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Article

Learning "About" and Learning "Through" Technology: An Analysis of Syllabi from Foreign Language Teaching Methods Courses

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Abstract

The 2007 Modern Language Association (MLA) report recommended that foreign language (FL) graduate students be provided with "substantive training in language teaching and in the use of new technologies". In the present study, I examined teaching methodology ("methods") course syllabi in order to gauge the extent of professional development in technology after the publication of the MLA report. Using data from methods course syllabi (N = 31), I explored how FL Teaching Assistants (TAs) learned about technology and learned through technology and found that there were considerable missed opportunities for both. Data suggest that technology in the methods course is not keeping pace with advances in technology and that the methods course needs to be rethought.

KEYWORDS: FL TEACHING METHODS COURSE, TEACHING ASSISTANTS, GRADUATE STUDENTS, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, SYLLABI

The 2007 Modern Language Association (MLA) report "Foreign Language and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World" urged U.S. collegiate foreign language (FL) departments to rethink the content and goals of FL education. Whereas the 2007 MLA report was very specific about the needed changes in the undergraduate curriculum, it was much less so about the implications that such sweeping changes necessarily mean for the graduate students in FL departments. In fact, the report only made two related recommendations: "graduate studies should provide substantive training in language teaching and in the use of new technologies" (p. 7)

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and should "enhance and reward graduate student training … in language teaching" (p. 8). This relative lack of attention to graduate student education and teaching assistants[1] (TAs) was discussed in several articles (e.g., Allen & Negueruela-Azarola, 2010; Pfeiffer, 2008) published soon after the 2007 MLA report. Although the MLA report focuses on the structure of undergraduate FL programs, the professional development of graduate students should not be overlooked, given the role they play as FL instructors both now and in the future.

By recommending that graduate studies provide "substantive training … in new technologies" (MLA, 2007, p. 7), the ad hoc committee implied that TAs were not already receiving adequate professional development in technology. The present study will examine how TAs learn *about* and learn *through* technology in the most commonly used professional development opportunity – the methods course – in order to better understand current professional development in technology.

Technology in the Methods Course

Thoms (2013) surveyed TAs (N = 154) in 2010 to determine the nature of technology in methods courses. When asked to select technologies that were "addressed" (p. 210) in their methods courses, respondents revealed that the most commonly "covered" (p. 199) applications (i.e., PowerPoint, grammar websites, and discussion boards) were not Web 2.0 technologies, but were in fact Web 1.0 tools. Although 70.9% of the respondents received technology training during their methods course, only approximately 40% felt confident with their ability to integrate technology into their own classroom. The extent and quality of engagement with technology is therefore unclear. In other words, "addressing" or "covering" a technological tool could mean learning about it, experiencing it, or both.

Using a different survey, Dhonau, McAlpine, and Shrum (2010) found in their sample of teacher educators that the most commonly discussed technologies in methods courses were also Web 1.0 tools: PowerPoint, email, course management systems, and word processing. Other technologies, such as smartboards, were rated as very important, but fewer than 34% of the teacher educators taught about those applications. Overall, technology garnered little attention as there were more "pressing" topics to discuss.

As technology is sometimes "covered" by required textbooks in the methods course, Arnold (2013) surveyed language educators to determine which books are assigned and how they present technology (e.g., what approaches they use, what research is cited, what activities are included). She found that most methods textbooks gave a "broad, balanced view" (p. 12) of technology, but underscored that there was still progress to be made.

Hubbard (2008) suggested that technology demonstrations and lectures are not the best ways to learn about technology, but if they are employed, hands-on experience should follow (p. 183). Lord and Lomicka (2004) outlined an online partnership between their two universities in which their TAs used computer-mediated communication for class activities. Lord and Lomicka valued technology's role in facilitating collaboration with other students and scholars while at the same time connecting theory and practice. Similarly, students in Arnold and Ducate's (2006) study participated in online discussions.

Certain scholars (Arnold, 2013; Kessler, 2006; Reinders, 2009) have argued that teacher education must go beyond learning how and when to implement individual software. Because technology changes so quickly, teacher educators should instead provide a "technical and pedagogical foundation" (Hubbard, 2008, p. 185) that would help teachers approach new technology as it is developed. Teacher educators should encourage transferable skills that create a "future-proof" technology education (Reinders, 2009, p. 233), for example, by teaching TAs how to evaluate new technologies (Chapelle & Hegelheimer, 2004; Compton, 2009). Although Lord's (2014) chapter about technology in language programs only touched upon technology's implications for teacher professional development, she underscored the importance of hands-on training as well as reflective discussions about technology.

In sum, the professional development of TAs includes teaching about various applications of technology and using them to achieve certain objectives. Web 1.0 tools seem to be more commonly used than Web 2.0 technologies, but exactly how technology is included and learned remains unclear in many classes. Scholars and teacher educators have encouraged incorporating new technologies, using them as a medium for course content, and broadening the discussion of technology beyond specific software. With technology changing rapidly and playing an ever-increasing role in language learning, how TAs learn to use it in their own classroom practice is crucial.

Research Question

In light of the 2007 MLA report's recommendations for deeper technology knowledge and a growing emphasis on technology in the classroom, this article explores the place and role of technology in TA professional development with particular attention given to the teaching methods course. In order to gauge if TAs receive "substantive training" (MLA, 2007, p. 7) in technology, the present study aims to answer the following question: To what extent is technology taught *about* or *through* in FL methods courses? I hypothesize that technology in the methods class has not kept pace with technology in general and that TAs are not receiving the recommended "substantive training." To explore trends in learning *about* and *through* technology, I also examined

contextual factors, such as institution type, instructor type, language of the TAs, and related programs at each university.

Methodology

Data Collection

To answer the research question, syllabi were collected using a multi-pronged strategy. Email invitations were sent to personal connections, and messages were posted on several professional listservs typically subscribed to by FL faculty and TAs. Participants who completed a questionnaire for a different stage of this study were also invited to submit syllabi. Additionally, a Google search was conducted to locate syllabi that were publicly available.

The selection criterion for a syllabus to be included in this study was the following: they had to be for graduate FL teaching methods courses for TAs carried out post-2007, when the MLA report was published.

Syllabi

In total, syllabi (N = 31) were gathered from 29 different universities in 22 states and the District of Columbia. One syllabus was shared by two classes that were taught collaboratively at different universities. Instructors' specialties ranged from literature and linguistics to applied linguistics and second language acquisition (SLA), and all courses were housed in FL departments or schools of modern languages. See Table 1 for a summary.

Table 1
Description of Syllabi

	N	%
University type		
Public	6	20.0
Private	23	80.0
TOTAL	29	100
Instructors' credentials		
PhD	30	93.8
MA	2	6.3
TOTAL	32	100
Languages taught by TAs in each course		
Arabic	1	3.2
German	3	9.7

French	4	12.9
Spanish	8	25.8
Cross-listed/mixed	15	48.4
TOTAL	31	100
When the course was taught		
2009	1	3.2
2010	3	9.7
2011	6	19.4
2012	21	67.7
TOTAL	31	100

Data Analysis

The syllabi were coded deductively using codes derived from the research question. Two codes were used: "About" and "Through." "About" was used for any excerpt in which the students in the class read about, had a unit about, or discussed technology. "Through" was applied to excerpts in which students actually used technology to carry out activities built into the methods course itself. All specifications that written work be typed were purposely ignored because such requirements are now standard in university classes. However, uses of technology mentioned in the syllabi that were previously considered as standard but are now outdated were noted. Once the first wave of coding was completed, the syllabi were re-coded to ensure reliability. After the unique instances of the "Through" code and "About" code were counted for each syllabus, they were compared to determine whether each syllabus exhibited only one kind of code, primarily one kind of code, or equal numbers of both codes.

Finally, to see if any trends emerged between contextual features and technology, a spreadsheet was created to organize information from the main components of each syllabus according to Byrd's (2007) syllabus analysis protocol and contextual information about the courses (i.e., host departments, languages taught by the TAs, majors and degrees pursued by the TAs, instructors' highest level of education, instructors' specialties, types of university, availability of other technology courses, and degree requirements). The numbers of "About" and "Through" codes, as well as the types of activities, were then compared to these contextual factors to determine if any trends existed.

Findings

Seventeen (54.8%) syllabi refer explicitly to technology in the course description, goals, or objectives. Some objectives were as specific as explaining that students will learn to "reflect critically about fieldwork through conversations, blogs, and written work," whereas other courses' objectives were more general, stating, for example, that students will "become familiar with technology and multimedia" and "gain exposure to the use of technology and multimedia resources in foreign/second language teaching."

Across the 31 syllabi in this study, there were more opportunities overall to use technology than to learn about it. In total, there were 76 applications of the "About" code, ranging from 0 to 22 per syllabus ($M = 2.5$). There were also 111 applications of the "Use" code, from 0 to 8 per syllabus ($M = 3.6$). See Table 2 for a summary of the focus of the syllabi.

Table 2
Focus of Syllabi

	N	%
All learning "About"	0	0.0
Primarily learning "About"	5	16.1
Equal	4	12.9
Primarily learning "Through"	20	64.5
All learning "Through"	2	6.5

The next sections of this article go into detail about how graduate students learned *about* and *through* technology.

How TAs Learn *About* Technology

TAs in these methods classes learned *about* technology primarily through readings and thematic units.

Readings

The most commonly used textbooks, either in part or in their entirety, were *Teaching Language in Context* (Omaggio-Hadley, 2001), *Communicative Language Teaching in Action* (Brandl, 2008), *Making Communicative Language Teaching Happen* (Lee & VanPatten, 2003), *Teacher's Handbook: Contextualized Language Instruction* (Shrum & Glisan, 2009), and *How Languages are Learned* (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). *Foreign Language Teaching Methods*, a set of online teaching modules created by the University of Texas at Austin, was also popular (Blyth, 2010).

Among the most commonly required texts used in these methods courses, some (Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Omaggio-Hadley, 2001) had no listings for technology, the Internet, software, multimedia, or the web in their indices. This could indicate that technology was incorporated seamlessly throughout the book and could not be easily pinpointed by an index. This, however, does not seem to be the case. Lee and VanPatten (2003) and Lightbown and Spada (2006) rarely if ever discuss using technological tools to foster language acquisition. Omaggio-Hadley (2001), on the other hand, includes audio and video into her chapters about listening and culture, but the technology is out of date. She mentions cassette tapes, videotapes, and slides, and she suggests that teachers use paper maps and phone directories instead of realia that is now widely available on the Internet. This is not surprising considering that this textbook is the oldest of the most-used methods textbooks. Going many steps further is Brandl (2008), whose textbook includes Internet-based reading and listening activities, as well as suggestions for improving input using multimedia applications, such as PowerPoint. Indeed, he has an entire chapter dedicated to improving listening skills using audio and video. Published one year later after Brandl's text, Shrum and Glisan (2009) include a chapter entitled "Using Technology to Contextualize and Integrate Language Instruction" in which they give suggestions for using technology for all modes of communication, present a variety of ways to incorporate technology such as synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication tools, webquests, and distance learning, and provide information about evaluating multimedia presentations. Finally, Blyth's (2010) modules are completely online and use .pdf documents, links, and videos to teach course content. There is a dedicated technology module focusing on how technology can increase learners' time on task, create a real context for language learning, provide input, and facilitate intake. Despite there being chapters and modules dedicated to technology, teacher educators who assigned these books sometimes skipped over the technology chapters.

To supplement textbooks, methods courses often included additional required or optional readings in the form of scholarly articles. Six (19.4%) syllabi did not list any articles on the calendar or reading list, nor did they refer to additional readings posted on the course website. For those syllabi that did give specific articles, the topics focused primarily on using videos to teach language (Gruba, 2006; Herron, Cole, Corrie, & Dubreil, 1999; Herron, 1994; Rifkin, 2000; Royce, 2002; Swaffer & Vlatten, 1997). Indeed, Swaffer and Vlatten (1997) was read in at least three methods courses. Other articles were about computer-provided feedback (Rosa & Leow, 2004; Sanz & Morgan-Short, 2004), the impact of technological tools on writing (Stapleton & Radia, 2010), social media (Mills, 2011a), uses of technology for developing literacy

(Reinhardt & Thorne, 2011) and teaching culture (Moore, 2006), an introduction to networked-based language learning (Kern & Warschauer, 2000), and an overview of the possible implementations of several technological tools (Thorne & Payne, 2005).

Thematic units

The most common way to learn about technology was to treat it as a distinct unit on the course calendar, which varied from less than one full class period to four entire classes. Although not the rule, typically the technology unit appeared during the second half of the course. Fourteen (45.2%) syllabi included "Technology" or another similarly worded topic on their course schedule, and eight (25.8%) syllabi included "Video" or the title of a reading about videos as the topic for at least one day. Three (9.7%) syllabi had both. Nine (29.0%) syllabi did not have any partial or full days dedicated to the use of videos or technology on their course calendars.

Interestingly, there was a tendency for classes with TAs who taught different languages to include more technology than classes with TAs who all taught the same language. Among the syllabi that completely omitted technology or videos from their course calendar, seven (77.8%) were classes with just one TA language. Of the eight classes that only included video in the calendar, four (50.0%) were for TAs of the same language. Finally, in the fourteen calendars that included both video and other technology, only five (35.7%) were from single language methods courses. One could speculate that methods courses for multiple languages included more technology to personalize course content, but it could also be to showcase the variety of applications that exist in different languages. The syllabus that exhibited the most instances of TAs learning about technology was from a class in the western part of the United States for Spanish MA students and undergraduate students interested in teaching. This class met for six hours a week over seven weeks during the summer of 2009 and was required for all TAs before they were able to teach. This syllabus introduced the topic of technology on the second day of class with an explanation of the course wiki and a survey about TAs' use of and comfort with technology. All but three days that followed included technology as well. For each topic on the calendar, the instructor presented Web 2.0 tools that could be used to facilitate that aspect of language learning. For example, when the class discussed listening activities, Audacity, BroadcastLife, and Playlist.com were listed on the syllabus. When learning about writing, blogs and Buzzword were discussed. Compared to other courses that only read about using video or had guests talk about creating effective PowerPoint presentations, this instructor used or presented new technologies (e.g., Skype, chat, Voicethread, Jing, Scribd) and facilitated discussions about them.

Further research on the course's wiki revealed an optional reading list about technology that students could use to complete course assignments. Interestingly enough, the reason why this particular methods course incorporated so much technology was not because it was students' only opportunity to learn about it. On the contrary, the department offered an additional pedagogy class focused solely on technology.

As this section has shown, TAs learn *about* technological applications in the FL classroom through specialized units, textbooks, and additional readings. The following section provides details about how TAs learn *through* technology in their methods courses.

How TAs Learn *Through* Technology

The breadth and depth of technology used by TAs varied greatly. This section includes both activities in which TAs used the technology in a teacher role and opportunities for TAs to more deeply experience technology as a student would.

The most prevalent application of technology used by 27 (87.1%) methods courses was a course management system (e.g., Desire2Learn, Moodle, or Blackboard) to store grades, course resources, and online discussions. Fifteen (48.4%) courses required that TAs videotape themselves for self-observations. Another popular activity involved online reflection, discussion, and reactions to readings in the form of blogs (8 syllabi, 25.8%) and discussion forums (5 syllabi, 16.2%). Students used PowerPoint (7 syllabi, 22.6%) to make presentations about course readings or teaching activities, and their teacher educators also used it to present course content. To show their ability to teach with technology, TAs were required by nine (29.9%) courses to create lessons using an Internet-based activity or a listening clip. Three (9.7%) instructors asked TAs to assemble these lessons into digital teaching portfolios. One (3.2%) syllabus required annotated lists of websites that TAs found helpful for language learning. Another syllabus mentioned an online Q&A forum about class topics and issues. Two (6.5%) courses used an online workbook or textbook companion created by their textbook's publisher and, as previously mentioned, seven (22.26%) syllabi assigned readings from online teacher education modules (Blyth, 2010). Perhaps the most novel use of technology was found in one (3.2%) syllabus where students were required to keep in touch with their classmates via Twitter. In total, the amount of activities involving technology was substantial, but from class to class there was great variation in how much technology was used and for what purpose.

It is interesting to note that the methods class for Arabic seemed to lag behind the others, as it included only one required use of technology: videotaped self-observations. The other uses of technology by this class were

optional and demoded. For example, many years after the fall of cassette tapes, TAs in the Arabic class were informed that "if [their] project involves a recording, include a tape or a tape script." The Internet was referred to as the "World Wide Web," and creating an Internet-based lesson was not required – it was "possible." Because publisher-created materials for less commonly taught languages (LCTL) are limited, the Internet would be an ideal place to find realia, so it is surprising that this particular methods course included little technology.

On the other hand, the syllabus that had the most instances of the "Through" code was from a methods course taught completely online at a large public university located in the Southwest during the fall 2012 semester. The professor had a Ph.D. in Education and taught classes in SLA. The students enrolled in this course were primarily MA students in Chinese, French, German, Japanese, and Slavic languages and were all first-semester TAs. This methods class was taught via Moodle and made use of several of its modules including assignment, chat, forum, resource, and workshop. Resources included .pdfs of articles relevant to the topics covered in the course, short interactive lectures recorded using Adobe Captivate, and links to several modules (Blyth, 2010). One course assignment required students to create several lessons including a video- and web-based lesson. Using the Moodle workshop module, each student was paired with two peers whose task was to provide feedback on the lessons created. Students wrote weekly reflective blog posts based on the assigned readings and videos and invited comments and questions from peers, kept an online reflective teaching journal viewable only to themselves and the instructor of the course, and also participated in two lesson studies with classmates teaching the same language. Office hours were held online, and if students had questions, they first consulted a discussion board of Frequently Asked Questions. Students even took their final exam online.

Although learning *about* and learning *through* technology are both important in their own ways, it is better for TAs to get a deeper understanding of technology by actually using it themselves (Erben, 1999, p. 230; Lord, 2014). Technology facilitated class activities throughout the semester in the online course and let the TAs experience being in the student role, whereas most face-to-face classes used technology in a more superficial way and usually focused on the TAs only in their roles as teachers.

Discussion

The findings of the present study show that, to varying degrees, technology is learned about and used, not just as a tool for conducting class business, but also as a medium for professional development. The following sections will discuss the prevalence of older technologies and the peripheral role of

technology as revealed in the findings section of this article and will claim that these do not constitute "substantive training."

Prevalence of Older Technologies

As previously mentioned, the kinds of technology used in the methods courses in this study were primarily Web 1.0 tools and video. Lord (2014) speculated that the number of technological tools that exist and the limited time available could overwhelm some teacher trainers (p. 135). Dhonau et al. (2010) and Thoms (2013) provide a developmental time line of technology in methods courses, showing that the technologies that are covered now are essentially the same ones that were covered a few years prior, with a few exceptions. For instance, PowerPoint and course management systems have remained popular in the methods courses and in university courses in general. Contrary to Dhonau et al.'s (2010) results, however, the present study found that email and word-processing are no longer taught in the methods course and that collaborative web-based writing (i.e., blogs, discussion boards, and wikis) has grown in popularity. This could be due to the changing nature of communication, particularly in an FL where the only access students have to other speakers is via the Internet.

Methods courses with technology in the form of videos, cassettes, or primarily Web 1.0 tools are lagging behind general advancements in technology and computer-assisted language learning (CALL), and they clash with current students' "plugged-in" lives. Focusing on older technologies and Web 1.0 tools poses a threat to TAs' professional development and by extension the students in the TAs' classes. TAs are influenced by their teacher mentors (Mills, 2011b, p. 11), so if their teachers only use Web 1.0 technologies, it is possible that the TAs will do the same because they are comfortable with these tools and have experienced them. Instead of a cycle of new ideas being incorporated in the methods course, there is stagnation in language pedagogy (Hubbard, 2008, p. 185). This is particularly problematic given the speed of technological developments, decreased professional development after one's first year as a TA, and the fact that beginning teachers could possibly be teaching for 40 years into the future (Hubbard, 2008, p. 178). Some of them might become teacher educators themselves, preparing teachers who will in turn teach for decades into the future. Teacher educators must therefore be good role models who teach with newer technologies, but who also help their TAs understand how to evaluate technologies, so they can make informed decisions about using them in their classes. In other words, rather than focusing on specific applications, TAs need "conceptual tools that will enable them to evaluate and engage with subsequent research developments and swings in the methodological pendulum that will inevitably occur, especially in the area of technology" (Hubbard, 2008, p. 179).

To incorporate newer technologies in the classroom, teacher educators ideally should be comfortable with the technology themselves. However, Hubbard (2008) claimed that a lack of qualified faculty (p. 185) is the main reason why technology in the methods course is lacking. In other words, teacher educators might not be capable of using certain technologies effectively, or they might not even be aware of what new options exist. Both of these reasons could explain the lack of technology in these syllabi, as only one teacher educator in this study had completed a doctorate in a program that emphasized technology. Other faculty, such as the instructor of the Arabic methods course, did not specialize in pedagogy at all and instead was an expert in linguistics.

If teacher educators are unable for whatever reason to give the technological support their TAs need, they should arrange for support to be provided by someone else. For example, in a syllabus that required students to create digital teaching portfolios, workshops were provided about how to create a website. A different syllabus referred to a session being held in a computer lab to talk about PowerPoint and video clips, and another syllabus noted that students were required to bring their laptops to class on days when technology was the scheduled topic. If there are no specialized entities on campus for technology instruction, teacher educators should look at this as an opportunity for TAs to discover possible technology applications by reading articles and joining relevant professional organizations.

More important than just being able to train and troubleshoot, teacher educators must provide opportunities to reflect upon and evaluate technological tools (see Chapelle & Hegelheimer, 2004; Compton, 2009). Although this can be done on paper and face-to-face, a number of technologies can also be valuable tools for reflection. Discussion boards and blogs can host reflections about personal experiences and class readings, while at the same time providing the opportunity for other classmates to participate in the discussion. As these technologies are improving and changing, a reflective use of technology would permit the teacher learners to think critically about situations wherein a certain form of technology would best serve their students.

Technology on the Periphery

Some scholars (e.g., Hoven, 2007; Kessler, 2006) recommend that technology be woven into the curriculum. At the very least, textbook chapters about technology should be read early so that TAs can apply the knowledge throughout the remainder of the course. In this study, the course with the most examples of the "About" code introduced technology on the second day of class and continued to incorporate technology during the course. Obviously, the online class integrated technology throughout the semester as well. However, almost half (45.2%) of the syllabi in this study showed separate units about

technology. Separating technology implies that it does not play an integral role in the curriculum. It also creates missed opportunities for TAs to learn how to include technology as relevant contexts arise during the class. For instance, when TAs learn about teaching a language skill, it is an ideal moment to learn about related technological tools. In the case of methods courses with TAs from multiple languages, technology would be particularly helpful to personalize and reflect on course material. Even TAs who speak the same language could benefit from collaboration and personalization afforded by technology. However, as noted in the findings section of this article, there was a tendency for single-language classrooms to not include technology in their course calendar. Teacher educators who oversee TAs in only one language may have a clearer understanding of their language program, the publisher materials, and the technology available. They may have therefore made a conscious decision to limit the role of technology in the methods course because of real-life constraints.

Scheduling the technology unit at the end of the semester makes technology seem like an add-on or an afterthought. Furthermore, it prevents TAs from having the time to practice using technology and be comfortable with it. With limited CALL experience, teachers are less likely to incorporate it into their own classes (Egbert, Paulus, & Nakamichi, 2002). This lack of time with technology also means that TAs have less chance to practice evaluation skills for deciding if and how to implement technology in their own courses. Even if certain TAs are limited in the technology they are allowed to use in their current positions, it is impossible to know the contexts in which they will work later, so it is beneficial to them to practice evaluating technology for their future teaching positions.

All but one methods course in the present study learned about or through technology at least once, so it could be said that teacher educators do value technology to at least a small degree. However, given the prominence of older technologies and the peripheral role of technology, it is not surprising that only half (54.8%) of the syllabi in this study explicitly included technology into the goals and objectives. A lack of technology in the goals and objects could suggest any of the following:

1. Learning about technology and its possible applications in the FL classroom was not a priority for many teacher educators.
2. Technology was mostly absent from the methods course.
3. Technology was so seamlessly integrated into the curriculum that the teacher educators did not deem it necessary to signal it as an objective.
4. The instructor of the methods course did not feel comfortable enough with technology to include it into the course.

5. The teacher educator valued technology but was not skilled at writing a syllabus.
6. Syllabi do not always provide a complete or clear picture of what actually happens in a class.

On the other hand, mentioning technology in the objectives or goals could suggest that it is an important part of the methods course curriculum. It could also signal a non-integrated treatment of technology or even just lip service to this buzzword in pedagogy. For example, one syllabus cited "use resources available to foreign language teachers (journals, technology, professional organizations)" as a learning outcome of the course, yet none of the readings, assignments, or units led students to be able to accomplish that goal. This begs the question of how students would come to use technological resources. While this was the most extreme case, a disconnect between the course description and its components was present in other syllabi as well.

Depending on the course, any of the previously mentioned situations could be true. However, considering the presence of technology-specific modules as well as infrequent application of the "About" and "Through" codes in many classes, it is doubtful that technology was so well integrated into most of these courses that the instructors deemed it unnecessary to create additional explicit technology-related goals.

The methods course is the "key delivery point" (Dhonau et al., 2010, p. 73) for learning about possible implementations of technology because it is sometimes the only professional development opportunity that TAs participate in. However, the lack of new technology in the methods course and the peripheral treatment of technology do not constitute "substantive training" (MLA, 2007). In fact, the current treatment of technology promotes the *status quo* despite advances in CALL, and the methods course as it currently stands should therefore be rethought.

Limitations and Future Directions

Without observing these methods classes, it is difficult to know the exact role of technology, but a syllabus provides important information regardless. It is a required document that functions as a contract, and it outlines expectations. To ensure a more accurate interpretation of syllabi in the present study, relevant excerpts of this article were sent to the instructors of the courses described at length for verification that the classes were correctly described.

Because these syllabi were not randomly selected and comprise a relatively small sample of research universities and programs favoring Romance languages, it is difficult to generalize about the state of all teaching methods courses across the country. This article only tries to explain what some

programs are doing, with or without knowledge of the 2007 MLA report's recommendations, to provide TAs with training in technology. However, because the collected syllabi came from a variety of programs all across the country and reflect the reality that the majority of FL TAs are in Romance languages, they reveal important trends in methods courses.

To get a better understanding of how technology is incorporated into FL methods courses, more syllabi need to be collected, particularly from LCTL programs, because this population is frequently overlooked. The perspectives and backgrounds of teacher educators should be explored, since they determine how and what to teach in the methods course. Follow-up interviews with these instructors could uncover information about their experience and comfort with technology, their vision of the methods course, and their knowledge of the MLA report's recommendations. It would also be important to consider what is actually happening in the methods course, in particular the content of the discussions and reflections of novice teachers as they try to make sense of technological tools and apply them in their own classes.

Conclusions

This study has shown that, although some methods courses incorporated technology, there were missed opportunities to use, learn about, and evaluate newer technologies. Instead of receiving "substantive training" in technology, as the 2007 MLA report recommends, the impression that these syllabi give is that some students actually received *substandard* training. If TAs are expected to use technology when they teach now and in the future, methods classes must set an example.

What can TA educators do to provide better training in newer technologies given limited class time and ever-changing technology? Technology that lends itself well to the pedagogical topic at hand could be simultaneously presented and explored, followed by a brief oral or written reflection of why and how that tool could be used in the FL classroom. For example, when graduate students learn about writing and editing, they could explore Google Docs. If there is limited time for reflection in class, these discussions can take place outside of class time via blogs, chats, videos, and discussion forums. If teacher educators themselves are uncomfortable with or unfamiliar with available new technologies, TAs could be assigned various technologies to learn about, practice, reflect on, and share with the rest of the class throughout the course. Another manner to incorporate more technology while involving more members of the university community in the training of the TAs would be to invite professors, experienced TAs, and specialists in technology to lead demonstrations, workshops, and discussions about what they do in their own classrooms. Some of the methods courses in this study could benefit from a complete overhaul, but

at the very least, a few of the previously mentioned suggestions could – and should – be incorporated into all methods courses to improve the professional development of current and future FL TAs.

Note

1. For the purposes of this article, a teaching assistant is any graduate student that teaches a foreign language at a college or university.

About the Author

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