the intersection of content and pedagogy and teachers’ capacity to reformulate, present, and organize content in ways that are pedagogically appropriate. Shulman (1986) advised against the sharp distinction between content and pedagogy and claimed that “mere content knowledge is likely to be as useless as pedagogically content-free skill” (p. 8). Borg (2001) suggested, furthermore, that within one discipline, different fields of pedagogical expertise may develop. In FL education, Freeman (2002) claimed that “when applied to language as subject matter pedagogical content knowledge becomes a messy and unworkable concept” (p. 6) because of its vast content knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge is therefore contextually situated, and transfer from one domain to the next, even within the same discipline, is not implicit (Shulman & Sparks, 1992).
Content and Literacy

Content-based instruction is a pedagogical approach that was originally conceived as an approach to jointly teach FL students content and language. Despite its original conception, Zyzik and Polio (2008) claimed that content-based courses are generally found to be either content driven or language driven. In lower division FL courses, Stoller (2002) claimed that the focus is often placed on language development, and content may only be used as a means to master language skills. Conversely, recent studies of university FL literature classes found content instruction to be the main goal, with minimal attention paid to linguistic development (Donato & Brooks, 2004; Pica, 2002).

Recent publications have subscribed to the notion that content and language are inseparable (Schleppegrell, Achugar, & Oteiza, 2004; Zyzik & Polio, 2008). Byrnes (2002) suggested that university FL departments should reorient their goals to focus on multiple literacies. Literacy is described as “a broader discourse competence that involves the ability to interpret and critically evaluate a wide variety of written and spoken texts” (Kern, 2000, p. 2). A text may provide both oral and written input as well as appear in multiple genres such as narratives, dialogues, and symbols. Magnan (2004) suggested that the unification of the goals and practices within FL departments may be met through a focus on texts and literacy at all levels of language learning.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

This study aimed at gaining information on French TAs’ beliefs about language, literature, and literacy. Beliefs have been described as an elusive construct with multiple layers and voices (Dufva, 2003), and scholars with various agendas have attempted to explain the relationship among knowledge, beliefs, and actions (Borg, 2001; Woods, 2003). It is understood that the complexity of beliefs makes it difficult to organize their understanding into a coherent schema. TSE and its accompanying model were chosen, however, for the purposes of learning more about TAs’ perceived competence in teaching language and literature.

Grounded within social cognitive theory, TSE subscribes to the notion that humans can regulate their own behavior (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Thus, “what people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave” (Bandura, 1986, p. 25). Those teachers with a stronger sense of efficacy have been found to use more student-centered and innovative approaches to teaching (Graham, Harris, Fink, & MacArthur, 2001; Wertheim & Leyser, 2002) and possess stronger in-class teaching performance than those with lower TSE (Woolfolk-Hoy & Davis, 2006). TSE is also associated with teachers’ enthusiasm, persistence, and effort (Allinder, 1994; Milner, 2002) and with student achievement and motivation in the K–12 context (Martin, 2006).

Prior research evaluating K–12 teachers also reveals differences in TSE and content and pedagogical knowledge among novice teachers and their more experienced peers (Cruz & Arias, 2007). In the university context, findings reveal that the TSE of TAs increases via teacher training and ongoing teaching supervision (Prieto, Yamokoski, & Meyers, 2007). Because self-efficacy beliefs develop early in the teaching career and are resistant to change thereafter (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), Bandura (1997) stressed the importance of developing TSE at the early stages of teaching.

In an attempt to define TSE, Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) developed a model of TSE that includes four sources of self-efficacy in addition to cognitive processing, analysis of teaching task, assessment of personal teaching competence, and the consequences of TSE (see Figure 1).

Sources of Teacher Self-Efficacy

According to Tschannen-Moran et al.’s (1998) TSE model, an individual’s TSE is constructed from the information received from the four primary sources of self-efficacy. These sources include mastery experiences, verbal persuasions, vicarious experiences, and physiological states (Bandura, 1986, 1997).

According to Bandura (1997), the most influential source of efficacy information is mastery experiences. Within TSE, teachers interpret the results of prior teaching performances and develop beliefs about their personal capabilities. Whereas successful teaching experiences strengthen personal efficacy beliefs, failed teaching experiences undermine one’s sense of efficacy.

Teacher self-efficacy beliefs are also partly influenced by vicarious experiences or by appraising one’s own competence in relation to the accomplishments of peer and/or model teachers. By visualizing the successes of other teachers, an instructor can assess the feasibility of a teaching task and foster the belief that he or she might also possess similar capabilities. Conversely, a teacher’s perception of his or her ability to succeed may be
undermined through the observation of another instructor’s failure. Various studies have found that teachers’ beliefs about language learning and teaching are greatly influenced by their observations of FL instructors in their role as language students (Freeman, 1993; Johnson, 1994). Observations of model and antimodel teachers influence second-language (L2) instructors’ beliefs about appropriate classroom strategies (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Supporting this claim, Marshall (1999) stated that “years of anecdotal teacher reports suggest that the literature instruction teachers receive in college—the texts they are taught, the discussions that are held, the writing that is assigned—profoundly affects the instruction they provide when they begin teaching” (p. 396).

Bandura (1997) asserted that verbal persuasions, or judgments of another’s ability to perform a particular task, are an additional source of self-efficacy. Within TSE, such verbal feedback may include feedback from teacher supervisors, colleagues, or students (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Encouragement can contribute to future successful teaching performances, whereas negative feedback can weaken perceptions of teaching competence.

Finally, physiological or emotional indicators while teaching, such as stress or anxiety, can be an additional source of TSE. Positive emotions while teaching may enhance TSE, whereas high levels of anxiety may debilitate performance and negatively influence teachers’ perceived competence.

**Analysis of Teaching Task and Its Context and Assessment of Teaching Competence**

The interpretation and cognitive processing of these four sources of TSE are critical in teachers’ perceived sense of efficacy. In their TSE model, Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) defined analysis of the teaching task and its context as instructors’ assessment of the school context, teacher support systems, and potential teaching constraints. After this analysis, teachers may then make an assessment of personal teaching competence, which contributes to teachers’ predictions of future teaching abilities. The consequences of TSE, such as effort, persistence, and innovation, are then a result of teachers’ personal analyses and assessments and contribute to a greater or lower sense of efficacy.
In a study evaluating the TSE of French TAs and their conceptualizations of themselves as FL teachers, Mills and Allen (2007) found that the 12 TAs possessed a moderately high level of TSE to teach the French language. Most of the participants professed to have received meaningful, positive feedback about their language teaching, found teacher training programs at their university highly influential in their development as language teachers, possessed a variety of contacts in their support network, and felt that teacher observations were helpful in their own conceptualization of effective language teaching. When TAs were asked to evaluate their perceived competence in teaching literature versus language, Mills and Allen discovered that TAs’ perceived competence to teach literature was significantly lower than their self-efficacy to teach language. Even those TAs with high self-efficacy in language teaching felt less competent and were anxious about the prospect of teaching literature.

Informed by Tschannen-Moran et al.’s (1998) model of TSE, this study aims to extend the former study’s findings and explore TAs’ TSE beliefs in literature and their accompanying sources, personal assessments and analyses, and consequences. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What major sources contribute to graduate French TAs’ TSE in teaching literature?
2. How do graduate TAs’ analyses of teaching task (“language” vs. “literature”) and context (department) shape their TSE?
3. What consequences of TSE in teaching literature emerge in terms of effort, persistence, and innovation?

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Context

Because teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs are themselves “complex, meaningful interpretations” (Wheatley, 2005, p. 759), a qualitative methodology was chosen for a more detailed exploration of the TSE of doctoral students in French literature. The department consisted of tenured faculty with varied specializations in literature who taught upper level undergraduate and graduate courses in literature, culture, and cinema. Language and culture courses at the elementary and intermediate level were taught by non-tenure-track faculty members and teaching assistants. The language program director and language coordinators were also non-tenure-track faculty members with specializations in French linguistics, literature, or applied linguistics. Three possessed doctoral degrees and two possessed Master of Arts degrees.

The TAs in the department typically teach courses at the elementary and intermediate level. A task-based learning approach is used at the accelerated elementary French level, and a communicative language teaching methodology was chosen for the Elementary French I and II courses. Texts incorporated within the elementary-level curriculum include poems, articles, songs, dialogues, cartoons, and texts from Internet sites. Employing a global simulation approach, the Intermediate French I course is contextualized around Paris and its art, housing, literature, film, and culture. Sample texts from the curriculum include newspaper articles, songs, short stories, excerpts of novels, and poetry. The Intermediate French II course is content based and centers around the theme of francophone identity. The course explores the culture, film, and literature of Senegal, Martinique, and Morocco, and sample texts include folktales, poetry, and excerpts of novels.

Participants in this study included 10 TAs enrolled in this French doctoral program. In addition to their coursework in French and francophone literature, the TAs were required to teach French courses in their second and third year of the doctoral program. Before teaching, all TAs participated in a 5-day FL teacher orientation and teaching practicum meetings during their first semester of teaching. TAs then enrolled in a required course on FL pedagogy during their second semester of teaching that presented various approaches to FL teaching and current issues in SLA.

Participants included 8 females and 2 males. Of the 10 participants, 1 individual was a native French speaker and 9 individuals were nonnative French speakers. All participants were enrolled in the Ph.D. program in French literature, and specializations among the participants included medieval French literature (2 participants), francophone literature (2 participants), and literature from the 18th (1 participant), 19th (2 participants), and 20th centuries (3 participants). One participant was in his second year of the program, 4 were in their third year, 3 were in their fourth year, and 2 were in their fifth year of the program. The average age of the 10 participants was 28 years, and ages ranged between 25 and 38. Six participants taught French at other institutions before attending the Ph.D. program in French, whereas 4 participants had no experience in teaching before beginning their doctoral
studies. The participants did not have experience teaching a French literature course at the graduate institution; however, 3 participants were TAs for undergraduate literature courses. The future goal of all participants was to obtain a faculty position in academia and teach French literature.

**Data Sources**

The data sources for the present study were an adapted version of Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy’s (2001) Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale, a background questionnaire, and a TSE in teaching literature interview protocol.

**Background Questionnaire.** This questionnaire was designed to collect additional personal information from the TAs. Previously researched predictors of TSE such as age, gender, and teaching experience were included (Ross, Cousins, & Gadalla, 1996). The information form also included questions about specific literature and language teaching experiences, research interests, and future career goals.

**Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale in Literature.** This scale was adapted from Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy’s (2001) Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale and quantitatively evaluates the teachers’ sense of efficacy in teaching literature. The scale evaluates self-perceptions of competence in literature instruction strategies, classroom management, and student engagement in literary texts (see Appendix A). For example, one item asks “How much can you do to help your students think critically about a literary text?” 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 presented Cronbach’s reliability alpha for the non-adapted scale as \( \alpha = .94 \). Numerical responses were averaged for each question to obtain a TSE in teaching literature score for each respondent.

For the purposes of evaluating the scale results, the scores were assigned values using Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy’s Likert-type scale notations as a guide. To assist readers in data interpretation, TSE scores between 8 and 9 were labeled as high, between 6 and 7 as moderately high, between 4 and 5 as moderate, between 2 and 3 as moderately low, and 1 as low. The mean TSE score in teaching literature for all participants was a moderately high score of 6.8. TSE scores ranged from moderate (5.5) to moderately high (7.7). Moderately high subscores found for literature instruction strategies, classroom management, and student engagement in literary texts were 6.9, 6.7, and 6.7, respectively.

**TSE in Teaching Literature Interview.** This interview employed a semistructured interview protocol based on Tschannen-Moran et al.’s (1998) TSE model and Mills and Allen’s (2007) interview protocol. The TAs were interviewed on their sources of efficacy information in teaching literature, their analysis of teaching tasks and contexts, the assessment of their personal teaching competence, and their goals, effort, and persistence as teachers of literature (see Appendix B).

**Data Collection and Analysis**

After completing the questionnaires, each participant participated in a face-to-face interview with the primary investigator, which lasted approximately 45 minutes. All interviews were held in the department’s recording room on the university campus.

During the process of data analysis, the interview tapes were listened to and transcribed verbatim. To ensure accuracy, the transcriptions were proofread while listening and emailed to the TAs for confirmation and clarification of their responses. No participants altered their interviews or clarified their responses outside of grammar revision and correction. Patterns and themes found in the TAs’ interviews were then identified through inductive coding methods. Each interview was reviewed line by line, and the researcher generated categories and labels using inductive coding techniques described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Scores were then computed and information was tabulated from the Teacher Sense of Efficacy in Literature Scale and background questionnaire as sources of triangulation with the interview data.

**Reliability and Validity**

Strategies used to address reliability in this research study included triangulation of data, an effective organization system for collected data, and the establishment of a clear chain of evidence to detail and document the data collection process. Strategies used to address internal validity in this study included multiple sources of data, member checks during the data collection phase, recording devices, and verbatim transcripts. Strategies used to address the external validity or the generalizability of the research findings included the description of the typicality of the participants’ comments and beliefs. Furthermore, the results...
TABLE 1
Sources of Teacher Self-Efficacy in Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you know how to teach literature?</th>
<th>No. of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observations of Literature Professors</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of Model Professors</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of Antimodels</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Language Pedagogy Only</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trial and Error</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience as a Literature Student</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Sense</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Participants offered a variety of responses to the same question.

were presented in a comprehensive and descriptive manner so that readers could determine the applicability of these findings to their context.

**RESULTS**

Recall that TSE in teaching literature was evaluated according to the components of Tschannen-Moran et al.’s (1998) TSE model, including major sources, analyses of teaching task and context, assessments of personal teaching competence, and consequences.

**Question 1: What Major Sources Contribute to Graduate TAs’ Teacher Self-Efficacy in Teaching Literature?**

When the graduate students were asked to identify general influences that they attributed to the development of their TSE in teaching literature, they overwhelmingly responded that they were greatly influenced by observations of their current and former literature professors (see Table 1). Eight of the 10 TAs responded that this was their primary source of information. Three TAs claimed that the observation of perceived models had been particularly helpful, whereas 5 TAs mentioned antimodels and the unsuccessful approaches of literature professors as key to their understanding of literature instruction.

In response to this affirmation, 4 TAs professed that their knowledge of pedagogy was grounded solely in “language” and not in “literature.” When asked about her main source of information about teaching literature, 1 TA with a moderately high TSE score and no experience as a TA for a literature course claimed:

...I would have to say that I don’t feel that I have ever received explicit instruction in it. I think it’s sort of one of the things that could be reformed, across the board, across the United States...We are taught the ins and outs of second language acquisition and teaching beginning language instruction, but teaching literature and theories about how students start to learn how to deal with literature written in another language—that doesn’t get nearly as much time comparatively in pedagogy courses. (teaching assistant, TSE score = 6.7)

The distinction made between language and literature and its pedagogy by this TA and by other TAs became a clear pattern found within the description of their perceived teaching competency. The belief that doctoral students specializing in FL literature did not receive “explicit instruction” in the pedagogy of literature, or the necessary “pedagogical content knowledge” as described by Shulman (1987), was a concern that appeared to impact the TAs’ perceived capabilities as literature instructors.

**Mastery Experiences**

Recall that according to Bandura (1986, 1997), mastery experiences have one of the most direct influences on TSE. If a teacher perceives his or her performance to be successful, efficacy beliefs are raised. When the TAs were questioned about their experiences teaching literature, 5 professed that they had not taught literature and had only taught “language” or made later clarification about their minimal literature teaching experience by making claims such as “very little...only in language classes” (see Table 2). A further clarification question asked the TAs to describe their experiences teaching literature at the elementary and intermediate French levels. Although all TAs recognized that they had experience teaching texts at these levels, they specified that the instruction of literature was distinctly different. Two TAs claimed that teaching texts at the elementary level is challenging because it is “too difficult” for students and requires a certain level of language competency. At the intermediate level, TAs claimed that
TABLE 2
Mastery Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you had successful experiences teaching literature?</th>
<th>No. of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have Taught Texts in Language Classes But Not &quot;Literature&quot;</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach Texts at the Intermediate Level</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Only on Comprehension</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Focus on Analysis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Opportunity to Teach Literature</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Teaching Literature at High School Level or as a Teaching Assistant</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach Texts at the Elementary Level</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Participants offered a variety of responses to the same question.

their literature instruction focused on comprehension (5 TAs) and did not include analysis (3 TAs). In describing this approach to literature instruction at the intermediate level, 1 TA with a moderately high TSE score and experience as a TA for a literature course stated the following: “Basically, it’s [the intermediate level] so I’m not going to ask them to discuss the aesthetics of the text. It’s just about looking at whatever they can remember” (teaching assistant, TSE score = 7.5). With comprehension perceived as key at the intermediate level, 3 other TAs claimed that literature was only included as a support for themes or grammatical structures. The TAs’ differentiation between the pedagogy of “text” in the lower division courses and “literature” in the upper division courses seems to suggest that they do not perceive the connection that text interpretation has to both communicative competence and literacy. They may not be viewing the diverse range of written and spoken texts at the lower division as a mode for FL learners to interpret, evaluate, and analyze, as suggested by Magnan (2004). The TAs appeared to dichotomize literacy—placing an emphasis on comprehension of texts in the lower division courses and critical interpretation of literature in the upper division.

Describing the emphasis on comprehension in lower division courses, 1 TA with a moderately high TSE score and experience as a TA for a literature course claimed:

You know I feel like for a language class I would use a work of literature as like a support for some kind of grammatical activity. I wouldn’t try to have my students...I don’t know...I just wouldn’t teach the literary work as literature and have them do the same type of work with it. They just don’t have the vocabulary tools at their disposal to analyze it as literature. (teaching assistant, TSE score = 7.7, speaker’s emphasis)

In this TA’s estimation, the text cannot be categorized as “literature” because she perceives analysis and critical evaluation as unattainable at this level of language instruction. For this reason, the text fails to develop into what she recognizes as literature, and a clear distinction and prioritization is made between lower and upper level texts.

Another TA with a moderately high TSE score and no experience teaching a literature course made a similar differentiation with her profession that the literature of the lower division courses “wasn’t literature with a capital L.” When asked to define “literature with a capital L,” she stated:

Anything from the literary canon that we have to go through for our exams. The recommended academic canon as opposed to, I mean I’ve used cartoons and that kind of stuff but which I guess, has words in there, it’s literary in that sense but not...I think that it’s a little harder when you pull things in from day-to-day life like newspapers—yes, that has its own format—the journalistic style—but if we are hoping that the students continue on, they need to be exposed to literature with a capital L because that’s what’s going to hit them as soon as they transfer into literature classes. And the style, I think, is different. (teaching assistant, TSE score = 6.7)

In this response, the TA suggests that the recommended academic canon possesses literary attributes, whereas alternative genres such as cartoons and journalistic articles do not. A similar dichotomization of “literature with a capital L” (literary canon, etc.) and literature with a lowercase l (newspaper articles, cartoons, etc.) is highlighted in her discourse when she emphasizes the contrast between the practices and priorities of the beginning and advanced language courses. This TA suggests that the prioritized “literature with a capital L” is going to “hit” students when they enroll in advanced language courses and that this transfer may be dramatic for students because of the levels’ differing objectives and practices.

This same TA made reference to the differing priorities in lower and upper division courses in the department. She commented on an “artificial
division” between the practices in lower and upper division courses when asked about her experience teaching literature. She stated:

None of us has ever had access to teaching a designated literature course because it seems that in the department, it is very separated between the language class and the literature class. Even though, language is part of literature and you’re still learning, the kids are still learning language when they hit the so-called literature class . . . it’s in some ways an artificial division, I find. So, I’ve never taught a so-called “literature” class. (Teaching assistant, TSE score = 6.7)

Despite this TA’s prioritization of advanced-level texts, she seems to concur with the notion that advanced-level language learners have continued language development needs, as highlighted in the MLA report (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, 2007). In recognizing that even the terminology “literature” and “language” may be inappropriate, this TA perceived an artificial division that creates challenges for instructors, graduate students, and language students.

Verbal Persuasions

Because verbal feedback can be a great source of information about TSE (Bandura, 1986, 1997), the participants were asked if they had received feedback from others in reference to their teaching of literature (see Table 3). Five participants who did not have previous experience teaching advanced-level courses responded that they had received no feedback (5 TAs). Three TAs claimed that they received “very little” feedback related to their competence in teaching literature. Two of the 3 TAs citing “very little” feedback had previous experience teaching literature. One participant who had experience as a TA in a literature course (moderately high TSE score = 7.4) cited vague references, such as “the professor thought I did a really good job” or “the students said that I was an A+ TA and they loved me.” She was unable to cite specific feedback references to her performance.

The participant who had experience teaching literature to advanced-level high school students claimed that she received feedback with a pedagogical focus. She stated:

They just focused on, you know, as a teacher . . . how you’re engaging and interacting with the students. And I mean, for example, my person who was evaluating me doesn’t speak French, so he didn’t really have any idea of what was going on. It was just kind of, you know, looking at that. (Teaching assistant, moderate TSE score = 5.8)

This teaching feedback only included information about student interaction and engagement and focused on developing this instructor’s pedagogical knowledge as described by Shulman (1987). Although useful, this feedback may have been characterized as insufficient by this TA because it lacked the pedagogical content knowledge component.

Two participants who had experience shadowing a literature professor as a TA in an undergraduate literature course, however, were capable of providing specific examples of constructive criticism (moderately high TSE scores of 7.5 and 7.7, respectively). One participant with such experience and a moderately high TSE score claimed:

The professor was always there whenever I taught and then he would tell me, “There you went kind of fast.” “When you get to this type of question, you need to slow down.” “Don’t ask the question this way because they are undergraduates. They freak out because it taps into theory directly.” “Ask these kinds of questions.” “If you jump to it directly they will freak out because they . . .” What he was telling me was like in mathematics, when you ask the question and then you put the answer, they never know how you got there. So, help them and show them every step. (Teaching assistant, TSE score = 7.7)

This TA recalled specific details of the feedback received from this perceived expert, which provided him with the tools to transform his content knowledge into pedagogically effective methods (Shulman, 1986). In turn, this feedback may have influenced his moderately high sense of efficacy in teaching literature.

Vicarious Experiences

Whereas many TAs mentioned that they had received minimal to no verbal feedback related to their capacity as literature instructors, the participants in this study unanimously responded that they were influenced by observations of their former or current literature professors (see Table 4). This result supports previous research that teachers’ beliefs about language learning are strongly influenced by their observations of both model and antimodel FL instructors in their role as language students (Marshall, 1999).

Four TAs were keen observers of the pedagogical techniques employed by their literature professors and were able to provide clear examples of strategies. One TA with a moderately high TSE score and no experience as a TA for a literature course cited specific instructional strategies of a model literature professor. She stated:
TABLE 3
Verbal Persuasions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you received feedback from others about your teaching of literature?</th>
<th>5 Participants</th>
<th>5 Comments</th>
<th>3 Participants</th>
<th>1 Comment</th>
<th>1 Comment</th>
<th>2 Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only for Teaching “Language”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Little</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise From Teacher that He/She TA’d for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise From Students (as TA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback When Giving Presentations as Graduate Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Participants offered a variety of responses to the same question. TA = teaching assistant.

For example, every week, she would ask us to do something slightly different. We would send her discussion questions by email. Sometimes we would have a discussion board so we were supposed to ask a question and then answer somebody’s question so it was kind of interaction there. Sometimes we would have to write a paragraph or two about something that really interested us or struck us about literature. She also did mini presentations. We would have 5-minute presentations on something really specific but that pertained to our text. That was a way of kind of sparking discussion and I thought that really worked. She has a lot of experience teaching and I just enjoyed watching her work and she just brought a lot of excitement to the class. (teaching assistant, TSE score = 6.6)

Through classroom observation, this participant assimilated, valued, and strived to emulate this model literature professor’s varied use of instructional strategies. Although enrolled in the course to develop her content knowledge in literature, this TA was able to use the power of observation to merge pedagogy and content and independently develop her pedagogical content knowledge.

Other TAs, however, did not appear to have the capacity to bridge content and pedagogy through their observations of literature professors. When asked to describe the teaching techniques or strategies gained from observations, 6 TAs had difficulty articulating the types of approaches used by their model literature professors. The participants made vague references to the observation of instructor errors (3 TAs), management of student participation (5 TAs), class structure (7 TAs), and instructor feedback (2 TAs). Specific techniques were not provided. In response to the question of what was learned from observation, 1 TA with a moderately high TSE score and experience as a TA in a French literature course focused largely on the professor’s transmission of content as opposed to specific pedagogical techniques. He stated:

PARTICIPANT: The first thing they did was to break this barrier that literature was abstraction. And I’m doing francophone fiction, postcolonial theory, which is marginalized, at least in French studies. One of the first things is to try to get students to understand this.

INTERVIEWER: How did they do that?

PARTICIPANT: What they did was very simple. They got us involved to a point.

INTERVIEWER: How?

PARTICIPANT: How did they do it? [laughs] I mean, um…they would teach it for example by …one of the professors, one of the techniques that he used was to start the class by stressing the influence of French and francophone fiction. By showing how…if not for French people there would not be what we call francophone fiction. And giving some networks of the influence of some French writers and, you know, francophone writers. That was one of the points. (teaching assistant, TSE score = 7.7)

This TA had a clear understanding of the necessary content needed to transmit knowledge about francophone fiction; however, he was unable to articulate the instructor’s specific strategies or techniques used to do so. He stated that it was important to “get students to understand” and that the instructor “got [them] involved to a point” and “stressed” particular content knowledge. His description of how the students became “involved” and how knowledge was “stressed,” however, is unclear. When the researcher continued to press for a description of the model professor’s effective pedagogical techniques and strategies, it became clear that he was unable to articulate beyond effective content transmission. Vicarious observations allowed this TA to effectively assimilate an understanding of appropriate course content, but the model professor’s pedagogical approaches did not appear to be absorbed.
Physiological and Emotional Cues

Physiological cues are an additional source contributing to TSE. When asked about their emotional responses to teaching literature, 7 TAs responded that because of minimal experience, they would be unsure of their feelings while teaching literature (see Table 5). One TA with a moderate TSE score and experience teaching literature in the high school context claimed:

It’s hard to say just because I’ve had a lot more experience with the language side, so I have a lot more data points, you know, in my memory. In terms of how I feel about teaching literature versus language, I think that I would feel a lot less secure… but, you know, in reality, I think all of the graduate students just kind of feel like, “How are we...?” You know, we’ll do it because you always overcome your difficulties … (teaching assistant, TSE score = 5.8)

Expressing her uncertainty, this TA’s pedagogical experience on the “language side” is perceived as uniquely different from what will be expected on the “literature side.” She expresses apprehension in her claims that she would “feel a lot less secure” and questions “How are we...?” She continues, however, by expressing confidence that collectively the TAs will be able to confront their perceived obstacles in teaching literature because “you always overcome your difficulties.” In changing the subject from “we” to “you,” however, it appears that the triumph over these difficulties is perceived as an independent conquest conquered only after graduate school.

Despite such feelings of uncertainty, however, 7 TAs projected feelings of energy and excitement in the advanced-level literature classroom. One TA with a moderately high TSE score and no experience as a TA for a literature course anticipated excitement because of her experience with literary texts as an intermediate-level instructor. She stated:

You know, I think I would feel great, just because when I try to incorporate literature sections, or, you know, segments into my language classes, I would always get so excited… you know, I get this feeling that this is what I really want to do. (teaching assistant, TSE score = 7.4)

These feelings of excitement while teaching literature at the intermediate level led to confirmation of her professional goals.

Five other TAs anticipated excitement in the teaching of literature because of their passion to transmit their content knowledge to their students. One TA with a moderately high TSE score and no experience teaching a literature course claimed “I think I will feel really excited and passionate about it. I know that I’ve been so excited and motivated by my professors; being able to reciprocate and pass that on is really an exciting feeling for me” (teaching assistant, TSE score = 6.6). Enthusiasm for the content and a true desire to inspire students motivated this TA and led her to anticipate feelings of excitement in the literature classroom. Two other TAs also mentioned a sense of security in having gained a solid content knowledge base from their coursework, which allowed them to predict future feelings of confidence in the advanced-level classroom.

Question 2: How Do Graduate TAs’ Analyses of Teaching Task and Context and Assessments of Personal Teaching Competence (“Language” vs. “Literature”) Shape Their TSE?

Analyses of Teaching Task and Perceived Competence. Teaching assistants’ responses to questions evaluating their assessments of personal teaching competence in “language” and “literature” revealed that the participants did not feel equally
TABLE 5
Physiological and Emotional Cues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you feel while you’re teaching literature?</th>
<th>No. of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project That in the Future It Will Feel Great</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on Literature Content</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal Experience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety for Future Position/Job</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety for the Job Market</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy/Energized</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Confident</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware of Strategies for Teaching Literature</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal Experience Teaching Literature</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Participants offered a variety of responses to the same question.

TABLE 6
Analysis of Teaching Task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you feel about teaching literature?</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expresses Less Confidence in Ability to Teach Literature than Language</td>
<td>6 Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Knowledge of Explicit Models/Methods</td>
<td>3 Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Experience</td>
<td>4 Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Feedback</td>
<td>1 Comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based Only on Observation of Other Literature Instructors</td>
<td>1 Comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Direct Line Between Language and Literature Teaching</td>
<td>1 Comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects Future Competence to Teach Literature</td>
<td>4 Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion for Literature</td>
<td>3 Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Language Pedagogy May Transfer to Literature Instruction</td>
<td>2 Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will Gain Confidence With Practice/Experience</td>
<td>1 Comment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Participants offered a variety of responses to the same question.

efficacious in both tasks (see Table 6). Six TAs stated that they felt less confident teaching literature than language. Four TAs claimed that their limited experiences teaching literature did not permit them to appropriately answer the question, and 3 TAs claimed uncertainty because of unfamiliarity with explicit methods of literature instruction. These results confirm Borg’s (2001) notions that different fields of pedagogical expertise may develop even within one discipline and that pedagogical content knowledge may not transfer from one domain to the next. One TA with a moderately high TSE score stated “I feel that I gain an important skill set that I can then apply to the teaching of literature but it’s… there’s just… it’s not a direct line from teaching language to teaching literature” (teaching assistant, TSE score = 7.7). Although this participant claims that she has gained important knowledge about language pedagogy in graduate school, her comments seem to support the MLA report’s (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, 2007) concerns about the missing “direct line” in the practices and goals of the lower and upper division courses.

In expressing uncertainty about their capabilities as literature instructors, however, 4 TAs did project future competence teaching literature as a result of their passion for literature (3 TAs), the applicability of language pedagogy skills to literature instruction (2 TAs), and the understanding that future literature teaching experience will lead to increased competence (1 TA).

Analyses of Teaching Context and Perceived Competence. To make an efficacy judgment, contextual factors, such as school climate and departmental support, must also be taken into consideration. Participants in this study were asked how well supported they felt by the university and the department in their development as a future
literature professor. Seven TAs expressed uncertainty about their perceived support in their development as a professor of literature, and 3 TAs believed that they were not well supported. The reasons provided for their uncertainty included their lack of experience teaching literature (6 TAs), the emphasis on language pedagogy (7 TAs), and their knowledge of literature instruction, which stemmed only from observation (4 TAs).

In describing this needed support, 1 TA with a moderately high TSE score and no experience as a TA for a literature course claimed:

In terms of faculty, I think it is more encouragement in preparation for being a scholar, and not so much in terms of teaching … so I think that anything that I can get from them is something that I actively seek out … but I don’t really feel like I’m getting specific … I guess that teaching literature falls in a gap between these two holes, and I’m not specifically getting support in that area. (teaching assistant, TSE score = 7.4)

This TA contrasts the support and encouragement she receives from graduate faculty in literary scholarship with the missing, yet desired, pedagogical support in literature instruction. The described gap may be the result of a perceived disciplinary culture in which faculty members possess roles as either literary scholars or language teachers—but not both. Another TA with a moderately high TSE score and no experience teaching a literature course described a similar perceived gap in her claim: “I think that they really prepare us well to be excellent language instructors, but I wish that they would work more on making sure that we are the most effective literature professors that we can be” (teaching assistant, TSE score = 6.6). Yet another TA with a moderate TSE score and experience teaching literature in the high school setting claimed that this missing support system in literature pedagogy was not only characteristic of the current graduate program but instead a professionwide issue within all graduate programs. She stated:

with my colleagues in French, that’s something that we definitely discuss a lot. That, you know … we know how to teach language, but what’s going to happen when we get out there? And, of course, nothing crazy will happen because all programs are structured this way … we’ve never been educated in how to teach literature. But yet we’re going to be teaching literature. (teaching assistant, TSE score = 5.8)

This participant finds solace in the belief that “all programs are structured this way”; however, concerns about the future still remain. Another TA with no experience as a TA for a literature course described his similar concerns by describing his lack of experience teaching literature as “becoming a surgeon without ever having done a residency” (teaching assistant, moderate TSE score = 5.5).

In expressing such uncertainty, however, the participants did claim that the program was highly effective in its development of literary scholars (4 TAs), language instructors (8 TAs) and that support in literature pedagogy could be attained with a proactive approach (4 TAs). Furthermore, the participants provided suggestions to address such constraints within their support system, including experience teaching literature, adjustment of graduate course structure, increased observations and feedback, inclusion of more literature within lower division courses, and increased TA opportunities in upper division courses (see Table 7).

Question 3: What Consequences of TSE in Teaching Literature Emerge in Terms of Effort, Persistence, and Innovation?

Consequences of TSE, according to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), are teachers’ persistence, effort, and innovation. To evaluate effort, the TAs were questioned about their effort put forth in the preparation of language and literature lessons. Seven TAs responded that planning an advanced-level literature lesson would take more time than a beginning- or intermediate-level language lesson. These TAs recognized the contextual nature of language teaching and the differences in teaching tasks at different levels of instruction. Increased lesson preparation time, however, has also been found in less experienced teachers (Mills & Allen, 2007). More experienced teachers often recognize that the effort put into lesson preparation may not always lead to improved teaching performance, whereas less experienced teachers believe that there is a direct correlation between effort and the success of a lesson (Mills & Allen, 2007).

In this study, 3 TAs believed that there was a direct link between lesson preparation time and the effectiveness of an advanced literature lesson. Seven TAs, however, believed that increased effort did not always result in better teaching performance and discussed issues such as student participation and discussion directions as key to a lesson’s success.

When asked about their persistence and instructional approaches following detection of student confusion while teaching a literary text, the TAs suggested a variety of techniques to help clarify and clear up confusion. Such techniques
TABLE 7
Analysis of Teaching Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How can we address support issues within French literature doctoral programs?</th>
<th>No. of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide Graduate Students With Experience Teaching Literature Courses</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Experience as a TA for an Undergraduate Literature Course</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer Coordinator Observation During Literature Lesson at Elementary/Intermediate Level</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include More Literature at the Elementary/Intermediate Level</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Course in the Teaching of Literature</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Presentations in Graduate Coursework</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Literature Faculty Involvement in TAs’ Development as a Literature Instructor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Feedback From Literature Faculty on Literature Syllabus Development</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Opportunity to Teach a Lesson in a Graduate Course Within an Area of Specialization</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Half of the Pedagogy Course on the Teaching of Literature</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Participants offered a variety of responses to the same question. TA = teaching assistant.

included finding the source of the misunderstanding (8 TAs), conducting a one-on-one discussion with the student during office hours (9 TAs), demystifying the analysis of literature (3 TAs), and recapitulating ideas or analyses (4 TAs).

Participants in this study were also asked about their incorporation of innovative methods in teaching literature. Nine TAs responded that they would “definitely” implement experimental strategies in their literature instruction. Interestingly, however, 9 of the 10 TAs were not familiar with such experimental strategies. One TA with a moderately high TSE score and experience as a TA for a literature course stated:

I would. I would love to do that, to be more creative in teaching literature. I haven’t right now. I don’t have any answers about what exactly those types would be because I haven’t taught a literature class … so I can’t talk about it. (teaching assistant, TSE score = 6.2)

Despite their desire to incorporate experimental methods, the TAs were unable to provide examples of such innovative approaches. One TA humorously claimed that “one could perhaps define my entire teaching [of literature] as experimental!” (teaching assistant, TSE score = 6.7). Some claimed that to know more about such approaches, they would need to have pedagogical discussions with literature faculty, receive further training in language pedagogy, or read further materials on the pedagogy of literature.

Limitations

Before drawing conclusions, it is important to stress that any implications should be interpreted in light of the following limitations. Dufva (2003) claimed that it may be challenging to uncover the complex, elusive, and multifaceted nature of beliefs and viewpoints. Furthermore, in the interview process, the interviewer plays the role of a participant; therefore, some claim that it is impossible to attain participants’ pure and untainted beliefs. The assurance of confidentiality and anonymity in reporting the results, however, minimizes these issues. It should also be noted that this qualitative study used Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy’s (2001) TSE model as a framework for the development of the interview structure. The qualitative analysis, therefore, was an a priori analysis and should not be considered inductive. Moreover, this study only assessed TAs’ TSE and their accompanying sources, personal assessments, and outcomes. Further research should evaluate the relationship of TSE to TAs’ teaching performance and student learning. Despite such limitations, the present study aims to provide valuable information about the sources, personal assessments, and consequences of TAs’ beliefs about language, literature, and literacy.

DISCUSSION

The results of this investigation indicate that as a group, the TAs possessed a moderately high level of TSE in literature ($M = 6.8$). According to Tschannen-Moran et al.’s (1998) TSE model and accompanying interview, however, the TAs did not appear to feel efficacious as literature instructors. The interviews revealed that three of the four sources of TSE, including mastery experiences, verbal persuasions, and emotional indicators, were not fostered. The TAs claimed that they had extensive vicarious experience observing their own French literature professors; however, they believed themselves to have had limited to no experience teaching French literature and to have received limited to no feedback about their ability to teach literature, and although they anticipated future excitement, the TAs believed themselves to
have had little to no frame of reference to describe their emotional experience while teaching literature. Furthermore, in their analysis of the teaching task, the majority of the TAs claimed to feel more confident teaching lower division courses than advanced-level literature courses. The TAs also expressed uncertainty about their support by the university and the department in their development as teachers of literature.

The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale, however, revealed contrary results with the TAs’ average report of moderately high TSE scores. Reasons for such a disparity could support Rath’s’s (1999) claims that subject matter knowledge plays a key role in effective teaching or, in this case, perceptions of teaching efficacy. Many TAs expressed great satisfaction in the structure and content of their graduate coursework and found the graduate program to be highly effective in its formation of literary scholars. The TAs additionally believed that they had received highly effective pedagogical training. The TAs’ perceived mastery, passion, and knowledge of the content, accompanied by their acquired pedagogical knowledge, may have led to their high scores in literature TSE. The perceived missing pedagogical content knowledge component, however, appears to have played a key role in the TAs’ narratives revealing a professed lower sense of efficacy to teach literature.

Although departments often make the assumption that training and experience teaching lower division courses serve as preparation for teaching advanced-level literature courses, this study revealed that few TAs believed that pedagogical skills acquired through teaching elementary and intermediate FL courses could easily transfer to literature course instruction. This supports the notion that teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge may not be easily transferred, even in domains within the same discipline (Shulman, 1987). These results also indicate that although the TAs may possess valuable pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge, they typically do not possess (or believe they do not possess) the tools to independently intersect their content knowledge of literature with their knowledge and practice of SLA.

Furthermore, in describing their limited mastery experiences, the TAs typically made a clear differentiation between language and literature instruction. The treatment of texts taught at the lower levels was often viewed as distinctly different from the instruction of literature at the upper levels. The TAs did not appear to see a direct line in the content and instructional practices of the lower and upper division courses and, as a result, they did not believe that they had gained sufficient mastery experiences in literature instruction. Despite their professed excitement to teach literature, the perceived differences in these levels appeared to develop anxiety among graduate students when faced with the prospect of teaching advanced literature courses. Furthermore, in their expressed need to learn innovative methods in teaching literature, it becomes clear that departments cannot assume that TAs are able to independently recognize the “seamless relationship” between applied linguistics and literary study without direct instruction or pedagogical discussion. As evidenced in their responses, the majority of the TAs were unable to bridge, apply, and articulate the pedagogical approaches learned from their methodology course and lower division language teaching experience to the teaching of advanced-level courses.

For such reasons, coordinators and faculty may need to place more focused attention on the intersection of literary scholarship and the pedagogy of literature when training and socializing graduate students. Encouraging the discussion of literacy and the identification of the similarities among upper and lower division instructional objectives may help bridge the perceived “gap between these two holes.” As research suggests that TSE beliefs develop early in the teaching career and are resistant to change thereafter (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998), bridging this gap may be necessary at the outset of the graduate student experience.

Furthermore, because research suggests that TAs’ TSE increases with ongoing teaching supervision (Prieto et al., 2007), departments may wish to provide further supervision beyond the standard required 2 years. Organized shadowing and observation of capable French literature professors with follow-up discussions of approaches to literature instruction could be exploited. Such pedagogical discussions could help ease TAs’ uneasiness about the mystique of literature instruction, and they could begin to see their graduate professors’ roles as both literary scholars and professors. Furthermore, coordinators could guide TAs in their development of lower division pedagogical materials that incorporate textual interpretation and critical evaluation and conduct follow-up observations that provide feedback and “verbal persuasions” about the efficacy of the lesson implementation.

When asked how TAs could feel better supported in their development as literature professors, many suggested the opportunity to teach or TA an advanced-level French literature course.
The findings suggest, however, that the quality of this TA experience would be an essential force in the development of TAs’ TSE. Although the experienced TAs claimed to receive more feedback (“very little”) than their nonexperienced peers (“no feedback”), the feedback’s content, quality, and focus played a key role in their perceptions of efficacy. Furthermore, experience level did not suggest differences in the identification of effective instructional approaches, their anxiety, or their perception of departmental support. The experienced TAs (mean moderately high TSE score = 7.0) expressed the same marked differences perceived TAs (mean moderately high TSE score = 6.7). With such observed results, it becomes clear that simply providing TAs with experience teaching literature at the advanced level may not develop a legion of instructors who believe that they can effectively engage in FL literacy instruction. Moreover, because of the complex nature of beliefs (Kalaja, 2003), experience teaching an advanced literature course may not change TAs’ beliefs about appropriate goals and practices at differing levels of language instruction.

For such reasons, overcoming these challenges in TA training and socialization may be a difficult feat. As Byrnes (2001) suggested, a rearticulation of language programs may be a first step in the right direction. The TAs may perceive great differences among upper and lower division FL courses because these differences may indeed exist. Departments may wish to collectively and critically evaluate the curriculum to ascertain whether courses at all levels are advocating the instruction of both content and language (Zyzik & Polio, 2008). This rearticulated instructional sequence may be necessary, not only for our FL students but for the effective formation of our TAs.

Courses or workshops offered about developing literacy, as suggested by Byrnes and Kord (2001), may also assist in bridging this gap. Panel discussions could be organized with language acquisition specialists, literature specialists, and graduate students in attendance. In such forums, graduate students may move away from discussions of literature that focus solely on textual analysis and instead toward the pedagogy of literature and teaching philosophies that foster literacy among language learners at all levels.

In conclusion, eliciting feedback from our graduate students is an essential and valuable force in enhancing their perceived teaching efficacy. Although TAs play a key role in FL instruction at the undergraduate level, their voices are not often heard. They work closely with language acquisition specialists to receive their pedagogical training and with literature specialists to receive their scholarly training, and as a result they may be in the position to become clear products of the divide between language and literature. TAs’ perceived competence and beliefs about “language” and “literature” instruction are key evidence that changes may need to be made in their formation as graduate students.

As suggested in the MLA report (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, 2007), the curricular unification of language, culture, and literature at all levels should be encouraged. Solace is found in several TAs’ acknowledgment of the need for disciplinary change. Following the interviews, one of the participants organized a variety of graduate student workshops in her role as a teaching fellow at the university’s Center for Teaching and Learning. Sample workshop titles included “Teaching Our Students to Be Critics: From Comprehension to Analysis,” “Making the Transition From Fl. Instructor to FL Professor,” and “The Future of FL Teaching: MLA Panel Report.” Fruitful topics of discussion included literacy at the elementary level of FL instruction, the artificial division between “language” and “literature” courses, sustained collaboration among all faculty, and the establishment of clearly articulated language programs. The recognition of the need for change was evident in many of the TAs’ commentaries and suggestions. The initiative, interest, and strong TA attendance at these departmental workshops seem to suggest that the new generation of FL faculty is eager to take on the challenges ahead.

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APPENDIX A

Teachers’ Beliefs Questionnaire: Literature

Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us understand more about teachers’ beliefs about teaching literature. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below by circling the number that best describes how much you believe you can do when teaching literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW MUCH CAN YOU DO?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Very Little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Some Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Quite a Bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A Great Deal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. In teaching literature, how much can you do to get through to the students who have a great amount of difficulty in understanding literary texts?
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically about a literary text?
3. How much can you do to lead an effective and fruitful discussion about a literary text?
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in engaging in the text(s)?
5. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in a literature class?
6. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students when discussing a literary text?
7. How much can you do to help your students value learning about literature?
8. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?
9. To what extent can you craft good questions about a text for your students?
10. How much can you do to foster students’ creativity and analytical skills when teaching literature?
11. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who cannot understand the nuances of a text?
12. How much can you do to control a student who is dominating a literary discussion?
13. How well can you coordinate small group discussions of a literary text?
14. How much can you do to adjust your literature lessons to the proper level for individual students?
15. How well can you assess the understanding of your students when teaching literature?
16. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused about a text?
17. How well can you implement alternative or innovative strategies in teaching literature?
18. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students when teaching literature?
APPENDIX B
Teacher Self-Efficacy (TSE) in Literature Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>What are your future goals after completing your doctorate in French literature?</td>
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<td>What have been your major sources of information about teaching literature? [Sources of Efficacy Information]</td>
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<td>Have you had experiences teaching literature, or teaching reading texts in your language classes? Could you describe these experiences? [Mastery Experiences]</td>
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<td>Have you received feedback from others about your teaching of literature or reading? What types of feedback have you received from others about your teaching? What obstacles do you foresee in teaching literature? Who, if anyone, has provided you encouragement/and or strategies for overcoming obstacles in teaching literature? [Verbal Persuasion]</td>
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<td>How are you influenced by others, or how would you imagine yourself influenced by others, in your teaching of literature (i.e., observing others teach, media/society images, mentors of successful teachers, comparisons to others) [Vicarious Experience]</td>
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<td>How do you feel while you are teaching a literary text or a reading text? [Physiological and Emotional Cues]</td>
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<td>How do you feel about teaching language as opposed to literature? [Analysis of Teaching Task/Assessment of Personal Teaching Competence]</td>
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<td>How supported do you feel by the department and by the institution in your development as a future literature professor? (Are there any constraints that you feel in your development as a teacher of literature? If so, how could this be addressed in your opinion?) [Analysis of Teaching Context]</td>
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<td>What are some strategies you use or you would use to engage students in a literary text? Are you or would you be successful in engaging them in their understanding of a literary text? [Consequences of Teacher Self-Efficacy]</td>
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<td>What do you do or what would you do when you sense that there is confusion on the part of a student or students while you are teaching literature? How do you or would you react? How well do you feel you would be able to clear up confusion? [Consequences of Teacher Self-Efficacy]</td>
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<td>Would you attempt to use experimental or different methods in your teaching of literature? What types of methods would you use to teach literature? How well do you feel you use or would use these methods/tools? [Consequences of TSE]</td>
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<td>What do you do or what would you do when you have a student who is failing or having a very difficult time in your literature class? [Consequences of TSE]</td>
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<td>How much time do you or would you spend preparing your lesson when teaching a literary text in an elementary or intermediate language class? When teaching a literary text in an upper level literature class? Do you feel like there is a relation between the effort you make in preparation and the effectiveness of the lesson? [Consequences of Teacher Self-Efficacy]</td>
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