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ABSTRACT

An instructional module designed to help prepare college-level teaching assistants (TAs) for their duties in second language instruction is presented. The purpose of this module is to assist TAs in integrating what they are learning about teaching methods, language acquisition, and the nature of the profession. There are five parts, each consisting of a narrative section, followed generally by questions for discussion and suggestions for action. An annotated list of suggestions for additional reading is also provided. In the first part, some initial difficulties of entering the profession as a TA are discussed, and the second part reflects on the nature of expertise in language education. Part three presents one model of professional development, the reflective practice model, and part four presents the teaching portfolio as a strategy for long-term professional development and documentation of that development. The final section offers suggestions of ways to begin developing a professional profile while in graduate school. Contains 18 references. (Author/MSE)

Beyond TA Training
Developing a Reflective Approach to a Career in Language Education

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one of a series of modules for the

Professional Preparation of Teaching Assistants in Foreign Languages

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Introduction

The purpose of this module is to assist you in developing a critical and reflective approach to your practice of language study and teaching. In order to do this, you must begin to integrate what you are learning about teaching methods, language acquisition, and the nature of your new profession. There are five parts in this module, each of which consists of a narrative section, followed usually by questions for discussion and suggestions for action. An annotated list of suggestions for additional reading is also provided. In the first part, we discuss some of the initial difficulties of entering the profession as a teaching assistant (TA), and in the second part we reflect on the nature of expertise in language education. The third part presents one model of professional development, the reflective practice model, which you may choose to guide you in your own efforts to achieve a coherent approach to language study. The fourth part presents the teaching portfolio as a strategy for long-term professional development and documentation of that development. In the final section, suggestions are offered for ways to begin developing your professional profile while you are in graduate school, so that you will be as prepared as possible for your entry into the profession after graduate school.

The Need for an Integrated Approach to Language Teaching

As a graduate student and a teaching assistant, you may feel that you have two distinct roles and sets of responsibilities. You are a scholar in the field of specialized expertise you wish to pursue; your primary responsibility is to perform well as a student and develop your own competence. You are also a teacher, whose main job is to help your students in their development and to display a professional demeanor in order to inspire their confidence. It is not easy to achieve an appropriate stance for each of these two very demanding roles, especially at first. You may find it difficult to organize your time and effort in order to devote adequate attention to each of these domains.

At the same time, especially if your department organizes itself in the usual way, you have probably begun to appreciate the hierarchical meaning of separating language teaching from the other departmental missions. The reasons for this separation have to do with how we define both "teaching" and "language." In many American institutions of higher learning, teaching is considered a separate category from research or scholarship. This view has a long and distinguished tradition of categorizing "pure" research as the production of knowledge, and teaching as transmission of the knowledge produced by research (Schön, 1983). Of the two activities, knowledge production is considered the more valuable. Another reason has to do with a view of language itself as a lower-level skill which must be mastered before it can be invested with content. This evaluation of the importance of language leads to confusing and divisive conceptual distinctions between language study and literature, between culture and civilization (Kramsch, 1993).

Your own situation probably offers an excellent illustration of this hierarchical structure. You, a relative neophyte, are entrusted with knowledge transmission right away, often without guidance or with only short-term training in the application of a certain teaching method. The knowledge you are to transmit is supposed to be mainly unproblematic. On the other hand, to become a producer of knowledge will require that you invest years of time and study, and that you prove your competence by passing exams and writing theses. There is probably little or no provision in your graduate program for organized reflection on the value of language study as education.

Meanwhile, it is up to you to resolve any conflict you may feel between the teaching and learning roles you must play, and the hierarchical status and separateness of language teaching may be doing you particular disservice. For example, if you are sufficiently conscientious to be aware of areas for potential improvement in your own language competence, the assumption that language itself should be unproblematic may seem particularly daunting. If you are genuinely interested in teaching, and wish to develop as a teacher, you may find that it is particularly difficult to find the correct balance in assigning importance to the different aspects of your scholarly work.

As you reflect on your own resolution of these issues, you may wish to consider the value of an integrative approach to language teaching. One way to begin is to consider

alternative definitions of language: for example, rather than as mere skill, we can define language ability as communicative competence (Savignon, 1983), a complex, domain-specific, interpersonal ability that includes grammatical, social, and strategic dimensions. A broad-based view can help us to appreciate the development of language ability over the long term, and the centrality of language both in professional development and in institutional curricula. Communicative ability in a particular area is an important aspect (if not *the* most important aspect) of expertise, but it is never absolute. As you continue to develop knowledge in your field, you will develop domain-specific communicative competence in that field, but not in others. For example, you may learn how to explain the proper formation and use of verb forms, but not how to scold a two-year-old or instruct a mechanic to dismantle and service airplane engines. Similarly, as students proceed through the curriculum in your department, they do not cease developing their language competence at the point where courses are no longer considered to be language courses; their communicative competence is shaped by the length and nature of their interactions in the language. Because of the relative nature of communicative competence, there is no reason to feel insecure about a perceived need to develop your language ability.

Concerning the integration of language teaching and scholarship, it is important to begin early in your career to reflect on the links between the two that may strengthen both. There are no practical reasons why you should not aspire to a balanced approach, and several reasons why you should. If you pursue a scholarly career, the chances are excellent that your work will have something to do with language education, even if it is not labeled as such. If you do not develop an ability to use what you know, critically and reflectively, in that part of your work that relates to language education, you run the risk of early professional stagnation through lack of conceptual renewal. If, on the other hand, you take up the opportunity you have as a graduate student to start out integrating all of your intellectual resources in a process of continuous development, your teaching will be a part of your scholarly work, and a source of inspiration both to you and to your students.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the difference between training and education? (For you? For your students?)

2. Concept map: With a group of two to four TAs, use a large sheet of paper and a crayon or magic marker to draw a picture of how you see the relationship between each of the three domains in part A, and/or each of the three domains in part B.
   A. research — teaching — theory
   B. language — literature — culture
   Are they the same thing, or different? Do they overlap? How? Are there other categories you need? If you are working with a class, nominate a spokesperson to present your map to the rest of the TAs in your class.

3. Who was your favorite teacher when you were in high school? In college? Why did you admire that person? What did you enjoy about being in his/her class? How do you think the teacher defined his/her area of expertise?

Suggestions for Action

1. Write your professional history, including everything significant that led to your now being a language TA. What were the major turning points? What were the most important influences? Compare your history with the histories of the other TAs you know.

2. The significance of your accomplishments has won you a place in the 2015 edition of *Who's Who in Language Study*. Write the description of your work.

What is Expertise in Language Education?

In the first part, we considered the need for you to develop an integrated approach to language education by using all of the intellectual resources available to you, including your own history as a learner and your aspirations as a scholar. In this section, we will consider some specific conceptual resources that emanate from sources within language research and education. In order to begin evaluating information about language development and teaching, you need some information about the groups that produce it and their priorities. We will review and critique three "ways of talking" about language education. A fourth way is the critical approach exemplified in the present review.

Like other scholarly fields, language education is characterized by debate which can appear—or be made to appear—more dramatic than it really is. From a distance, it can seem that the profession's evolution is characterized by sweeping pendulum swings: all the way over in this direction, then all the way back, as if wildly various allegiances were normal, and changes in the profession's discourse could be attributed to personal whim, popularity contests, or boredom.

One reason why continuous change exists in the language teaching profession is that it must respond to a constantly evolving socio-political context. One reason for productive if sometimes acrimonious debate is that various groups have a stake in the process of revision; conflicts surrounding definitions of language ability arise in part from fundamental incompatibilities between the traditions, styles, values, and political leanings of these groups (Kramsch, 1995). When you are presented with a particular view of language or language learning, it is important for you to consider where this view came from and the extent to which it is congruous with your own traditions, style, values, and political leanings.

Although there is a potentially unlimited number of different relevant groups, in the American foreign language teaching profession, it is possible to identify a small number of the most influential discourse communities. Kramsch (1995) lists four distinct discourse communities formed on the basis of historically determined social conditions, each of which has its own way of talking about the aims of foreign language teaching. Kramsch also notes the constitutive value of these ways of construing foreign language teaching: "Different ways with words create different ways of viewing the world to which these words refer, ways that bear the mark of different institutional histories and individual trajectories" (p. 9). In the literature on language teaching and in other sources of information for teachers, we see competition for prestige and recognition among these different ways of talking.

(1) The *discourse of policy and public relations* emphasizes "priorities," "standards," "accountability," and "performance objectives." This discourse constructs its ideology primarily around the opposition between foreign language education as a field and all other academic fields, in competition for national attention, priority, and funding. Much of the work of this discourse is framed as a struggle to build consensus within foreign language education in order to present a unified picture of strength and effectiveness in terms that the taxpaying public can readily understand. Since it is close to the public discourses of politics, government, business, and industry, it borrows many of its forms from these sources. The emphasis on utility and effectiveness comes from the discourse of business; the calculated use of popular, simple metaphor (for example, "the push toward communication," "the ties that bind," "the journey of a lifetime"), the hortatory tone and the rhetorical use of repetition are borrowed from the discourses of political and quasi-religious speech. Consider, for example, a volume in the ACTFL Foreign Language Education Series devoted to the question of national standards and articulation across educational levels. The volume ends with this paragraph by Paul Sandrock of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction:

> We are at the crossroads. We can create coherence out of the separated foreign language experiences that are all too common now. Commit to aligning the pieces of foreign language education within systemic reform. Travel as an explorer. The nature of the journey is that you must experience it yourself. Observe, reflect, learn, grow and ensure that no child is left behind.
>
> (Sandrock, 1995, p. 186)

The above paragraph illustrates the tension in this discourse between the need for uniformity in the face of outside pressure, and the desire to respect the local needs and creativity of individual schools and educators. The discourse succeeds much better at conveying the former than the latter, precisely because its ideology values consensus around effectiveness and utility over anything else. The use of an inclusive "we" at the beginning of the paragraph suggests that Sandrock is at once inviting the reader to feel a part of the expertise that informs his "vision of the standards" (p. 193) and emphasizing the collective effort that is required for collaborative action across the educational levels. The shift to the imperative in the third sentence can be interpreted either as a plea or as an order to cooperate. In either case, the two sentences that follow do not seem related to the alignment of education, but rather to something else entirely, the personal journey to enlightenment. It is implied, perhaps, that "getting on the program" by committing to Sandrock's vision will lead the reader to a personal and *personalized* satisfaction, but it is not clear how. This discourse is not fundamentally concerned with the voices of individuals, even though it is precisely the individual professional who must be convinced.

In recent years this way of talking has gained in prominence within American foreign language education, largely due to efforts by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages to promote its own *Proficiency Guidelines* (ACTFL, 1989) and *National Standards* (ACTFL, 1993). Notably under-emphasized in this discourse are the primary concerns of the other discourses, namely the "real" processes of language acquisition as revealed in acquisition research, the local classroom contexts of teachers' work, and the broader relevance of language education beyond quantifiable competencies.

(2) In the *discourse of research and theory*, scholars studying cognitive processes of language acquisition tend to emphasize the importance of objective, scientific inquiry, and of progress toward greater knowledge of the truth about interlanguage and the psycholinguistic aspects of acquisition processes. This discourse community shares an infrequently articulated if ever-present belief in the ultimate theory of language acquisition toward which it is worthwhile to strive. "Most researchers working in the field believe that eventually it will be possible to arrive at theories that are sufficiently well corroborated to command allegiance" (Beretta, 1991, p. 493). For many members, the attainment of this theoretical account is the absolute priority of research, irrespective of any potential applications (for example, in teaching).

The process of becoming a member of this discourse community is a matter of great importance, for members must mark their belonging with a true appreciation of scientific

method, an ability to suspend disbelief in the application of quantitative or statistical methods to the study of humans, and of course, an extensive professional jargon. To become a member of this community normally requires education at the graduate level in linguistics, cognitive science, second language acquisition, or a related field, followed by demonstration of competence in using the requisite forms of discourse to present original research.

To sample this discourse, consider some of the titles of articles in a special issue of *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* devoted to the "Role of Instruction in Second Language Acquisition" (1993, Volume 15,2):

On explicit and negative data effecting and affecting competence and linguistic behavior
Input enhancement in instructed SLA: Theoretical bases
Positive evidence and preemption in the second language classroom
Explicit instruction and input processing

"Input," "preemption," "processing," —all terms which refer to specific concepts within theoretical constructs known to competent users of these articles. The texts of the articles reveal an elaborate received format for the presentation of information. Reports of experimental findings, for example, must show adequate review of previous related study, details about the experimental method, the findings, and an interpretation of the findings which relates both to the earlier research previously cited, and to next logical steps toward the truth. Elegance resides in such qualities as achievement of greater theoretical parsimony, creative (but credible) refutation of earlier theories, attention to detail, and appropriate convergence of hypothesis and research design.

For the most part, once again, this discourse does not concern itself with the main questions of the others. It does not address the national or state policies governing language instruction, nor does it deal with the cultural or social significance of language education. To the extent that it approaches issues of language teaching, it is as a source of expert systems which must be carefully interpreted by the experts, then applied only with caution, primarily as a guide in formation of expectations about how natural processes of acquisition may unfold with or without intervention from teachers.

(3) The *discourse of teachers and teacher educators* highlights specific, practical skills and outcomes and the means of attaining them in the classroom. This is the discourse of educators who are confronted on a daily basis with the various dilemmas of classroom work: how to organize material, what and how to teach, how to evaluate progress toward attainment of goals.

Issues which, within the other discourses, may be complex subjects of long-term inquiry, such as the nature and significance of social context, or the natural processes of interlanguage development, become practical problems requiring an immediate solution. For

example, one way in which the development of grammatical competence is frequently addressed is in terms of error correction, that is, what the instructor should *do* about students' production of non-native forms. In the following example, from Rivers' *Teaching French: A Practical Guide* (1988), the writer addresses teachers directly on the subject of error correction during autonomous oral interaction:

> The best approach during interaction activities is for the instructor silently to note consistent, systematic errors (not slips of the tongue and occasional lapses in areas where the student usually acquits himself well). These errors will then be discussed with the student at a time when the instructor is helping him to evaluate his success in interaction, with particular attention to the types of errors which hinder communication. The instructor will then use his knowledge of the areas of weakness of a number of students as a basis for his emphases in instruction and review. In this way, we help students focus on what are problem areas for them as they learn from their mistakes.
>
> (Rivers, 1988, p. 55)

Note that the emphasis here is on assisting students in the efficient production of error-free language, based on the assumption that conscious, well-organized work in the classroom will ultimately lead to learning. The problem is framed as the teacher's responsibility to observe and understand learners, and to arrange learning accordingly. The question of what an error is, or what it might mean as a social, cultural, or psycholinguistic phenomenon, is decidedly secondary to action-related concern.

Much of the confusion and conflict surrounding language study is due to the ways in which these discourses shape basic assumptions about what kinds of expertise are important. It is as natural for them to be different from one another as it is for them to compete for recognition and prestige among the members of the profession at large. The only real danger inherent in this situation is that of uncritical acceptance of a particular group's vision, especially if it is in conflict with our local circumstances or concerns.

(4) Kramsch notes the presence of a fourth system, *the discourse of the humanities and social sciences*, which is "the discourse of critical pedagogy, cultural criticism, and postmodern thought. It shows evidence of social and political consciousness—what Paolo Freire calls *conscientizacão*. It stresses the importance of using theory to understand concrete realities" (Kramsch, 1995, p. 8). This discourse, though still relatively less important in American foreign language teaching, places the others in a particularly useful perspective, especially as concerns the significance and integration of language education within the context of institutional learning. In particular, it provides a useful vantage point from which to assess the educational value of language study: the extent to which the profession meets its stated larger goals of educating for peace, intercultural understanding, and awareness of the social meaning of language.

It also allows us, as we have done in the preceding sections, to critically review the social and political meanings of various "ways of talking" about language education itself. One major goal of graduate studies in the humanities and social sciences is the development of advanced critical awareness of language: using this expertise is essential as you work toward your personal teaching approach and understanding of the profession.

Question for Discussion

1. Which of the four "ways of talking" outlined in Kramsch (1995) seems the most useful to you in developing your teaching approach? Why?

Suggestions for Action

1. Read and critique a text that is about priorities in language study. The text could be the preface of a textbook used for language instruction in your department, or the written justification for language study (or even a language requirement) in the course catalogue of your school. What are the assumptions about language study that underlie the rationale given in the text? Do you share these assumptions?

2. Read an article about language teaching from one of the major journals (*Foreign Language Annals, Modern Language Journal, TESOL Quarterly, Hispania, French Review, Die Unterrichtspraxis*). What are the "ways of talking" that the authors use to justify their suggestions for teaching or to situate their research?

3. Read an article about language research from one of the major research journals (*Applied Linguistics, Language Learning, Studies in Second Language Acquisition*). Can you identify implications of the findings for language teaching?

Developing your Expertise

In the first two parts of this module, we have insisted on the multifaceted and variable nature of foreign language teaching expertise. As a language educator, you will benefit from working toward a personal teaching philosophy that draws on all of the expertise available to you. In this section we will examine one model of professional development, the reflective practice model (Schön, 1983), which may assist you in achieving an integrated view.

In essence, the reflective practice model is itself an attempt at integration of two different theories of professional development: the "craft" model and the "applied science" model (Wallace, 1991). In the craft model, learning involves exposure to the activity of

experts, followed by imitation and practice. The craft model is atheoretical: learning to practice a profession is analogous to skilled activity in general. In the applied science model, knowledge produced elsewhere by researchers and theorists is exported and applied in the work setting. Professional renewal consists of periodic updates on the state of the art in research.

The reflective practice model provides a dynamic approach to professional development over the long term. The model was first developed by Schön, who wished to explain the tacit "knowledge-in action" displayed by competent professionals in a variety of fields. In the model (see Fig. 1) cycles of theory-building, application and reflection lead to the integration of technical knowledge with life experiences. The principal advantage of the reflective practice model is that it centers all of this activity in your experience of diverse situations, experiences, and "ways of talking," allowing you to consider your classroom as a kind of laboratory where you can test the ability of technical knowledge to help you in your practice. The model also assumes that the cycles of practice and reflection will be continuous, in other words, that you will continue throughout your career to change your approach through critical and active evaluation of new technical knowledge, or knowledge created within a discourse community with which you had been previously unfamiliar.

[See Figure 1 at end of text]

When it is carefully planned and adequately documented, teacher-directed change via reflective practice is often termed "action research." The action research cycle can begin either with a perceived need for change in the classroom or with a new insight into teaching, language, or learning. Key to successful action research is the formulation of questions which are non-trivial and answerable (Chamot, 1995). For example, suppose you are interested in improving writing instruction in your classroom via action research. The question "How can I get students to write more correctly?" is too broad to be answered without further refinement. As you reflect upon ways to arrive at a suitable question, you may wish to read some accounts of recent writing research. As you read, you learn about a range of different ways to evaluate writing and decide to investigate the effect of changing your writing evaluation practice.

In this way, your initial reflection leads to a planned intervention: an "action," or change in teaching procedures which follows upon a particular question. In the next phase of research planning, you refine your question further until it becomes specific enough to form the basis of your research. In this case, you may decide to investigate how a change in your writing evaluation practice affects the amount of writing students produce. This question is answerable via comparison and observation, and it is non-trivial since you know that the amount of writing students perform correlates with writing proficiency. You plan to observe the amount of writing students provide when you evaluate using your current practice (counting errors), then switch to the use of a holistic rating scale and document the change. Following your experiment, you reflect on the outcome and adapt your practice accordingly or plan a new study.

Action research presents the advantage of being "owned" by the teachers who practice it in their own teaching contexts, and as such, it provides a useful complement to your acquaintance with the various discourses of language education and the educational marketplace.

The real achievement of action research and reflective practice, however, is a personal sense of coherence: the perception that your teaching practices are consonant with a philosophy informed by the full range of expertise available to you. The coherence attained through reflective practice is not a static "once-and-for-all" achievement, but must remain open and flexible. As your own professional development proceeds, and as new kinds of expertise gain prominence in the educational literature and marketplace, you will need the capacity to integrate new knowledges into your sense of what is fundamentally right about language learning and teaching. At the same time, your coherence system will provide a basis for critical judgment and, if need be, rejection of ideas whose relevance or provenance is questionable.

Questions for Discussion

1. What elements are required to make up a complete approach to language teaching?

2. Do a "free writing" exercise, then critique the results. Write for ten minutes on the topic: My Approach to Teaching. When you have finished, analyze the way you describe language and learning. Compare your ideas with a colleague's. Do you have a theory of language? What metaphors do you use to explain your views, and where do you think they come from: one of the discourses of language education? your personal history as a teacher or learner? common sense?

Suggestion for Action

1. Read one of the sources on "action research" in the Suggestions for Additional Reading, then develop and carry out an action research project focused on a question or problem in your teaching.

Developing Your Approach: The Teaching Portfolio

As you are developing your approach to language education, you may wish to consider the benefits of documenting your progress along the way in a teaching portfolio (Seldin, 1991). In essence, the teaching portfolio is nothing more or less than your record of

your own performance in teaching, of your development as a teacher, and of the coherence you build through reflective practice. As simple as the concept may seem, the impact of the teaching portfolio can be considerable, both in terms of evaluation of teachers and in terms of how teaching itself is valued.

Consider for a moment how the classroom performance of teaching assistants is traditionally evaluated. Normally, in American institutions of higher learning, students are expected to rate their teacher and the course, often using standardized forms and/or questionnaires. Often, TAs are also observed as they teach by a supervisor, generally a member of the faculty. Sometimes departments also institute a system of peer observation and evaluation. As useful as these methods of evaluation can be, they are fundamentally insufficient: the one point of view that is missing from all of them is that of the TA whose work is being evaluated. The teaching portfolio offers you an opportunity to present the best or most interesting aspects of your own work, and so to give voice in the evaluation process to your own perspective on teaching. If you are drawn to innovative teaching procedures, and regularly perform action research in your classroom, you may find it especially useful to have a place to explain your stance to the person or people whose job it is to evaluate your work.

The teaching portfolio also provides a concrete means of addressing the perceived incompatibility of teaching and scholarship and of heightening the value of integrative views towards these activities. The reflective work that goes into producing a portfolio almost inevitably brings the scholarly value of teaching into focus, both for individuals and for groups of colleagues working together on portfolio projects. For these reasons, employers are increasingly requesting that teachers present a teaching portfolio for hiring and for subsequent tenure or promotion review.

Since one of the purposes of a portfolio is to show change and development over time, and since the construction of a portfolio can be time consuming if you are in a hurry and unprepared, the earlier you begin to assemble your portfolio materials, the better. If you start at the beginning of your career to collect your portfolio materials, and to reflect critically and in writing on their value, then, when the time comes, you will be able to present a compelling image of your developing practice.

There is no recipe for the teaching portfolio, because every teacher has a particular approach and will wish to highlight particular strengths. Before you begin, you should think carefully about which aspects of your teaching you wish to foreground. Typically, the portfolio contains at least two sections: information about the teacher's background and philosophy, and a series of annotated samples of work. It is important to select these samples judiciously in order to present a well-rounded picture of your work without exhausting your reader's patience. Depending upon the purpose of the portfolio, you may or may not wish to include a third section for official evaluations of your teaching. A skeleton table of contents follows.

Contents of a Teaching Portfolio

Section One: Background information

- Professional biography: a narrative description of your professional history, the major influences on your teaching.
- Teaching philosophy: a description of how you teach and why, the theoretical or philosophical foundations of your approach.
- Information about the environment(s) where you have worked and any relevant details about courses you have taught.

Section Two: Selected entries reflecting diverse aspects of performance

This section can contain any of a range of different document types. The only stipulation is that the work sample must be contextualized for the reader; this is most easily achieved with annotations or explanations of their significance in your teaching. Samples of work can include:

- assignments you have written or in-class tasks you have designed
- syllabi, to demonstrate your involvement in course design and development
- student work (projects, compositions, skits) and your reaction to the work, to show how you evaluate and provide feedback to learners
- tests or quizzes you have written
- video- or audiotapes of lessons or lesson parts
- documents showing your progress in learning to teach (e.g., a corrected composition from this year, one from last year, and a commentary on the differences)
- descriptions of your participation in professional development activities (e.g., conferences, workshops)
- descriptions and/or documents relating to any teaching-oriented professional service you have performed (e.g., leading workshops, publishing papers)

Section Three: Required information

- student evaluations
- letters of support about your teaching
- supervisors' reports

Nurturing Your Career

Unfortunately, many TAs are unaware of the importance of professional development activities during graduate study and live to regret missed opportunities when the time comes to seek employment. Often, the routine obligations of teaching and the pressure of advanced study seem to provide more than enough work to do—there does not seem to be enough time to add anything extra. Nonetheless, if you intend to pursue a career in language education, you will probably benefit from some focus on your professional development and profile. You should consider what kind of work you hope to do, and what steps you can take now in order to enhance your chances of finding that work.

If you have begun to develop a coherent approach to teaching and scholarship through the kinds of integration and reflection advocated here, you may discover that there is an additional advantage to this approach to be found in the job search. As mentioned in the first part of this module, unless your circumstances are exceptional, it will be very difficult to begin your professional career in a post allowing you to devote all or most of your time to your specialized field. If you are involved in education, the chances are good that it will be some form of language education. You will do much to improve your chances of finding satisfying work if you can demonstrate not only that you are flexible and capable in a range of teaching roles, but also that you see the connections between the roles and approach them all with equal seriousness.

In addition to the teaching portfolio, there are numerous more concrete ways in which you can begin to work toward a successful and satisfying long-term career in language education. You can begin to gather information about the job market and about prospects for employment in different kinds of institutions. You can also begin to develop your professional network, both informational and personal, not only because it will become one of your most important sources of new technical knowledge in the future, but also because it will help you to feel connected to others who share your views and interests. Finally, you can participate in activities that will contribute to your awareness and experience while improving your professional profile. These would include attendance and participation in workshops and conferences, but also membership in professional associations, administrative work such as course or exam coordination, community service such as tutoring, and academic service such as advising.

Suggestions for Action

1. Find out what professional meetings or conferences in your area of research or teaching will be held near where you live this year. If possible, make a point of attending at least one such meeting. If you are ready, submit an abstract for a presentation at a conference.

2. Identify the faculty members you want as mentors and cultivate their interest in you.

3. Find someone who has just accepted the kind of employment you will be seeking after graduate school (e.g., an assistant professor, if you are preparing a doctorate). Ask for advice on the process of getting a job, and ask if you may see a copy of the person's curriculum vitae.

4. Read the ads. Find the publications that list job openings in your field. (For university and college employment in the modern languages, the main sources are the *Modern Language Association Job List* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education.*)

5. Find out which electronic discussion groups are active in your field. "Lurk" (read others' contributions without joining in) for a while until you have determined what the norms are for interactions, then participate.

6. Gather information about professional associations in your field and join those whose interests are closest to your own. Student memberships are generally much less expensive than regular memberships and can be a valuable source of information and networking possibilities.

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Seldin, P. (1991). *The Teaching Portfolio: A Practical Guide to Improved Performance and Promotion/Tenure Decisions*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.

Wallace, M. J. (1991). *Training Foreign Language Teachers: A Reflective Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Suggested Additional Reading

Chamot, A. U. (1995). The Teacher's Voice: Action Research in Your Classroom. *ERIC/ CLL News Bulletin*, 18(2).

Although it was written for elementary school language teachers, this article provides an excellent general primer on action research for teachers at all levels.

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*. New York: Oxford University Press.

An approach to language teaching that overlaps significantly with the discourse of the humanities and social sciences.

Lightbown, P. and N. Spada. (1993). *How Languages Are Learned*. New York: Oxford University Press.

A readable account of the discourse of second language research, by authors who are also conversant with the discourse of teaching and methodology.

Richards, J. and C. Lockhart. (1994). *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

This book offers case studies of action research carried out by other language teachers, as well as numerous suggestions and resources for teacher-directed inquiry.

Savignon, S. (1983). *Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

A highly influential, "classic" book in language teaching, explaining both the conceptual and historical background and the classroom implications of communicative approaches.

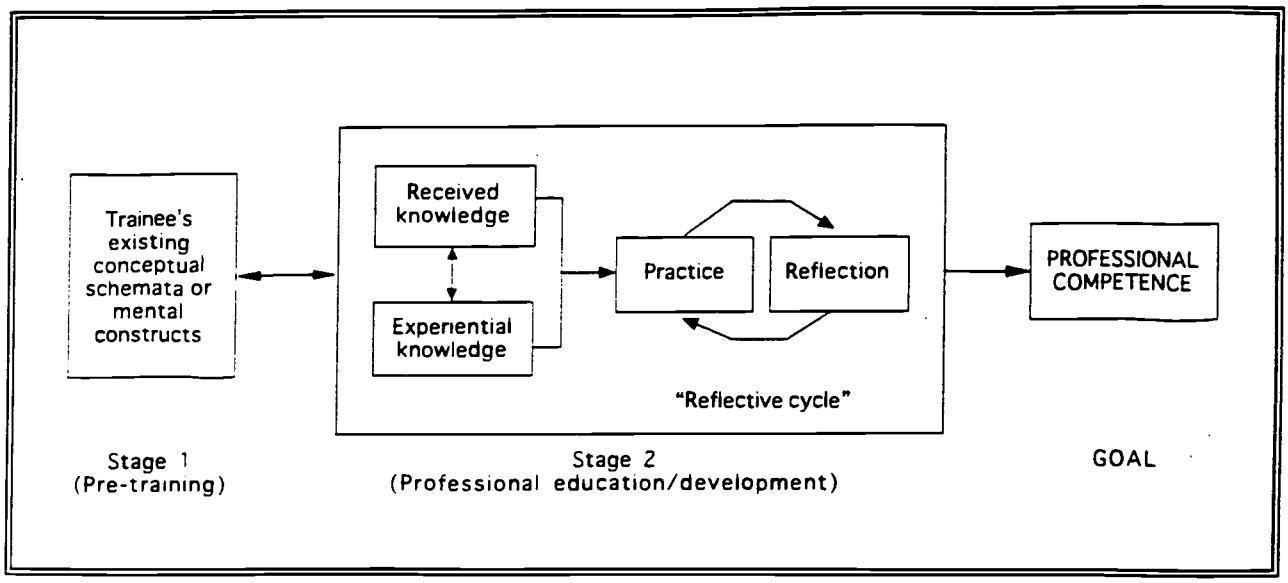
Seldin, P. (1991). *The Teaching Portfolio: A Practical Guide to Improved Performance and Promotion/Tenure Decisions*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.

This book provides an excellent overview of the rationale for using teaching portfolios, along with many practical suggestions on their construction.

The Author

Celeste Kinginger was a TA teaching two sections of early-stage or intermediate French every semester for six years before she got her Ph.D. in Second Language Acquisition and Teacher Education (U. Illinois). The assistance she received during that time ranged from nonexistent or very bad to excellent.

Figure 1 Reflective Practice Model of Professional Education/Development



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