Research Issues and Language Program Direction

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Positional Pedagogies and Understanding the Other: Epistemological Research, Subjective Theories, Narratives, and the Language Program Director in a "Web of Relationships"[1]

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Introduction

In a search for a more satisfying general approach to what those of us teaching and directing programs for the learning of another language and culture do every day, we have found the beginnings of a new epistemological home in positional pedagogies, where knowledge and its sharing can be seen in a context ". . . in which people are defined not in terms of fixed identities, but by their location within shifting networks of relationships, which can be analyzed and changed" (Maher and Tetreault 1994, p. 164). This kind of positionality, "perhaps more than any other single factor, influences the construction of knowledge, and positional factors reflect relationships of power both within and outside the [language and culture] classroom itself" (p. 22). Part of the increasing complexity of this kind of approach to research and pedagogy is a realization that there is still a real need for the "complex interplay between the individual, the group, the teacher, the academic discipline, and the institutional context" (p. 91). This calls for a strong connection between the

"languages of experience and theory" (p. 91). There is little that more accurately describes the research, teaching, and service roles of the Language Program Director (LPD) than the daily need to find and reinforce connections between the languages of experience and theory.

The following studies will demonstrate how the ideas and research paradigms related to our foci—subjective and standpoint theories, narratives as vehicles of theory-building, and positionality and positional pedagogies as a way to interpret approaches to second language and culture acquisition and teaching (SLACAT) and program direction—can and have led to a coordination and ultimate synthesis of perspectives, where the self and other perspectives are explicitly compared and contrasted. First we will present concrete examples of research approaches, data collection, and some data analysis. Then we will proceed with thoughts on the negotiation of perspectives with the goal of syntheses that imply and make explicit a new creation and construction of knowledge about the content, context, and outcomes of research possibilities and mandates for the LPD. This set of strategies is meant to exemplify in concrete and research-oriented terms ways in which "understanding is created in a community of discourse, not in the minds of competing individuals with differing levels of expertise. Because the sources of knowledge are recognized as multiple, authority is redefined as well" (Maher and Tetreault 1994, p. 155). This approach will in turn show that, although individual voices and subjective theories and narratives are the definitional points of departure for suggested research paradigms for the LPD, we advocate not only ". . .personal solutions, but rather a need to examine the university's deepest cultural and epistemological assumptions concerning the origins and goals of knowledge" (p. 130). The resulting data analyses and conclusions, then, will illustrate how this type of epistemological inquiry is essential as a partial paradigm for the teaching, service, and research work of the LPD.

This contribution focuses on program direction for language and culture teaching and learning as a pedagogy of social practice. As such, ways of conceptualizing language and culture research and teaching from the perspectives of all participants in the process will be introduced to show how links can be made from the production of knowledge (i.e., from ways of knowing and the acts of learning and teaching) to content rooted in the narratives, histories, experiences, and meanings of Others within the culture, language program, and the classroom. Rather than excluding voices from discourse communities, this approach will attempt to show ways to

theorize and to develop a "dialogic emergence of culture" (Tedlock and Mannheim 1995) from the varying perspectives of all those involved in language programs at the university level.

Subjective and standpoint theories give us a theoretical basis to go beyond the mere inclusion or "adding on" of Others' works and lives in the analysis and understanding of second language and culture to actually beginning from Others' lives, that is, from their narratives and from their experiences, in order to generate research and pedagogical approaches. This view of subjective and standpoint theories is then put into practice and informed by positional pedagogy, both from the perspective of an LPD who is a teacher and model for the graduate teaching assistants (TAs) as well as from the perspectives of those engaged directly in the second language and culture acquisition and teaching (SLACAT) context.

Before continuing this discussion, we find it important to include some notes on basic aspects of our own positionalities. As a native German, I (Meerholz-Haerle)[2] received my education both in the US and Germany. For six years I was a TA in the German Studies Department described below. During this time, I also had the opportunity of working as an assistant coordinator with the TAs in the department. I (Wildner-Bassett) also received my education in both the US and Germany. At the time of the studies reported here, I had been the LPD for ten years in the same department as my participants. The two of us have worked collaboratively on several projects. The two facets of our research discussed here were undertaken independently by each of us, but we consulted on many aspects of each project as they were in progress.

Subjective Theories and Narratives—Definitional Work

Subjective theories are experientially based knowledge structures which exist in an individualized context of meaning. This context of meaning is in relation to a particular area of life or of experience, and it serves as an explanatory and orientational system for the individual. Subjective theories thus have psychological reality, even though the context of meaning, i.e., any particular subjective theory, is not necessarily explicit or conscious. An example would be the beliefs held by learners and teachers about language and about learning and teaching. Subjective theories are characterized as "complex cognitive structures that are highly individual,

relatively stable, and relatively enduring, and that fulfill the task of explaining and predicting such human phenomena as action, reaction, thinking, emotion, and perception" (Grotjahn 1991, p. 188). As Grotjahn goes on to clarify (pp. 189–90), research founded on subjective theories is related to:

- research on individual differences in SLA;
- ethnography;
- schemata in the information processing engaged in by teachers and learners;
- descriptive and explanatory goals of many forms of research;
- introspective data collection; and
- research on learners' strategies and learning styles.

It is indeed through research on this last point that we have found our way to both subjective theories as a research paradigm, and to positional pedagogies as a paradigm for becoming more like balanced bilinguals in the languages of experience and theory. As Grotjahn points out, subjective theories create a view of the goals of our research as one that will establish an epistemological model of the individuals involved in SLACAT. This model will explicate the web of relationships and positionalities which pervades the work and research of the LPD.

In recent years, a growing number of studies in teacher education and teacher development have focused on narratives told by teachers for the purposes of investigating their beliefs and knowledge about their teaching practice (e.g., Butt, Townsend, and Raymond 1990; Carter 1993; Connelly and Clandinin 1990). Teachers acquire much of their expertise in and their understandings of their practice in actual classroom situations. As Carter explains, for teachers, "the acquisition of expertise is, in essence, the acquisition of event-structured knowledge" (1993, p. 7). Studying narratives is an appropriate avenue for capturing and disseminating this event-structured knowledge, since narratives are centered around events and their sequencing. As Clandinin and Connelly state, "humans are storytelling organisms, who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world" (1992, p. 2). Bruner further explains that:

> *. . . we organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative—stories, excuses, myths, reasons*

> *for doing and not doing, and so on. Narrative is a conventional form, transmitted culturally and constrained by each individual's level of mastery and by his [sic] conglomerate of prosthetic devices, colleagues, and mentors. (1991, p. 4)*

For the LPD, narratives can function as an important source of insight into the culture(s) of teaching and learning co-constructed among the members of a language program. Understanding teachers' subjective theories about their classrooms and their teaching practice is essential to devising effective teacher development programs. If innovations within a program are envisioned, it is also essential to understand a program's underlying structures of beliefs and assumptions in order to devise appropriate strategies for implementing change. Teachers' narratives as a valuable source of data should by no means be underestimated. As White (1991, p. 226) has pointed out, when teachers share stories about their classroom experiences, they are reflecting on their own practice, putting their premises about teaching and their theoretical and practical priorities into a discussion forum, and they are implicitly encouraging others to do the same.

Although numerous recent studies have focused on teacher knowledge and beliefs, there are still many avenues which remain unexplored and which can provide a valuable site of exploration for the LPD as researcher and practitioner. Of the recent studies in the area, most have been conducted with preservice, beginning, and experienced school teachers (e.g., Carter 1994; Connelly and Clandinin 1990; Cortazzi 1991; Knowles and Reynolds 1991; Nias 1989; Pinnegar 1988; White 1991; Yaxley 1991). There are only a few studies which focus on the beliefs and knowledge of educators in a language teaching context (e.g., Freeman 1991, 1993; Kinginger 1997). Further research into this area is certainly warranted. We thus came to the point of developing our research projects from background theoretical work on narratives and on teacher knowledge and beliefs as aspects of subjective and standpoint theories.

Research Paradigms

There have been two general approaches, often viewed as being diametrically opposed, to research in SLACAT. Magnan points out that these two approaches or paradigms are seen as:

> *. . . facts vs. values, objectivity vs. subjectivity, fixed categories vs. emergent categories, static reality vs. fluid reality, outsider's perspective vs. insider's perspective, causal explanation vs. understanding. (1996, p. 3)*

As an alternative to this diametric opposition, Magnan illustrates how ". . . the researcher's search for a position of understanding in the text [the focus of the research questions; the topic and content of the research]" comes as a result of the "interaction of researcher and subjects. . . . [I]t becomes almost dialogic, as polyphonic voices interact with each other, shaping meaning and interpretation" (p. 11).

The two research projects described below are both qualitative case studies. This approach is particularly suitable for fostering the interaction between researchers and subject matter. As Denzin and Lincoln explain:

> *. . . qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape the inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. (1994, p. 4)*

Similarly, Johnson (1993, p. 7) advises that case studies be not neglected as an important research tool in the area of SLACAT because they help focus on individuals and small groups and lead to insights that include particular contexts and their complexities.

There are various ways to ensure the methodological rigor of qualitative studies. Johnson (1993) suggests, for instance, including a sufficiently large amount of data in order to gain a distinct understanding of typical and atypical occurrences. A clear description of the procedures used for data analysis is, of course, essential. Researchers can also verify their interpretation of the data by conducting a "member check" (Janesick 1994, p. 216). That is, they can ask participants in the project or members of the culture(s) studied to cross-check the interpretation of the findings, thus admitting polyphonic voices and multiple perspectives into the interpretive process. Janesick (1994) further points out that in qualitative research, validity is closely connected to credibility. It is crucial that interpretations and conclusions be substantiated by the data. Sufficient examples should therefore be included in the presentations of findings in order to enable readers to be co-judges of a study's validity.

Of course researchers also have to be conscious of their own backgrounds and training, and realize how their own positionalities shape any data interpretation. As Stake explains, even if a strong attempt is made to present a case and let it speak for itself, "it may be the case's own story [that is presented], but it is the researcher's dressing of the story" (1994, p. 240). It is therefore important for researchers to explicitly and consistently position themselves in relation to their work.

Objectivity in Second Language and Culture Acquisition and Teaching Research

This call for explicitly stating our research questions, collecting our data, and interpreting our findings in a way which is not a claim to be unmarked or generically human may itself call up for many the question of objectivity. Harding in fact points out that:

> *The most radical implication of understanding how the structure of the institutions of science structures the content of the science produced there . . . may be the recognition that whoever gets to define what counts as a scientific problem also gets a powerful role in shaping the picture of the world that results from scientific research. (1991, p. 40)*

She goes on to clarify that it is helpful to see the issue by noticing that "though scientific methods are selected . . . exactly in order to eliminate all social values from inquiry, they are actually operationalized to eliminate only those values that differ within whatever gets to count as the community of scientists" (p. 41).

Thus, many of the conclusions that have been drawn about SLACAT and the pedagogical implications often derived from those conclusions, may fit the experiences of only a small portion of the people whom these conclusions and implications will ultimately affect. Most of us will be able to agree that language acquisition and teaching are social phenomena which are bound to particular institutions (like schools or universities) and to particular political systems. These social phenomena are themselves defined by explicit and, even more, by implicit social and political norms (see also Grotjahn 1993, p. 237). These norms are in turn, most often related to the dominant conceptual schemata of some but not all of those involved in the daily work of institutions. There is indeed an implicit

"standpoint" in what we most often consider to be our most unbiased and objective approaches and standards for inquiry and implementation in language and culture teaching and in program administration. The call we are making here echoes, then, Harding's call for "strong objectivity," i.e., "the acknowledgment that all human beliefs—including our best scientific beliefs—are socially situated, but they also require a critical evaluation to determine which social situations tend to generate the most objective knowledge claims" (1991, p. 142). One final summary from Harding's definitional work can help us understand the application of these thoughts about standpoint theory and strong objectivity to issues of SLACAT and program administration:

> *To enact or operationalize the directive of strong objectivity is to value the Other's perspective and to pass over in thought into the social condition that creates it—not in order to stay there, to "go native" or merge the self with the Other, but in order to look back at the self in all its cultural particularity from a more distant, critical, objectifying location. (1991, p. 151)*

Data Types and Sources: Our Subjective Research Paradigms

We have chosen multiple and very diverse contexts within which to view the subjective theories and narratives of those involved in SLACAT. Our data is in the form of:

- videotaped records of meetings among teachers, coordinators, and supervisors for the purposes of language program direction;
- interviews with participants in those meetings;
- transcripts and analyses of the meetings and interviews;
- self-reflective journals of TAs;
- written autobiographies by TAs focused on explicating positionalities and standpoints;
- written dialogues which were interactive and collaborative explications of positionalities and standpoints; and
- critical reflections and process evaluations by the authors of the written dialogues and autobiographies on the gradual emergence

of statements concerning the shifting networks of relationships in institutional and personal contexts.

We have analyzed this array of data using various methodologies which help us understand how the interaction of experience and theory can be "... narrated and understood in terms of different language and descriptive lenses" (Maher and Tetreault 1994, p. 204). The different language and different descriptive lenses each of us have used will become apparent in the discussion, but we will also show how the many types of data and their analyses can be viewed as "polyphonic voices" that "interact with each other, shaping meaning and interpretation" (Magnan 1996).

Most of the recent studies on teacher narratives build on narrative data elicited by the investigator for research purposes. Various studies, for example, employ data gathered through interviews (e.g., Cortazzi 1991; Nias 1989; Pinnegar 1988), journal entries (e.g., Carter 1994), questionnaires (e.g., Nelson 1993), or teacher autobiographies (Goodson 1980; Knowles 1992). Some researchers have engaged participating teachers in a dialogic process. They have focused on the written correspondence between researchers and participants (see Clandinin and Connelly 1990) or on collaboratively constructed autobiographies (Butt, Raymond, and Yamagishi 1988; Butt, Townsend, and Raymond 1990) as a source of data. The latter approach asks participants to write and concurrently discuss their autobiographies with other participants, constantly revising their writings based on issues raised during the discussions.

There is a scarcity of studies using naturalistically occurring data for research into teachers' understandings of their practice. One of the few studies in this area was conducted by Gudmundsdottir (1991) who observed two social sciences teachers in their classrooms and analyzed the stories they told while teaching. In his large-scale study on primary teachers in Great Britain, Cortazzi (1991) includes some narratives told in a naturalistic context. He does not, however, present a detailed analysis of this part of his data. Bennett (1983) taped six lunch-time gatherings of college teachers. Her interest, however, is only directed toward the structural properties of certain narratives told in this setting. Hammersley (1984), Kainan (1994), and Pollard (1987) investigated teachers' staff room talk to gain insights into teachers' perspectives on their work. They categorize the teachers' concerns and describe the main functions of teacher-teacher talk in the classroom, but they do not conduct an actual analysis of the teachers' discourse.

This brief review of studies on teacher narratives and teacher understandings of their practice points to a need for studies which focus on language teachers interacting in their everyday naturalistic environment. Observing and analyzing narrative tellings in their naturalistic context will more adequately capture the emergent nature of teachers' culture(s). Focusing on narrative co-construction will provide insights into the subjective theories and assumptions that teachers posit, challenge, and maintain about their students, about themselves as teachers, and about their teaching practice.

As Jacoby and Ochs claim, "co-construction is *the joint creation of a form, stance, action, activity, identity, institution, skill, ideology, emotion, or other culturally meaningful reality*" (1995, p. 171; emphasis in the original). Participants in co-narration co-construct perspectives on and assumptions about the world around them. In the narrative process, they actually build theories of events, and challenge and redraft these theories collaboratively. This process of theory construction is traditionally associated more with environments such as laboratories or university seminars. Ochs and her colleagues (e.g. Ochs, Smith, and Taylor 1989; Ochs and Taylor 1992; Ochs et al. 1992) argue that this is a misconception, and that essentially the same process of positing, challenging, and redrafting theories takes place in such everyday gatherings as family dinners. The activity of constructing a narrative, they claim, is conducive to theory construction in all these environments.

We maintain here that the same process of theory-building which can be observed around family tables, in science laboratories, or in seminars can also be observed during professional meetings of TAs in a language program. In all cases, observations are made and theories are built based on these observations. In one of the meetings analyzed here, for instance, a TA told a story describing a student's destructive behavior during group work. Her criticism of this student led the group to a discussion on appropriate vs. inappropriate student conduct, or in other words, to co-construct a theory regarding the issue.

Theories, whether developed in a laboratory, around a dinner table, or in a meeting, are *potential* explanations of events and as such are challangeable (Ochs et al. 1992). They are merely versions of reality. Investigating which versions or which voices are heard more and which tend to be silenced will provide valuable insights not only into the dynamics of meetings, but also into the differential access to the construction of knowledge within a community.

Issues of Power and a Research Mandate for the Language Program Director

We will continue the discussion here by showing our intent to start from a footing within the approaches to research in SLACAT discussed above. There is a very close and direct connection between the ideas expressed in subjective and standpoint theories and the discoveries and warnings that have come to the study of SLACAT through the work of sociolinguists who have looked at language and gender. Those scholars have often reiterated that the forms and uses of language in many of our societies "designate men as the 'unmarked' and women as the 'marked' [or unusual, misfit, or exceptional] category" (Freeman and McElhinny 1996, p. 223). Freeman and McElhinny describe a dynamic process where "patterns of meaning or commonsense assumptions that guide people's behavior within a particular society" are created. These "cultural values and belief systems are closely linked to power" (p. 220). As Susan Gal puts it: ". . . the strongest form of power may well be the ability to define social reality, to impose visions of the world. Such visions are inscribed in language and, most importantly, enacted in interaction" (1992, p. 160).

Narratives and both subjective and standpoint theories thus help us become aware that in our research in SLACAT there are ways to take this "strongest form of power" into our own researchers' hands by clearly choosing and explicitly stating the standpoint from which we ask our research questions, collect our data, and interpret our findings. We as LPDs and researchers are also, then, able to both choose and to explicitly state our subjective theories and our standpoints in a particular interaction or in our interpretation of a particular narrative. New insights are necessary to accomplish these new analyses and to explicate subjective and standpoint theories and the power situations which grant anyone even a transitory ability to define social reality or impose a vision on a language program. These insights can be gained by an in-depth look at TAs' and LPDs' narratives, at their own expository and dialogic statements about their subjective and standpoint theories, and at the linguistic processes which point to salient events in those narrative and dialogic accounts.

Sociolinguistics and general linguistic analysis can help us understand this type of approach to research and interpretation as applied to the contexts of research for the LPD. Those fields have given us both definitions and research on *agency* in language. While there have been relatively few research studies published on "how agency is linguistically realized in

discursive practices," we know from Freeman and McElhinny's summary work that:

> *. . . an agentive individual [is] . . . one who speaks for himself or herself, accepts responsibilities for his or her thoughts, speech, and actions, and is recognizable separate from any particular collective. . . . [A]gency . . . is contingent upon discursive practices made available to the individual, and not automatically attributed to all human beings in the way that more traditional sociological theory assumes. (1996, p. 229)*

This harks directly back to what the standpoint theorists have said about the interaction of power, the dominant group, and a myth of typical human interaction in society. Thus LPDs and researchers of second language and culture acquisition and teaching need an analysis of language and culture to be based on a consciousness as set forth in subjective and standpoint theories. This consciousness needs then to be put into practice and informed by positional pedagogy. By making explicit and working with our own narratives and subjective theories which give us the perspective for starting from and declaring our "standpoint," that is, by explicitly stating our research questions, collecting our data, and interpreting our findings from a particular standpoint which does *not* claim to be unmarked or generically human, we will be able to use these findings and to teach (about) them in such a way as to make agency in the L2/C2 a viable possibility for all participants. We will also be able to view our work as LPDs as a way of making explicit our own and our TAs' subjective and standpoint theories about teaching and about program direction, and to move from theory to practice, which will then spiral to inform a new level of theory about language program direction and about research in SLACAT.

A Synthesis of Perspectives

Linguistic and cultural Otherness cannot be separated from any other form of Otherness. A synthesis of perspectives means that TAs and LPDs engage in a negotiation of perspectives, of their own and others' narratives, and of both subjective and standpoint theories when TAs and LPDs come into contact with Otherness in any form, be it the "other language," the "other culture," or "other" individuals (Schinschke 1995). This can proceed by:

- first an explicit definition of the perspectives of self and other;
- then a coordination of perspectives, where the self and other perspectives are explicitly compared and contrasted;
- followed by a negotiation of perspective with the goal of synthesis that implies, and if possible explicitly thematizes, creation and construction of new knowledge; and
- finally a construction and creation of new subjective theories relating to the newly negotiated knowledge and synthesis of perspectives.

A Case Study: Narratives, TAs, and the LPD

To investigate the co-construction of theories in the context of a language program, I (Meerholz-Haerle) video and audio taped the weekly meetings of four TA groups in a German Studies department over the course of the semester. The study addresses the following research questions:

- What functions do the narratives told by TAs serve in the meetings, i.e., why are they told?
- What themes are addressed, i.e., what are the TAs' preoccupations?
- What subjective theories do TAs co-construct about their own rights and responsibilities, as well as about their students' rights and responsibilities?
- What subjective theories are ratified as group theories, and who is involved in the process of ratification?

Methodology and Context

Fifteen TAs and one supervising faculty member participated in the study. The TAs were divided, in connection to their teaching duties, into four groups of two, three, four, and six participants respectively. They were teaching beginning and intermediate language courses (first- through fourth-semester German). All meetings were moderated by the coordinator (faculty member) who, in the two larger groups, worked together with an assistant coordinator (TA). The general format of the meetings was that of a roundtable discussion. The meetings were held in the department's seminar room (25'x12').

At the time of the taping, I had been part of the department's culture for six years and had attended previous meetings with most of the TAs. All of them had known me for at least one semester and, presumably, did not perceive my presence as an intrusion. Over the entire period of my data collection, only three overt references were made to the presence of the tape recorder and the fact that the meetings were being taped. Applying Adler and Adler's refined categorization of participant observers, I acted as a "peripheral-member-researcher" who "observe[d] and interact[ed] closely enough with members to establish an insider's identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership" (1994, p. 380).

The twenty-five meetings which were taped over the course of the semester yielded a total of twenty hours and fifty-six minutes of data. The meetings were transcribed in their entirety from the tape recording. In a second phase, non-verbal features were added to the notations based on the video recordings. Additional data was gathered from semi-structured interviews with all participants. The interviews were aimed at yielding general ethnographic information concerning all participants, as well as gaining explicitly formulated statements regarding their views on teacher and student roles, the purposes of coordination meetings, and the role of the coordinator.

My analytic approach is "inductive" (Janesick 1994, p. 215) in the sense that questions, categories, and themes were not superimposed on the data, but were allowed to emerge from it. A first step in the analysis was to identify the narratives which were told during the meetings. Initiators, main tellers, and protagonists were identified for each narrative and tabulated with respect to gender and status (TA/coordinator/student in language class). The number of co-participants in the individual tellings was also calculated.

Narratives were further classified according to the themes emerging from them. In order to avoid a too narrow classification, several themes could be assigned to one narrative. Most of the narratives in this corpus focus around grading and teaching issues, but others also thematize classroom management, professional conduct, and teaching tasks (i.e., problematizing teaching materials or lesson content). It is interesting to note that the TAs' preoccupation with grading and testing issues was less pronounced among the more experienced TAs studied. The TAs teaching in the first-year courses told more narratives aimed at shaping policy decisions. Compared to this, the TAs teaching in the second-year courses, who

were also more experienced, tended to narrate individual problems or unusual occurrences with the intention of either simply sharing their experiences or getting their colleagues' input on certain matters. This might be due to the fact that the German courses in the first year consist of several more components (e.g., a video lab, an oral practice session) than do the follow-up courses. Due to their greater complexity, the first-year courses are more thoroughly structured, leaving less opportunity for individual TAs to "do their own thing." The TAs in these courses spend a lot of time negotiating how to teach and evaluate program components. They accomplish much of this discussion through narratives, relating both what happened and what might happen because of certain group decisions. The TAs teaching in the second-year courses, on the other hand, are allowed more freedom for the creative shaping of their lessons. Less standardization of procedures is required, since their syllabus contains fewer standardized components. This also frees up time during their coordination meetings to discuss difficulties with students or teaching issues.

Telling narratives is an opportunity for the TAs to negotiate their theories and assumptions regarding issues such as student and teacher rights and responsibilities. The following segment presents a partial analysis of a narrative telling which took place in the group teaching second-semester German. The data was transcribed using HIAT, a computer program developed by Ehlich (1994).[3] The transcription conventions used are adapted from Jefferson (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974, pp. 731–733).[4]

This particular TA group consisted of the eight members as detailed in Table 1:[5]

Table 1

TA Group Demographics

Name	Gender	Native (NS) or Non-Native (NNS) Speaker of German	Age	Years of Teaching Experience
(In)*	female	NS	34	8
(Ju)**	female	NNS	27	5
(Ja)	female	NNS	28	2
(Na)	female	NNS	23	1
(An)	female	NS	24	1
(Ma)	male	NS	23	1
(Ch)	male	NS	23	1
(Ph)	male	NNS	24	1

*Coordinator (faculty) **Assistant coordinator (TA)

The TAs in the following data sample discuss how to evaluate essays that are turned in late. The students in our language program are generally required to first write a draft of their essays, correcting it based on their peers' as well as their instructor's input. The final draft of the essay is then due three days after the rough draft was turned in. To illustrate how she dealt with a late essay, Nadja tells a story about an incident which happened in her class that day.

```
    |Na[ in my class today, in my class today, one of the student
331 _-------------------------------------------------------------

    |Na[s that forgot her rough, I mean, her final draft, she ha
332 _-------------------------------------------------------------

    |Na[d, she said, well, I have a rough draft with me, and I s
333 _-------------------------------------------------------------

    |Na[ aid, well, can you (.) at least bring your final draft a
334 _-------------------------------------------------------------

    |Na[ny time soon after the class? no, I won't be able to mak
335 _-------------------------------------------------------------

    |Na[e it even today, so what if I bring it tomorrow? I said,
336 _-------------------------------------------------------------

    |Na[ no I don't take anything. So I didn't take the rough dr
337 _-------------------------------------------------------------

    |Na[ aft, I didn't take the (    ) and she doesn't get a
    |Ch[          oh!
338 _-------------------------------------------------------------

    |In[    (    )   yeah
    |Na[ ny, any points        and if she wanted 25 or wh
    |An[              yeah
    |Ma[                   tja, that's tough
    | _                    someone else also talking
    |Ch[                        that's tough
339 _-------------------------------------------------------------

    |Na[ atever points, she should work for it, well, I can't do
340 _-------------------------------------------------------------
```

```
    |Na[ it today
    |Ph[        it's not like she hasn't had two weeks
    | _                              va*rious:*
341 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |Ch[                             yeah, but
    |Ph[       or we haven't done this for the last (   )
    | _*right, mhm*                 *various: right, mhm*
342 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |Ju[  ok, so what would, what do you decide as a group?
343 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
```

Judging from the various "rights" and "mhms" (e.g., 340–341) in the background, the majority of the TAs in this group seem to approve of Nadja's handling of the situation. Phil even explicitly voices his support of her actions (340–341). Christian, however, expresses his surprise at Nadja's guidelines for accepting student essays (338; 342). When he starts to elaborate on his objection (341), he is interrupted by Judith, the assistant coordinator, who requests an explicit stating of the group decision on how to handle late essays. Phil responds that Nadja's handling of the situation was "precedent setting" and should be adopted by the group. He continues that this late in the semester (eleventh week), the students should be used to the essay writing process employed by the program:

```
    |Ph[                                 especially b
349 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |Ch[  (   )
    |Ph[ ecause they've had it this semester three times already,
350 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |Na[        right, I mean
    |Ph[ this process, it's not like they don't know the process
351 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |Ch[        well, yeah (.) if somebody tells me, what
    |Ph[
    | _ *someone: right*
352 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
```

```
    |Ja[                          if it's the same o
    |Ch[  if they say, this is my final draft?
    |Ph[                                ( )
353 _-----------------------------------------------

    |Ja[ ne that you wrote on, they didn't even bother just to re
354 _-----------------------------------------------

    |Ja[ type it, not make any changes
    |Ch[     yeah, what if they say, well that is my final draft
355 _-----------------------------------------------

    |In[ it isn't
    |Na[          it isn't
    |Ja[      it's not, it's their rough draft
    |Ch[                          what if they s
356 _-----------------------------------------------

    |Na[                      what if they say, this is
    |Ch[ ay, ok, what if they cross out rough draft
357 _-----------------------------------------------

    |Na[ my favorite dog, ok? what if
    | _                       laughter
    |Ch[                          no, no, this is no
358 _-----------------------------------------------

    |Na[                  well, it is
    |Ch[ t as stupid as you think     if they say, it's not, WE d
359 _-----------------------------------------------

    |Ch[ on't decide what their final version is, THEY decide wha
360 _-----------------------------------------------

    |Ja[          they
    |Ch[ t their final version is, if they say this is my final v
361 _-----------------------------------------------

    |Ch[ ersion, I don't do anything about it, that's what we hav
362 _-----------------------------------------------

    |Ja[                          no we don't
    |Ch[ e to accept and that's what we have to grade,
363 _-----------------------------------------------
```

|Na[no we don't
364 _- -

Facing the opposition of his entire group of colleagues, including the coordinators, Christian presents and maintains his theory that it is the students' right to decide which piece of writing is graded as their final draft. Christian is not easily swayed by his colleagues' unanimous opposition (356), but elaborates on a hypothetical case illustrating his grading theory (356–363). His subjective theory stresses the TAs' obligation to respect students' choices. He grants the students more input and power regarding their writing grades than the rest of the TA group. His theory constructs the teachers as reacting to student decisions, instead of establishing grading norms for them.

Nadja ridicules Christian's objection, challenging his theory (357–358). She implies that students might claim anything, but that their statements are of no importance to the matter at hand. The laughter that greets her utterance denotes general agreement and probably alludes to a generally shared assumption that students frequently make irrelevant comments which are best left ignored. The discussion continues with other TAs joining in. They all are in favor of Nadja's handling of the situation. After the assistant coordinator summarizes the group's grading policy, she directly addresses Christian again to ask whether he can "live with this:"

|Ch[actually, I don't understand really, b-,b-, but, le
| _ *stutters*
396 _- -

|Ch[t's not discuss eh, anymore, if they have a perfect roug
397 _- -

|Ch[h draft, they can, they have to write it again, make it,
398 _- -

|Ch[eh, have a different format and hand it in as the, the
399 _- -

|Ch[f- eh, because they are not allowed to hand this in as t
400 _- -

|Ch[he final draft I think, no, I think, you
| _ *someone mumbling, incomprehensible*
401 _- -

```
    |In[                                then
    |Ch[ have to look at it from the princi- from the principle a
402 _-------------------------------------------------------

    |In[ YOU should say in the rough draft, no re-write, this is
    |Ch[ pproach
403 _-------------------------------------------------------

    |In[ perfect      but you, you say (you don't) have to
    |Na[      yeah         you don't have to w
    |An[    yeah
    |Ph[     right
404 _-------------------------------------------------------

    |In[ have a rewrite, I do that in my class, too, most of th
    |Na[ rite (    )
    |Ch[                          right
405 _-------------------------------------------------------

    |In[ e people have to do a re-write, b-, b-, but say, if I s
    | _                        stutters
406 _-------------------------------------------------------

    |In[ ee a perfect paper, then I say, you don't have to go thr
407 _-------------------------------------------------------

    |In[ ough the process and rewrite it, and I say, no no re-wri
408 _-------------------------------------------------------

    |In[ te, I give 'em that feedback, and then I already take th
409 _-------------------------------------------------------

    |In[ e points, or the c- the credit for the final draft, if t
410 _-------------------------------------------------------

    |In[ at person is happy with it, even if I took several point
    |Ch[                      mhm
411 _-------------------------------------------------------
```

```
    |In[ s off, I said, of course you can rewrite it and get 100
    |Ch[    yeah
412 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |In[ percent, but if you're happy with 95, I'm happy with it,
413 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |In[ you know, but they, they ca-   yeah, but that's your
    | |                                 someo
    |Ch[     yeah, that's my approach, that's my approach
414 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |In[ decision, and not
    | | ne mumbling
    |Ch[     and that's not my approach, that, I think that
415 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |Ch[ 's their decision, that's not my decision, because I don
416 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |In[                    no,
    |An[              but you suggest, you
    |Ch[ 't see why it should be my decision
417 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |In[ but you are the teacher, and you are saying we are apply
    |An[ s-
418 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |In[ ing the process approach, and if we didn't apply the app
    | _                        someone moans
    |Ch[                              yea
419 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |In[ roach, then, you know    then the student is underm
    |Ch[ h              yeah, ok
420 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |In[ ining the approach, (.) (you know)
    |Ch[                          so, well, what if (tha
421 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
```

```
|An[                          food
|Ch[ t's true?)   ok, no, it's eh, it's fine   let's
| _        laughs
```

At the beginning of this segment, Christian still indicates his objection to the group decision, but also signals his willingness to abide by that decision. However, when he continues to elaborate on his own grading theory, Ingrid, the coordinator, interrupts him and initiates her longest sequence of turns in this data sample. In contrast to Christian's approach, Ingrid's theory grants the teacher the ultimate power of deciding what counts as a student's rough/final draft. In support of her theory, she describes the procedures she uses in her own class (an upper-level German language class). Except for Christian, the group supports Ingrid's approach. Christian agrees with the coordinator to a certain degree, indicating that giving the student an option is also his approach (414). Agreeing with Ingrid at first, Christian indicates a potential agreement between their two positions or theories. His dissent, however, becomes very obvious when he suddenly negates his consent, going from "yeah, that's my approach," to "and that's not my approach":

```
     |In[ you know, but they, they ca-   yeah, but that's your
     | |                                 someo
     |Ch[     yeah, that's my approach, that's my approach
414 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

     |In[ decision, and not
     | | ne mumbling
     |Ch[     and that's not my approach, that, I think that
415 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
```

Coordinator and TA grading theory here stand in clear contrast. As the continuing discussion shows, Christian eventually yields to pressure both from the coordinator, but also from the group. When he continues contradicting Ingrid (421), Anja signals her weariness of the discussion ("food"). Christian probably senses that his colleagues are getting weary of discussing the issue, and concedes to accepting the implementation of Nadja's grading policy.

```
    |In[ roach, then, you know        then the student is underm
    |Ch[ h            yeah, ok
420 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |In[ ining the approach, (.) (you know)
    |Ch[                        so, well, what if (tha
421 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |An[                            food
    |Ch[ t's true?)   ok, no, it's eh, it's fine   let's
    | _        laughs
422 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

    |Na[   so what we decided is, if there is no rough draft
    |Ch[ do it that way
423 _- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
```

The data presented above can help illuminate power relationships co-constructed within a group. It can also be used as a tool for investigating theories that TAs and coordinators hold concerning issues such as grading, testing, student behavior, and so forth. In meetings such as the ones described above, decisions are made and knowledge is co-constructed concerning major components of language programs. Whether the immediate goal is to implement change or to explore the direction of teacher development, it is essential for the LPD to examine and become aware of what constitutes the "professional culture of teachers" (Kainan 1994, p. 157) within a program. The data gathered and analyzed in the process can, of course, also contribute to generating further research questions and projects.

A final observation concerns the interviews conducted with TAs, assistant coordinators, coordinator, and LPD in the department. While TAs and assistant coordinators (advanced TAs) agreed that the meetings were held mainly to discuss exams and problem students, both the LPD and the coordinator (faculty members) also considered the TAs' professional development and their initiation to team work an essential purpose and goal. The LPD also stresses this aspect elsewhere:

> *. . . perhaps one of the most fertile opportunities for development are the weekly, course-specific coordination meetings in which all aspects of teaching as a professional endeavor are "cussed and discussed." (Wildner-Bassett 1992, p. 154)*

The TAs in this program sometimes seemed to experience their coordination meetings as a "waste of time"(Anna). Markus admitted that he gets "frustrated, because there's just some things we talk about that have absolutely no significance." Listening to the different voices present within a program and exploring subjective theories, not only about teaching-related issues, but also about professional expectations, might be beneficial to all members of the department. It seems that an explicit discussion about expectations and frustrations regarding the meetings might have been conducive to improving the working relationships this particular semester. In this way, the TAs, assistant coordinators, coordinator, and LPD would have been better able to co-construct group theories which were negotiated from various subjective theories about professional expectations among all those involved with SLACAT in the department.

A Case Study of Epistemological Exploration: A Graduate Course on the "Other"

A set of course components which realize and operationalize positional pedagogy footed in subjective and standpoint theories can be exemplified in our second case study, involving a graduate course taught in 1997. This case study of epistemological exploration is connected to the above study of narratives, teacher knowledge, and beliefs in that it had a focus on dialogic co-construction as a joint creation of a form, stance, action, activity, identity, institution, skill, ideology, emotion, or other culturally meaningful reality (Jacoby and Ochs 1995, p. 171). The course views gender and culture issues in the German-speaking world as a means to inspire students to think about themselves, others, and social organizations in new ways. The broadest form of these issues include difference, otherness, and outsiderness. The exploration begins by examining manifestations of these issues in the German-speaking world. The idea is to learn to practice a kind of "disloyalty" to conventional home culture and personal culture assumptions, as well to create a dialogue among individuals where they can collaboratively create their own emerging disloyalties.

The main **Educational Goals** of the course were to:

- learn about some of the elements of our own and other societies which are related to the multifaceted influences of gender, race, class, and various definitions of Otherness;
- become aware of the many ways of knowing and the assumptions about interpreting events and beliefs which shape any society and the individuals living in it;
- learn to use new awareness to compare and contrast various cultures and events in terms of the connotations and underlying implications that are different for each individual;
- gain an understanding of the sociological and anthropological notion of the stranger or outsider (*der/die Fremde*);
- learn to take the patterns women/Others in German-speaking societies create and the meanings they invent as a case study, and to learn from these patterns;
- have practical tools available to reconceptualize intercultural learning by placing a focus on *process* and on a subjective, experience-related understanding of the societies and cultures students come in contact with;
- enhance and find new tools for developing learner autonomy and critical thinking.

There were many opportunities for all of us participating in the course to explore and revise our positionalities in relation to many varied topics. Much of the evidence for and outcomes of these opportunities will be reflected in the data to be explored below. In addition to the expected and very productive classroom discussions, which will be excluded from the analysis due to a lack of objective recordings, there are three main data pools which will be investigated in order to reveal how the process of achieving an increased awareness of positionality, difference, and the possibilities for making connections across forms of difference once these differences were acknowledged became central to the mutual construction of knowledge in the classroom (Maher and Tetreault 1994, p. 251). This making of connections across forms of difference continued in the teaching and program direction aspects of all of our work. The classroom participants, their assignments, and especially process evaluations and an

analysis of the results of their assignments will be described in some detail below. It should be noted that the students in the class were all, with one exception, TAs in the program where the researcher (Wildner-Bassett) was the LPD. This interaction of voices and positionalities and the thematization of this interaction as a central content of the course and of the process evaluations and data analyses are what make the course an example of positional pedagogy founded in subjective and standpoint theories.

From the perspective of the LPD in a program where the students in this graduate-level course were taught by the LPD, I was also able to see and operationalize goals in addition to the educational ones listed above, namely:

- to get a subjective view of the TAs' ways of knowing, and relate this to possibilities for their ways of teaching;
- to explore and make conscious my own subjective theories about Others in all aspects of SLACAT, but especially in those aspects thematized in the course work;
- to find new ways of positioning myself in a pedagogical context where polyphonic voices and perspectives are in a steady process of redefinition;
- to begin to look at my own and the other participants' perspectives from a stance of Harding's (1991) strong objectivity; and
- to learn to look at my own and each of our Selves from a critical location made possible by the process of revisions of positionality and epistemological research.

In many ways, this course was itself an endeavor of epistemological research about positional pedagogy, ways of knowing, ways of teaching, and ways of learning, that was in process throughout the semester and that is still in process as I work with the data and reflect on my own roles as participant, instructor, and LPD.

Class Participants and Framework

The participants in this graduate-level course were four female and three male graduate students, all enrolled in the M.A. program in German Studies at our institution. Their ages ranged from 23 to 44 years of age. The birth cultures of four of the students were in various parts of Germany, including the former East, and of the other three were various parts

of the United States. Ethnicity in most general terms (Caucasian) was the only obvious trait where there was homogeneity in the group. The seminar, given in Spring 1997, was conducted in German, but students were allowed to choose the language in which they were most comfortable writing for a portion of the assignments. The data collected and analyzed in part below were related to the collaboratively constructed autobiographies as suggested in Butt, Raymond, and Yamagishi (1988) and Butt, Townsend, and Raymond (1990). Participants in this course were asked to write and concurrently discuss their autobiographies with other participants, revising their writings based on issues raised during the discussions. For several of the out-of-class activities related to collaborative construction, the seminar participants were asked to find a partner who could somehow be defined as Other, i.e., of other gender, background culture, family background, sexual, or other preferences, etc. These partners then worked together in construction of the "Intercultural Learning Portfolio." The portfolio contained, for each participant:

- three progressive versions of the Standpoint Autobiography;
- reactions to each version by the partner/Other;
- twelve entries in a partner journal (a dialogic written exchange which could only exist if collaborative co-construction took place); and
- critical assessments of the dialogic emergence of standpoint and cultural exchange, written by each participant individually. These latter entries gave the students an opportunity to take a step back to evaluate the process of their diadic discourse and to find a way to express their assessment of the process and of the collaborative products.

The best way to give our readers an impression of the voices and contents which the participants developed in their work with their Standpoint Autobiographies is to let their voices be "heard" here.

Standpoint Autobiographies

The students were asked to write three progressive versions of what we called their "Standpoint Autobiography." This was not intended, nor written, as an obvious "story of my life." The objective of this process-oriented assignment was, instead, to have students see and construct

themselves as learning and knowing subjects who bring into their own focus and consciousness, thematize, and develop an awareness and a way of expressing their own attitudes, positionalities, and perspectives on who they are in terms of Self, and who they see or react to as Other (Quasthoff 1993; Rao 1993). The possibilities and goals of Self and Other understanding are viewed through a problem-posing lens, where interactive participation and critical inquiry help to extend the ideas from the curriculum to the students' own lives (Wink 1997, p. 48). The implied goal of this process is also a gradual movement toward the perspective of the Other in any particular constellation of Self and Other, and then a possibility for a synthesis of perspectives. By means of presenting chosen aspects of Self for the assumed audience of an Other, the students gained insights and felt challenges in terms of coherence, consistency, and voicing key components of their standpoint and positionality in less ambiguous ways. The following are quotes from selected Standpoint Autobiographies of class members.[6]

> *TH: Since I have already spent 24 years on this earth, one could assume that I have developed as a person enough so that a definition of my own individuality could be seen as simple. First I see myself as a man who has grown up during a time in which many drastic changes in society are occurring. As a man a person is still in the position which brings the criticisms of the past and the present [with it]. . . . it is definitely important for me to mention that I anticipate an exchange of roles in the future, in which a Caucasian man will experience the negative aspects of [being] a minority. . . . it needs to be thought out how such an abrupt change in social-political terms might also bring its own problems in other aspects.*

> *OG: . . .Even the task of thinking about who I am makes my head hurt. Anyway, E, I am going to try for both our sakes to make this insightful, but more importantly truthful. . . . from age 11, I was happy again. I had lots of friends, lived on a farm, and had a new step-dad, who I loved dearly. About this time, I realized that I was gay. I guess it wasn't an overnight type of thing, but I knew I was different than most of the other boys my age. I still had friends, played little-league football, and pretended to have girlfriends, but slowly became introverted and nerdy. I knew that gay people existed, but I also knew it was "bad" to be gay. . . . I knew I couldn't possible live*

in a small-town [sic] for the rest of my life. I graduated first in my high school (as do many gay men) and took (of all things) a full Air Force scholarship. . . . My two older brothers took me out for my 21st birthday. . . . [T]hey took me from one strip bar to another. Not only was I a closeted gay man and totally uninterested in what these women were doing, but I had also been volunteering in a shelter for abused women and children and had become quite a feminist. I can sort of look back on that night and chuckle, sort of. Anyway, after that night, I decided to never be ashamed of who I am. . . .I am gay just like I have brown hair and green eyes. Nature put it there. . . .

AS: I want to ask myself the question of how I see myself and others culturally. . . . I was born into a blue-collar family, went through [minimal schooling], and then I worked many different jobs. I couldn't get any further [vocational training], this situation didn't allow it. I wasn't allowed to go to any further schooling, my mother didn't see the need for that. She had the standpoint, if you're born into a blue-collar family, you don't need to break out of the caste. . . . If I met people who had gone to the Gymnasium (college preparatory school), I couldn't keep up, we spoke a different language, had very different lives. . . . We learned as children to protect ourselves on the street, we learned to make the best of our situation. Parents, if one had any, were not able to show their children something different, except how to survive as well as possible. . . . Tolerance was not very important, we couldn't afford [tolerance], especially since I grew up as a girl without guidance. . . . We immediately had a bad reputation if we were seen with foreigners. [I moved to Spain.] On my first birthday in Spain (23 years old) I was surrounded by foreigners, and I was one myself. I felt great, the best I had felt in my life. We weren't foreigners, we were people. It didn't matter who had what, how much someone had, who did what. Important was only that we were friends and that we understood each other.

As these honest and very different first drafts of the Standpoint Autobiographies show us, there are many individual, role, and social-political differences among the voices in the dialogues. The depth and breadth of topics chosen by the participants, and of the voices they found to express their investment in these topics, also led these participants as TAs in their

own classrooms to become aware of the depth and breadth of difference and identity that their students were also most likely feeling and leaving unvoiced. The participants in this graduate class must also be acknowledged as exceptional in their eloquence and willingness to engage in this type of dialogic emergence of postitionality.

Reactions and Responses by Others

An integral part of the co-construction of the Standpoint Autobiographies was the reactions and responses of the partners in the diad. It became obvious, as the semester developed, that the participants were all equally engaged in the process, and that they saw the events taking place within the framework of the class and its projects as important beyond the usual seminar. Some student comments which support this point follow:[7]

> *VA : I am happy and thankful to have found a forum in the framework of this course where I can work out and discover my cultural standpoint and based on that to understand foreign (Other) cultures better. . . . Because of this it is difficult for me to refrain from personal reflections, but because of this it is the analysis of my own Standpoint that will lead to a general understanding of the theme of the course. . . . I think that the institution of the university is a very fitting place (or should be) to give us a venue and a frame for work on our own standpoint autobiographies. The "education of the mind" which is the traditional view within the university shouldn't be restricted to the consuming of texts, but should also include critical reflection about their contents. This is only possible if a person is conscious of her own standpoint, from which we reflect. . . . You see, I don't want to limit the "Other" to distanced localities or an exotic culture, but rather that I understand "Otherness" as a concept that extends to the personal and to the abstract."*

> *FS: The fact that VA's Standpoint Autobiography is so understandable for me is because this whole event takes place within the framework of a general exchange and in the framework of the seminar [where] a very good way and means of expressing ourselves has developed. That which she has written connects to what she says in the seminar, her standpoint is clear. . . . In this way, she makes it possible for me to differentiate what she says from what she writes[, and then] I can understand them differently and better.*

As the excerpts show, then, the participants became well aware of the difficulties, but also of the necessity and the ultimate rewards, of consciously building a discourse community that was different from the norm for them personally and for me as the instructor and as the LPD for this group of people. We all gradually became increasingly invested in a growing ability to engage in positional pedagogies on all levels available to us. This engagement helped us to " . . . understand that an awareness of positionality, difference, and the possibility of making connections across forms of difference once they are acknowledged is central to the construction of knowledge" (Maher and Tetreault 1994, p. 251).

Partner Journals

A second kind of discussion took place, where participants co-constructed "Partner Journals." Here students wrote to each other on themes related to the course topics which were also of personal importance to the diad. Diads were self-defined. Students used either paper-and-pen (or word-processed) entries in a written form of dialogue with another member of the class who the students had (self-) identified as somehow "Other." This self-declaration of "Other"ness could focus on differences in gender, culture, ethnicity, age, or preferences (sexual, political, personal life style, etc.). The participants engaged in an intensive written dialogue, where I, as the instructor, "stayed out," except to encourage and facilitate in terms of logistics. The future of this technique definitely lies in using computer aided, synchronous, written conversation, a technique which has been piloted with undergraduates as reported by Ittzes (1997). Specific examples, once again in the voices of the graduate students themselves, are included here.

> *EO: Hello OG! After we had such a lively discussion on Thursday about old, habitual ways of thinking, and then we discovered how quickly some of us (especially VA and I) are ready to categorize and deprecate some people based only on how they furnish and arrange their living rooms [based on photographs], where they go on vacation, what and how they eat, etc. I'm asking myself if that is also the case in America. I really can't imagine that people would do this so quickly here as we do in Germany. . . . What do you think? . . . As to the photographs we saw [in class]: when I see something like that and think about it, I always want to believe that the woman is "positioned" that way by chance, without the photographer asking her*

to do it. Maybe she just sat down there, because she wanted to, because she is used to being in the background, because she feels better there. Of course this is also a bad thing, if people are to the point where women just let themselves be satisfied with a hundred year long habit, or maybe even don't realize, how they are excluded or pushed into a certain position. Well, it's going to be a long, slow process, first to make women aware of such things, to sensitize them, and then to make it clear to them, that they are perhaps satisfied with many things because they are used to it that way, and not because it comes naturally to them.

OG: Hi E! I am sitting here eating my veggie couscous and almost crying over your entry #9. I should probably say that the stories of all of your friends is sad and shocking. You certainly have been through a lot. . . . Not only father-son conflicts occur, but also mother-son, and brother/sister conflicts arise (believe me, I know). My "subjective Theory" is that young men are destined to have conflict with their fathers, because men who grow up become heads of households and, in essence, make their own fathers obsolete. This is the typical father-son thing which Thomas Mann, Franz Kafka, and . . . [other] Germans wrote/write about. God, to have answers to this generational thing!!!

VA: Hello F!!!! First, I want to talk briefly about our course, before I take on another topic. . . . I have the impression, that some people aren't taking the contents of the course so seriously, because the way this course is structured is very different from the expectations of traditional course syllabi. Whatever is new causes a lack of understanding (. . . isn't exactly THAT our course topic???) [sic] and I think that this lack of understanding then . . . leads to defense mechanisms, that perhaps wouldn't develop these defenses in a "more traditional" structure of the course. . . . I wanted to chat about everyday understandings and subjective theories. I think that this field is thematized much too rarely, since I am convinced that a major portion of our daily judgments and prejudices, values, decisions, etc. are made on the basis of general knowledge, and that we are not at all conscious enough about how deeply we are influenced by this. There is rarely a requirement for explaining our value judgments, and if so, then they are quickly satisfied with a reference to

pseudo-scientific explanations. [There are always the exceptions.] . . . dangerous prejudices develop and become stereotypes, which effect [sic] new things negatively. I think that it is important for work on [a person's] standpoints so that the person at least starts to become conscious about value judgments, which are based on every-day knowledge or on subjective theories. Also, and especially in intercultural exchange this work on becoming conscious should be done, so that a person doesn't become a "victim" of his own cultural background. What do you think?

As becomes quickly obvious from these fairly typical entries in the Partner Journals, the participants in the course took their discussions from class, from their own subjective theories, from their experiences, and even from their teaching experiences, well beyond what could be accomplished in a typical class session. The topics of their journal entries, which ranged quite widely around the participants' own experiences and subjective theories, but which never strayed into the trivial in any respect, are here self-explanatory and need no further comment. A few comments in terms of voice and footing in these sample entries are, however, worthy of some brief (and definitely not exhaustive) analytical comments. First, all participants wrote directly to their partners, which became clear in their use of forms of address and their contextualization of their comments, even to the point of what they were doing (eating, etc.) at the time of the "conversations." The personal nature of these exchanges was important to all participants, and made my reading of them also a type of "eavesdropping" on dialogue. Despite this mutually acknowledged eavesdropping when I read the entries, there seemed to be no explicit anxieties for the participants connected to this situation.

Another interesting set of issues concerns the frame and voice (Tannen 1993) that the participants chose. In EO's entry, she begins with an agentive voice, and uses the first person to describe her own and another woman's reactions in a class discussion. As she moves on to the topic of women habitually taking a background position, and her hopes for the future on this topic, she uses a distancing and objectifying third person grammatical subject to talk about women. She is not yet, at least as evidenced by this entry, an agent who is identifying with her own particular positionality in relation to this topic. This interpretation is supported by her choice of the all encompassing generalization "women," rather than qualifying it with "some," for example. She can and wants to write about

it, but she does not seem willing to move into the position of an agent identified with women in this situation.

Another quite obvious indication from these entries is that subjective and standpoint theories, positionality, and epistemological research took on a living meaning for nearly all of the participants. VA was very articulate about finding her own stronger objectivity and discussing the process of her own epistemological research in terms of the process evaluation of the course participants, structures, and topics. While she generalizes and moves to an analytical or objective voice, it does not seem to be the same type of distancing that EO engages in. VA rather has a strongly objective and agentive voice in her use of third person toward the end of this entry, and she states her opinion clearly from within the positional context of a process evaluation not only of the course structures and outcomes, but also in terms of her own epistemological development. In sum, then, these results document techniques for creating and sustaining a dialogue by course partners among each other and with their own gradually developing interculturally learning Selves.

As is partially stated and strongly implied in the excerpt from OG's entry, participants also wrote about very personal and not always pleasant experiences. They, also without exception, reacted affectively, shared each other's painful and joyful experiences, and expressed their very personal and agentive reactions to each other's joys and sorrows. What was interesting, and exemplified by OG's entry excerpt, is that participants did not stop with sharing and caring. They continued to combine the voices of experiences with their knowledge and experiences from a more theoretical perspective. They were able to show, in many different contexts and examples, a strong connection between the languages of experience and theory, and therefore gain new perspectives, explore new or modified positionalities, and expand their epistemological research in mutually enriching ways. The success of these course structures has shown that the risks involved with an instructor's exclusively maintaining the role of facilitator and resource, the underpinnings of which have their roots in epistemological research and positional pedagogies, are well worth taking.

Conclusions

The examples from these case studies on teacher narratives in coordination meetings and within written dialogues on subjective theories and positional pedagogies in the graduate course, as well as the brief analyses

offered here, show how these types of epistemological research can explicate the construction of knowledge and reflect relationships among agentive individuals and Others. Constellations and negotiations of power within several contexts that are salient to the research, teaching, and service of the LPD are also thematized. We have presented:

- some of the complexities of the interplay among individual narratives and subjective theories;
- the group dynamics in class-related and coordination-related contexts;
- teachers and class participants as narrators of experience and theory;
- some of the details of our particular context and the more general context of SLACAT; and
- the institutional contexts surrounding all of these.

Just as the TAs in various contexts were able to reinforce connections between the languages of experience and theory in many different ways, we see these case studies as a way to increase understanding of Self and Other for LPDs who have the responsibility of being the most bilingual in the languages of experience and theory in all aspects of the work we do. We'd like to conclude with a final quotation from one of the journal entries of our participants (OG):

> *If there's one thing I learned at UA that I will take with me forever: Those who 'can' . . . teach, those who 'can't' go into some less significant line of work. (right, Mary?)*

Right! If we as LPDs can leave at least this subjective theory with our TAs as a main strand in the web of relationships that captures the parallels between epistemological research and pedagogy, then we have accomplished a great deal indeed.

Notes

1. "A web of relationships is the metaphor that best captures the parallels between research and pedagogy." (Maher and Tetrault 1994, p. 229).
2. My contributions to this discussion are partially based on my dissertation (in progress): *Teachers Talking Shop: A Discourse Study of TA Coordination Meetings.* University of Arizona.

3. HIAT stands for "Halbinterpretative Arbeitstranskription," and was developed by Erlich (e.g., 1994) to facilitate the writing of transcriptions. Ehlich explains the choice of name as follows:

> *". . . interpretative" refers to the overall hermeneutic process of understanding the spoken data. That the process is open to further analytical steps is reflected in the qualification of the name as being "semi-interpretative (halbinterpretativ)." A fine English version of the name that still preserved the acronym has been proposed by Dafydd Gibbon: "Heuristic Interpretive Auditory Transcription [. . .]" (1993, p. 125).*

HIAT runs on MS-DOS and represents data in the form of a graphic unit similar to a musical score or partiture (see data samples in the article). This format offers an adept visual representation of simultaneously occurring verbal and non-verbal behavior. The "score transcription" (p. 131) makes overlaps and turn-taking easy to note and analyze. According to Ehlich:

> *"A musical score makes use of the two-dimensionality of an area for representation purposes. Semiotic events arrayed horizontally on a line follow each other in time, whereas events on the same vertical axis represent simultaneous acoustic events produced by different musical instruments, such as the violin, the trumpet and the piano. One can consider simultaneous speech of several speakers at a time as a complex acoustic event similar to the simultaneous realization of a multitude of musical notes in a concerto." (1993, p. 129)*

The program is able to accommodate up to nine speakers. For each, it provides one line for the representation of verbal communication, and up to four lines for the notation of non-verbal features. Since this version of HIAT does not automatically separate words, the lines for each speaker flow like a "band" (Ehlich 1993, p. 137) from one unit in the score to the next.

4. The following transcription symbols are most pertinent to this analysis:

(.)	short, untimed pause of one-tenth of a second or less
-	cut-off
( )	doubtful or barely comprehensible sequence
CAPS	denotes emphasis

5. Initials used are for pseudonyms of the actual persons involved. Only enough personal data is supplied here to help establish identity issues that are potentially salient for the discussion at hand. Data was collected and used in reporting with the explicit permission of the subjects.
6. All segments from student writing are used here with the explicit permission of the authors. Authors' initials have been changed to respect anonymity. Most entries were written in German. Rather than reproducing both the original and the translation, only translations (by the two authors of this contribution) are included here to save space.
7. These comments were made in the Partner Journals which will be discussed in more details below.

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