Rethinking Graduate Student Teacher Training in Light the MLA Report

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Rethinking Graduate Student Teacher Training in Light of the MLA Report

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Outline

- MLA report and graduate student teacher (GTA) training
- Rethinking GTA training
- Example: methods course on text-based instruction
- Implications and conclusions

- Calls for “replacing the two-tiered language-literature structure with a broader and more coherent curriculum…”:
  - Implementation of integrated, articulated curricula
  - Development of translingual and transcultural competence
  - Curricula grounded in TL narratives
  - Collaboration among all department members
“…graduate studies should provide substantive training in language teaching and in the use of new technologies in addition to cultivating extensive disciplinary knowledge and strong analytic and writing skills.”

“Enhance and reward graduate student training in languages and in language teaching. Teach graduate students to use technology in language instruction and learning.”
GTA Training: Questions

- What is the connection between the reform of the two-tiered system and GTA training?

- What types of teacher-training courses prepare GTAs to function effectively in the reformed system?
GTA Training: The Problem

- Departmental bifurcation as an obstacle to GTA training & development:
  - Focus on language instruction; lack of training in teaching content
  - Incompatibility between CLT and advanced-level instruction
  - Inability to respond to literary/cultural questions while teaching
  - Underdeveloped knowledge in TL narratives, cultural studies, language pedagogy, and language proficiency

(Allen, in press; Arens, 1993; Bernhardt, 2001; Geisler, 2008; Maxim, 2005; Wurst, 2008)
Rethinking GTA Training

- Program articulation
  - Increased dialogue between faculty in SLA/applied linguistics and faculty in literature/cultural studies
  - Apprenticeship / mentoring / team teaching
  - Course design
  - Informal discussions about teaching

(Allen & Negueruela, in press; Brandl, 2000; Byrnes, 2001; Guthrie, 2001; Maxim, 2005; Melin, 2009; VanValkenburg & Arnett, 2000)
Rethinking GTA Training

- Authenticity
  - Continued development as L2 users
  - Deep subject matter knowledge
  - GTA engagement in curricular goals and decisions
  - Integration of technology

(Byrnes, Crane & Sprang, 2002; Huffman, 1998; Lord & Lomicka, 2004; Maxim, 2005; Wurst, 2008)
Rethinking GTA Training

- Long-term pedagogical development
  - More than one methods course
  - Understanding of SLA as process
  - Statement of teaching philosophy
  - Reflective teaching
  - Overall professionalization

(Allen & Negueruela, in press; Maxim, 2005)
Rethinking GTA Training

- Culture of teacher-scholarship
  - Increased dialogue among all department members
  - Action research
  - Reflective teaching
  - Linking instruction with the discipline as a whole

(Maxim, 2005; Rankin & Becker, 2006)
Rethinking GTA Training

- Integration of TL narratives
  - Deep subject matter knowledge
  - Pedagogical training beyond CLT and the methods course

(Allen & Negueruela, in press; Huffman, 1998; Wurst, 2008; VanValkenberg & Arnett, 2000)
Course in Text-Based Instruction: Description

- Institutional Context:
  - Large, urban research institution
  - BA, MA & PhD programs
  - MALL program
    - 15 credit hours in pedagogy/SLA
    - Courses attract MA/PhD students in addition to MALL students
Course in Text-Based Instruction: Description

- **Title**: Teaching Foreign Languages - Receptive Skills
- **Description**: develop a literacy-based pedagogy of written & oral texts; integrate language & content through reading & listening tasks; consider broader curricular issues related to literacy- and text-based instruction
- **Audience**: GTAs, in-service K-12 teachers
Course in Text-Based Instruction: Objectives

- Students should be able to demonstrate…
  - Conceptual knowledge of course content
  - An ability to relate concepts to instruction
  - An ability to apply concepts to discussions and assignments
  - An ability to interpret and reflect critically on texts on teaching materials
  - Engagement in pedagogical discourse
Course in Text-Based Instruction:  *Student Work*

- Portfolio project:
  - Statement of instructional context, goals & objectives
  - Reading-listening journal
  - Materials evaluation
  - Materials development
  - Annotated bibliography
EXAMPLE: Statement of instructional context, goals & objectives

- Description
- Samples of student work
## Course in Text-Based Instruction: Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSE CONCEPTS (n = 6)</th>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Relate &amp; Apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very well</td>
<td>79.2%</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat well</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not well</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Course in Text-Based Instruction: *Survey Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXTS &amp; TEACHING MATERIALS (n = 6)</th>
<th>Interpret</th>
<th>Reflect critically</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course in Text-Based Instruction: *Survey Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THIS CLASS HAS PREPARED ME TO…</th>
<th>(n = 6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>develop text-based reading lessons</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>develop text-based listening lessons</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make informed choices about text selection</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incorporate oral &amp; written texts into my classroom</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>develop my students’ ability to interpret oral &amp; written texts</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrate language &amp; content in introductory courses</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrate language &amp; content in advanced courses</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implications & Conclusions: Course in Text-Based Instruction

- Increased focus on development of teaching materials
  - Link between course concepts and their practical application
  - Situate instruction within larger curricular context
  - Multiple materials development assignments over course of semester
  - Micro-teaching with peer and instructor feedback
Implications & Conclusions: GTA Training

- More than one methods course
- Courses that address recommendations for curricular reform
- Courses that address issues of program articulation, authenticity, long-term pedagogical development, culture of teacher-scholarship, and integration of TL narratives
- Ongoing professional development to help connect concepts with classroom teaching (e.g., peer observation, workshops, self-reflection)
Thank you!

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