

***Development and
Supervision of
Teaching Assistants
in Foreign Languages***

***Joel C. Walz
Editor***

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Development and Supervision of Teaching Assistants in Foreign Languages
Edited by Joel C. Waltz

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Breaking Out of the Vicious Circle: TA Training, Education, and Supervision for the Less Commonly Taught Languages

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Recent political events transpiring across the globe, from Tiananmen Square to Red Square, from Berlin to Baghdad, and from Tokyo to Johannesburg, have drastically changed Americans' view of the world and their own place in it.¹ According to enrollment records reported in the *Modern Language Journal* ("Foreign," 1991), American university students are expressing greater interest than before in some of the less commonly taught languages (LCTs), including Chinese, Japanese, and Russian. Enrollments in Arabic may likely increase in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War. Other sources also report increases in enrollments in some of these languages (National Foreign Language Center, 1991; Walker, 1991). As of 1990, there were approximately 45,000 college and university students of Japanese, 44,000 students of Russian, 19,000 students of Chinese, 3,000 students of Arabic, and 24,000 students of other LCTs (including other Asian languages, African languages, languages of native peoples of North America, Modern Hebrew, and other LCTs of Europe), for a total of 135,000 students engaged in the study of a less commonly taught language. Assuming a

hypothetical student–teacher ratio of 30:1, one might safely conclude that there are more than four thousand teachers (professors, lecturers, and teaching assistants) at colleges and universities across the country.

Many of the introductory- and intermediate-level courses in these languages are taught by graduate teaching assistants (TAs) or native-speaker lecturers. These instructors often have little or no formal preparation in the foreign language pedagogy of their target language and also have little or no supervision in their work. Many of them ultimately earn doctorates, with dissertations in literature or linguistics, and take positions as junior faculty at institutions where they continue to teach language courses. Despite their own lack of any formal preparation in second language acquisition or in the methods of teaching their target language, they often find themselves responsible for supervising TAs.

Problems in the development of instructional materials and the implementation of teacher training, education, and supervision in the LCTs feed into a vicious circle: enrollments are not large enough to support the hiring of specialists in second language acquisition to provide programs of professional development for each of the LCTs, and thus there are few or no opportunities for teacher training (short-term workshops and orientations that are program-specific), education (long-term, not program-specific), and supervision. As a result, teachers are less likely to be able to help their programs retain students through higher levels of instruction to achieve better learner outcomes or to build their enrollments in the more advanced courses. In the remainder of this chapter, I will examine some of the factors contributing to the vicious circle and suggest steps that we can take to break out of it.

The Vicious Circle

Numerous articles describe foreign language teacher preparation programs in general (such as Rivers, 1983; Chism & Warner, 1987) and teacher preparation programs in the more commonly taught languages (for example, Bernhardt & Hammadou, 1987; Donahue, 1980; Gilbert & McArthur, 1975; Knop & Herron, 1982; Parrett, 1987; Pons, 1987; Rava, 1987; and Zimpher & Yessayan, 1987). Much has been written about teacher preparation for the international TA and especially for the native-speaker foreign language TA (Gutiérrez, 1987; Lalande & Strasser, 1987; Stern, 1983). However, very little has been written about professional development

programs specifically for TAs in the LCTs. Since 1980 only two articles about TA or teacher training and education were published for Russian (Chaput, 1991; Ervin, 1981) and one for Arabic (Rammuny, 1989). None were published for Chinese or Japanese. Although a number of published works for all these languages have presented “prescriptions” or “recipes” for successful instruction, most are based only on personal experience (e.g., for Arabic — Younes, 1990; for Chinese — Packard, 1989, and Wang, 1989; and for Japanese — Jorden, 1987).

The lack of published works on programs of professional development in the LCTs may indicate that few such programs exist. In one survey of foreign language graduate programs, only 15% of programs in the LCTs reported that they required a graduate course in methods of teaching for their TAs (Devens & Bennett, 1985, p. 25), despite the fact that as long ago as 1980 there were close to 150 TAs in these languages (Schulz, 1980, p. 2). Given the tremendous increase in Japanese enrollments and significant increases in Russian and Chinese enrollments since that time, the number of TAs in these languages is likely to have increased.

Specialists in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian interviewed for this study² agree that introductory-level and intermediate-level courses in these languages are quite commonly taught by TAs and native speaker lecturers at colleges and universities that often have made no provision for teacher preparation. One specialist — who asked for anonymity — described teacher training and education in his field as “haphazard at best,” while another described her field’s offerings as “sporadic.” A third specialist said that TAs who demonstrated interest in pedagogy and had teacher training on their curricula vitae were often considered “tainted” in the job market.

Ronald Walton (1989, p. 18), writing of the situation in Chinese, complains, “There is no teacher training, but rather teacher adaptation to idiosyncratic institutional settings.” Speaking of the less commonly taught languages in general, he notes that some programs, desperate for LCT teachers, hire instructors without going through the normal certification procedures or checks on professional competence. This leads to a perverse situation in which languages typically considered more “challenging” for Americans, such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian, which require a high degree of professional pedagogical training, are taught by instructors who are less qualified in some respects than instructors of the “less challenging,” more commonly taught languages (Walton, 1991). Walker (1989b,

p. 119) concurs, noting the institutional lack of opportunities for teacher training, at both the secondary and postsecondary levels.

The consequences of the lack of teacher training are quite real in terms of learner outcomes. One study (Duff & Polio, 1990), for example, links teacher training to use of the target language in the foreign or second language (L2) classroom for both commonly taught and LCT languages. Although many untrained instructors may receive positive student evaluations, one must bear in mind that the “consumers” are often unsophisticated and may not know what they are missing. Sophisticated learners are frequently dissatisfied in LCT classrooms. One such learner of a less commonly taught language wrote of her disappointment in the instruction she was offered by noting the instructor’s utter neglect to provide authentic input and opportunities for students to use the language in the classroom (Neu, 1991, p. 440). Complaints about poor teaching can be found in work by scholars of Arabic (Belnap, 1987, p. 37; Younes, 1990, p. 107); of Chinese (Walker, 1989a, p. 44; Walton, 1989, p. 8); of Japanese (Jordan, 1987, pp. 11–12); and of Russian (Baker, 1980; Chaput, 1991, p. 392, if only implicitly; Rifkin, in press, a).

One might view attrition rates in the LCTs as evidence of problematic instruction, despite student evaluations to the contrary. Belnap (1987, p. 31) reports a 50% per year attrition rate in Arabic. Dien (1985, p. 103) reports a 36–38% attrition *within* each of the first- and second-year Chinese courses he surveyed and what appears to be a 61% attrition rate *between* the first and second years. Kataoka (1986, p. 192) reports “considerable” attrition in Japanese language classes. The *National Foreign Language Center Survey of Russian Instruction* (in press) reports similar trends for Russian. Clearly, our students are voting with their feet.

Much has been written about the development of speaking skills or the development of instructional materials and assessment instruments for the LCTs, but, as one specialist (Allen, 1990, p. 2) points out, our profession may be neglecting items that should be at the top of our agenda:

Any number of conference titles can be invoked to confirm the impression that, in planning programs of language teaching and/or learning, the most logical sequence is represented by something along the following lines: Goals, Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Testing and Evaluation. Now, when we consult the proficiency “scenario” in its historical context, it becomes clear that the lion’s share

of attention, debate, and controversy thus far has focused on the later (or, at least, the latter) end of this sequence. We are, in a very real sense, working from Z to A.

The vast majority of articles and surveys of instruction published since 1980 in the various professional journals for teachers of LCTs on problems in pedagogy, applied linguistics, and instruction avoid the broader question of professional development for TAs and teachers (for instance, for Arabic — McCarus, 1987; Parkinson, 1985; Younes, 1990; for Chinese — Chi, 1989; Dien, 1985; Packard, 1989; for Japanese — Jorden, 1987; Kataoka, 1986; Samuel, 1987; and for Russian — Launer, 1977; Thompson, 1977). In each of these fields, however, some do call for a commitment to teacher preparation: Ryding (1989) for the LCTs in general; Allen (1990) in Arabic; Walton (1989) in Chinese; Samuel (1987) and Jorden (personal communication) in Japanese; Rifkin (in press, a) and Thompson (1991) in Russian. These specialists believe that we must reassess our professional needs and establish as one of our top priorities the professional development of teachers, without which we will never be able to share in the progress made in understanding the processes of foreign language acquisition.

For most of the LCTs some programs for teacher training on the secondary level do exist; they are conducted during the summer and funded by organizations such as the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Ford Foundation. However, it is inefficient to provide special programs for secondary-level teachers while ignoring the professional development of the postsecondary-level teachers and TAs. If we establish regular programs for the professional development of postsecondary-level teachers, some of them will ultimately become teacher trainers for secondary-level teachers. Thus, programs for TAs and other postsecondary teachers would be an efficient means to promote the spread of instruction in the LCTs to the secondary level by providing for a larger range of options for secondary-level teacher education in these languages at institutions across the country.

As efficient as teacher preparation on the secondary level may be, few institutions provide for LCT TA professional development in a systematic way, according to surveys for Japanese and Russian conducted by the National Foreign Language Center and according to my interviews with specialists in Arabic and Chinese (see note 2). In the era of ever-tightening budgets, some institutions may reject requests to fund LCT teacher preparation because there are so few new teachers in any one of these languages in

any given year or because many or all of the LCT TAs are native speakers and therefore may appear to administrators to have no need for such programs.

But those who hold that target-native speakers (i.e., native speakers of the foreign language that is the “target” of instruction) need no professional development programs to increase their understanding of learning and instructional processes are seriously mistaken: native proficiency in a language is not in itself sufficient preparation for teaching that language. In some instances graduate students in engineering and chemistry, originally from Taiwan or Egypt, are funded as TAs in Chinese or Arabic language classes, but this practice devalues the entire language learning enterprise by suggesting that the acquisition process is essentially a mechanical transfer of knowledge. Target-native speakers preparing to become language teachers, but who have no pedagogical training, often model their teaching on their own learning experiences in their native lands (Duff & Polio, 1990; Goodlad, 1983; Herold, 1977; Liskin-Gasparro, 1984; Walker, 1989a). The resulting instruction is often not in keeping with American students’ learning styles and needs. As Jordan (1987) points out, target-natives are unlikely to understand or be able to predict areas where base-natives (i.e., native speakers of English in the American context) will experience intercultural misunderstandings, nor will they be able to provide adequate explanations of linguistic and cultural phenomena without special preparation to do so. Thus, LCT TAs, the next generation of assistant professors, deprived of opportunities for professional development, are trapped within the LCT vicious circle.

The view that foreign language instruction is a mechanical process that requires no professional preparation other than target-language competency is the legacy of instruction in Latin as a mental exercise. Swaffar (1989, pp. 123–24) discusses some of the assumptions about foreign language instruction that are a product of this view:

- 1) The goal of a language program is to teach its literature and its historical-linguistic development.
- 2) Teaching elementary language is not a university-level activity.
- 3) Elementary language learning is mechanistic, a matter of acquiring rote skills.
- 4) Instruction in beginning languages lacks the intellectual rigor of literary and linguistic theory.

Each of these assumptions is unfounded, both with respect to the more commonly taught languages and to the LCTs, regardless of the widespread perception of some of these languages as so difficult for Americans as to justify instructional methods unacceptable in the contemporary French, German, or Spanish classroom. Since the advent of the audiolingual movement, foreign language instructors in most languages have begun to respond to students' expressed interest in learning to speak a foreign language and have begun to focus their instruction on the development of more functional skills and communication or fluency activities, rather than devoting most of their attention to the analysis of language structures. In the face of changes that have swept the foreign language profession in the last 50 years, we have learned that the processes of language acquisition and language instruction are far from mechanical at any level of instruction, but rather are very complex processes requiring sophisticated instructional strategies in order to achieve successful learner outcomes. Academe has begun, slowly, to recognize the scholarly value of research in instructional methods and foreign language acquisition. The Committee on Institutional Cooperation, an organization consisting of representatives of the "Big Ten" universities, together with the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois at Chicago, urges that language program directors' research in pedagogy and related fields be counted toward tenure (Lee & VanPatten, 1990, p. 114). The Modern Language Association also recognizes the legitimacy of research in these fields (MLA Commission on Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics, 1986, p. 3).

The lack of teacher training, education, and supervision is but one of the more significant factors that binds the vicious circle for the LCTs. Another of these factors is the issue of instructional materials. When criteria for the evaluation of instructional materials established by Bragger (1985), Schulz (1991a), Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes (1991), and Walz (1986) for the more commonly taught languages are applied to the materials available for the LCTs, the results are clear: instructional materials for our languages are, for the most part, catastrophic. As noted by Walker (1989b, p. 131), these materials are infrequently renewed, making improvements even less likely. Parkinson (1985, p. 18) and Walton (1989, p. 9) lament the quality of materials available for Arabic and Chinese, while Thompson (1991) and Rifkin (in press, b) voice similar concerns about materials for Russian. There seem to be fewer complaints *in print* about materials in Japanese, but in discussions with specialists in this field (see note 2), this writer heard of much

dissatisfaction in terms of the lack of instructional materials that would provide for truly communicative activities in the Japanese classroom. Since LCT TAs often have little or no pedagogical training, they may rely excessively on the instructional materials they are given. Many foreign language teacher educators note time and again that they expect teachers to develop materials, exercises, and activities for their classes that the textbooks fail to provide (Andrews, 1983, p. 130; Ariew, 1982, p. 31), but in the LCTs, where instructional materials are generally deficient and teacher preparation generally lacking, TAs are simply not prepared to make up for these deficiencies.

Publishers are reluctant to become involved in textbook ventures for small markets that produce even smaller profits. In fact, the market for state-of-the-art instructional materials in the LCTs is even smaller than our enrollments might suggest; because so few instructors of LCTs ever have the opportunity to study methods of teaching foreign languages, they are often resistant to innovations in instructional methods and materials. Liskin-Gasparro (1984, p. 31) has observed that “the grammatically oriented text... has conditioned language teachers to make the *structure* of the language, rather than proficiency in the *use* of the language, the focus of a course of study” (her italics). Thus, many instructors prefer to use older instructional materials despite the availability of materials with newer approaches to foreign language study, such as a greater focus on communication activities and authentic input — for instance, *Let's Learn Arabic* (Allen & Allouche, 1988), *Ahsalan wa-Sahlan* (Alosh, 1989), *Japanese: The Spoken Language* (Jordan & Noda, 1990), *Learn Japanese* (Young & Nakajima, 1990), *Reading Real Russian* (Thompson & Urevich, 1991), and materials in Chinese, Japanese, and Russian available from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (*Instructional Materials for the Teaching of Less Commonly Taught Languages*, n.d.). Resistance to and suspicion of innovation in instructional strategies is a significant factor in the LCTs, according to all those interviewed for this study, despite the fact that all the evidence to date suggests that authentic input and opportunities to practice language use (fluency activities) are the most efficient route to the development of communicative performance in commonly and less commonly taught languages alike (Brumfit, 1983; Dvorak, 1977; Rivers, 1986; Savignon, 1983; VanPatten, 1988, 1992a, 1992b).

Traditional instructional materials, in which so much attention is devoted to structure, may remain popular for a variety of reasons. They are

the most familiar. They present an overview of the entire grammatical structure of the target language. They also devote considerable attention to instruction in the writing system, especially of languages with a nonalphabetic script. The prevalence of traditional materials is self-generating: textbook writers are often inspired by the books they themselves used when they were students. Leaver (1991), in a review of a new textbook for Ukrainian, noted that it lacked authentic reading and listening texts and that the authors made little attempt to develop communicative competence. The review (p. 282) concludes: "The teacher concerned with communicative competence can supplement these materials with authentic reading and listening materials and with more communicative classroom activities." Realistically speaking, however, many instructors of this language may not seek out such supplementary materials and activities, since few may know that they promote the process of language acquisition. Furthermore, those instructors who are sufficiently well informed to want authentic reading and listening texts are unlikely to have the resources to find them themselves.

LCT instructors across the country continue to produce their own materials in relative isolation, often reinventing what others have already done. Again and again one hears the refrain, "We have been so frustrated for so long that we have developed our own materials." While some of these materials might be very good (in which case one would hope that they would be published and shared with the entire teaching community), often locally produced materials are likely to be problematic, since they may be designed by people with no methodological training. Jordan and Walton (1987, p. 122) observe, "Parallel to the mistaken assumption that anyone who knows a language is automatically qualified to teach it is the equally mistaken assumption that the same individuals are equally qualified to produce text materials." Those who create "home-grown" instructional materials without careful collaboration with other specialists tend to produce materials that emphasize linguistic theory at the expense of authentic input or communicative activities, or materials that provide authentic texts or activities lacking a rigorous linguistic foundation (Jordan & Walton, 1987, p. 114). Furthermore, the current lack of communicative textbooks in Chinese and Russian is more than regrettable. The pervasive use of older materials feeds into the vicious circle in that TAs and junior faculty who use these materials, but who never had opportunities for professional development, are likely to resist the introduction of new instructional materials as well as the methods they represent.

Breaking Out of the Vicious Circle: Professional Development for LCT TAs

Some authors are currently writing communicative instructional materials for some of the LCTs, including Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian, but these materials, no matter how high their quality, will disappear if our departments are not prepared to adopt them for instruction. Furthermore, unless we undertake reform and work to change attitudes within academe, we will not be prepared to accept the next pedagogical innovation when it appears in the years to come. The most important changes that we need to make lie in the area of providing for our TAs' professional development. We must recognize the fact that most teachers with Ph.D.'s in languages and literatures, whether more or less commonly taught, spend a good deal of their time in language instruction.

We need to establish programs for teachers' professional development and provide all graduate students (whether they become TAs in our programs or not) with opportunities to participate in them. Even those graduate students who are not employed as TAs in our own programs are likely, some day, to be teaching language at some other institution. The Ph.D. is not only a recognition of scholarly research, but also a license to teach, and we have an obligation to ensure that all those to whom we grant the Ph.D. are competent to teach their target language. Some of us have collaborated with colleagues in the more commonly taught languages, bringing our TAs together for joint workshops and methods courses (Garner, Geitz, Knop, Mangan & Di Donato, 1987), which is certainly one way of overcoming the financial barriers to programs for the professional development of TAs for small departments. In some circumstances, however, the needs of LCT teachers may be neglected in the context of a teacher preparation program in which 95% of the participants are teachers of French, Spanish, and German. A solution to this problem would be to bring together into one group the teachers of all the LCTs for a separate professional development program at each institution. Participants in a program dedicated to serving the needs of LCT TAs would be able to share with one another their unique perspectives and needs, making explicit some of their notions of language learning and instruction relevant to their target languages as they grow toward a better understanding of the language acquisition process. The professional development program for LCT TAs should include three

distinct components, each with its own goals and corresponding design: teacher training, teacher education, and teacher supervision.

LCT TA Training: The Preservice Workshop and In-Service Practicum

Once LCT TAs have been selected, they should be enrolled in a training program consisting of a preservice workshop and an in-service practicum. The preservice workshop should familiarize new TAs with the language programs in which they are about to participate, the instructional materials they will use, and the kinds of tasks they will face in working with the learners in their classrooms. Chism & Warner (1987) offer a number of descriptions of preservice workshops.

The preservice workshop should be dedicated to the TAs' most immediate classroom needs in order to be most effective (Ervin & Muyskens, 1982; Larsen-Freeman, 1983): planning an introductory lesson, presenting a pattern drill, introducing a dialogue, and taking care of pressing administrative details. The preservice workshop should provide TAs with opportunities to observe sample lessons in the LCTs and opportunities to practice teaching lessons to one another. The LCT preservice workshop should demonstrate to TAs how they can teach in the target language, despite any preconceived notions that it is "too difficult" for Americans. By presenting a sample lesson, the LCT preservice workshop director can do much to dispel notions that might prevent TAs from using the target language in their introductory-level courses and help them understand the value of authentic input at every level of instruction. One teaching assistant in Russian at my own institution, a native speaker from Moscow, was excited to observe an introductory Russian lesson because, as he said, he simply could not imagine beginning a class from "nil" and moving rapidly into communicative activities in the target language with simple language and memorized material involving greetings and introductions. Mixed language groups of TAs drawn from the LCTs provide a marvelous opportunity for TAs to reexperience the learning of a foreign language (Garner, Geitz, Knop, Magnan & Di Donato, 1987) as they discover the joys of teaching one.

The preservice workshop is also the place to establish the importance of the affective domain of the foreign language classroom, to talk about the differences between teacher-student relationships in the United States and in the target cultures, and to discuss different kinds of instructional formats, such as pair work and small-group activities (Billson & Tiberius,

1989). We need to remind LCT TAs of the importance of our learners' psychological needs and the relationship between affective concerns and foreign language teaching methods and practices (Rivers, 1991), since it is difficult to learn in an atmosphere lacking in trust and security. Rivers (1980, p. 64) notes the enhanced importance of the affective domain for the foreign language classroom: "Since any genuine communication requires that one feel at ease in the situation, these [basic] needs [as described by A.H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 1968] among students and between teachers and students affect the success of the communicative interaction, even apart from differing levels of language control." The LCT preservice workshop is the place to focus TAs' attention on these affective concerns precisely because learners tend to be least comfortable in the new and unfamiliar situation of the first day of an introductory-level foreign language class. This is especially true in the case of LCTs, whose cultures are so distant from the experiences of the American college student. Attention to the affective domain is especially important for target-native LCT TAs because their cultures have such different norms for student and teacher roles. If LCT TAs can come together as a group, it will be easier for them to discuss these cultural differences and come to grips with the norms of the American classroom than if they were left to their own devices or placed in a larger contingent of TAs in French, German, and Spanish, who are often either Americans or used to American culture. The discussion of affective concerns should not end in the preservice workshop, but it should certainly begin in this context in order to focus on these issues from the first hour of instruction.

The LCT preservice training should also provide TAs with the opportunity to deal directly with some of the cognitive concerns of language acquisition. All the teachers of languages with nonalphabetic scripts can learn firsthand the frustration encountered by American students when they are asked to hold back on the development of oral skills in order to develop writing. Frequently, native-speaker TAs in Chinese and Japanese seek to focus primarily on the instruction of the writing system in their teaching; after all, that is precisely what Chinese and Japanese students do in schools in China and Japan. But as Jorden and Walton (1987, p. 117) note, students in China and Japan are required to master the complicated writing systems of their native languages *only after* they have achieved a fairly solid mastery of the spoken language. TAs from Chinese and Japanese, languages with nonalphabetic scripts, and from Arabic and Russian, languages with non-

Roman alphabets, should come together for a preservice workshop in which they teach one another minilessons. In doing so, they would be able to address questions of sequencing instruction in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which are problematic for languages with different alphabets and nonalphabetic scripts.

LCT TAs begin with the preservice workshop focused on the immediate “survival” needs for the first few days of instruction. LCT teacher training should continue with an in-service practicum focused on other problems and questions. LCT TAs can try out ideas for classroom activities on one another before taking those ideas into their classrooms. In many instances, these activities may be quite good, but a trial run in a friendly setting would help TAs to fine-tune their lesson with the help of their peers. In addition to providing TAs with ongoing instructional support, the practicum meetings are a model for collaboration among practitioners in the LCTs, a desirable goal in and of itself.

The LCT program of professional development should not consist solely of TA training (the preservice workshop and in-service practicum), but extend to TA *education*, a distinction made by Larsen-Freeman (1983) and Azevedo (1990). It is a mistake to limit the LCT professional development program to a preservice workshop lasting only a few days, for to do so is to convey the message that the answers to all the questions concerning the acquisition of these languages have already been found, and it is the TA’s responsibility merely to “receive” this information from the course coordinator. It is also a mistake to limit the professional development program to a preservice workshop and an in-service methods course or courses, since this would also imply that teaching a foreign language is a skill that TAs can master in a very short period of time. This view of the processes of learning and teaching undermines long-term progress in the design and delivery of instruction, for it builds into our worldview a resistance to new information about language acquisition, new strategies for instruction, and new instructional materials to facilitate learning. The view of language teaching that considers the preservice workshop sufficient preparation for the foreign language classroom also devalues the importance of the work language teachers do in the classroom, making it comparable to simple transmission of information about language from instructor to learner. The message that we want to convey to our TAs is that learning and teaching go hand in hand and that learning and learning about teaching are lifelong processes. Accordingly, we should provide regular opportunities for TAs to meet and

discuss the processes of learning and teaching in the context of the LCTs and their special needs.

TA Education: The LCT Methods Course

While the preservice workshop can be dedicated to the immediate needs of teacher training, it is the in-service methods course or courses (Lalande, 1991) that provides TAs with their teacher education. The course or courses could be taught by one or more faculty members from one of the departments whose students enroll in it. The methods course for graduate students is the subject of much discussion, at least among instructors of the more commonly taught languages. In examining the needs of a methods course for LCTs, it is useful to consider how foreign language teaching depends on certain attitudes, expectations, and modes of behavior between teacher and students. Through the methods course, we must help TAs understand these interpersonal and intercultural dynamics and from this understanding to learn appropriate and effective classroom techniques. For learning to teach constitutes entering a new culture, the land of individual students brought together in a classroom for the common purpose of acquiring a second language. In this sense we can view the methods course as a stepping-stone for TAs as they acquire the discourse and the culture of teaching. The framework of three of the more prominent theories about how learners acquire languages — acculturation theory, discourse theory, and cognitive theory, can therefore also be applied to how instructors learn and acquire the practice of teaching LCTs to Americans.

Acculturation/Pidginization Theory

According to the acculturation/pidginization theory of second language acquisition, learners acquire the second language as they become acculturated into the target culture. The difficulty of the process of acquisition is in direct relationship with the social and psychological distance between the native and target cultures. Therefore we should use teacher education to provide opportunities for our TAs to become integrated into the target culture of LCT teachers. This, of course, has implications for the relationship between methods instructors and methods students, which should be modeled on a collegial relationship between senior and junior colleagues, rather than a relationship between a master of erudition and an utterly hopeless novice. This might be a somewhat more comfortable relationship for the methods instructor, if he or she has lived in the United States for

any length of time, than it might be for methods students from some of the cultures discussed in this study in which the relationship between teacher and student is very formal and the distance between them great. Methods instructors of students from these cultures need to address this issue directly in order to help their students feel that they are becoming LCT professionals.

The methods course should provide TAs with information about professional organizations, journals, and activities in their fields. TAs should become informed as soon as possible about the nature of the job market that awaits them, of professional organizations for teachers of foreign languages (and not only those to which their instructors belong), and of the kinds of conferences and workshops of interest to language teachers. It would be productive, in this sense, to require students to examine professional journals, not only those teaching their own target language(s), but also those concerned with other languages, as well as journals in applied linguistics (such as *Applied Linguistics* and *Language Learning*) and journals dedicated to issues concerning the foreign or second language teacher (such as the *ADFL Bulletin*, *Modern Language Journal*, *Foreign Language Annals*, and *TESOL Quarterly*). TAs should also become familiar with the newsletters and annual volumes published by such organizations as ACTFL and the Northeast Conference.

It might also be productive, in the context of this component of teacher education, to examine the history of foreign language education in the United States, in order to prepare students to understand the legacy of traditions and practices inherited from the days when Latin and classical Greek were taught as a mental exercise and to distinguish teaching practices based on this legacy from teaching practices based on more recent approaches to foreign language learning and teaching.

As an important part of the acculturation process, TAs in the LCT methods course should be given ample opportunity to observe teaching practices and be exposed to instructional materials in a wide range of languages, especially the more commonly taught languages and ESL. While it is true that one cannot simply take an excellent exercise, activity, or textbook in Spanish and “translate” it into an equally excellent exercise, activity, or textbook in Japanese, it is just as true that we do have much to learn from our colleagues in the more commonly taught languages. Teachers of the more commonly taught languages have significant professional advantages: larger enrollments (and thus more instructional materials), easier access to target culture communities (in Quebec and large Hispanic

communities throughout the United States, for example), older traditions of foreign assistance to promote cultural activities and instruction (*Alliance française, Goethe Institut*), and more widespread instruction on the elementary and secondary level to support more research in learning and instruction processes. For these and other reasons, colleagues in the more commonly taught languages have been able to produce a far greater number of textbooks of different kinds and at different levels than we in the LCTs can ever hope to do. While we need not slavishly copy from these books, we can learn a great deal from examining them. The methods course should provide students with opportunities to examine and compare instructional materials in the more commonly taught languages. LCT methods course instructors should consult reviews of textbooks in the professional journals and ask colleagues in French, German, and Spanish for their recommendations and examine these titles with their students.

The LCT methods course should not stop with the examination of instructional materials in their own target languages and the more commonly taught languages, but should involve a number of other activities and raise important questions. First, LCT TAs should be challenged to consider whether or not principles, methods, and strategies for foreign language instruction in the more commonly taught languages are, in fact, relevant for them. They should confront evidence supporting the notion that comprehensible authentic input and fluency activities promote the development of communicative skills in French, German, and Spanish (Brumfit, 1983; Dvorak, 1977; Rivers, 1986; Savignon, 1983; VanPatten, 1988, 1992a, 1992b), and debate whether and how the LCTs require different kinds of instructional approaches. The LCT methods course instructor should ask TAs to discuss how they learned their target language, if they are not native speakers, or how they learned English if they are target-native speakers, to discover what opportunities they lacked in their learning experiences (by comparison with experiences described by their peers), and whether they consider themselves to be typical of the learners they will encounter in their own classrooms. The course should require LCT TAs to visit and observe one another as well as their peers in French, German, and Spanish to determine whether or to what degree classroom activities and homework assignments used for the more commonly taught languages can be productive for the LCT classroom. This kind of observation, if properly prepared and undertaken, can promote teaching assistants' acculturation into the profession. It

can also provide the “authentic input” that teachers need in order to refine their teaching skills.

How, then, should such observations take place when some teachers view this event as threatening? The methods course should provide TAs with a system for observation that makes it less intimidating. Some of the more effective observation systems are those described by Allen, Frolich, and Spada (1984) and the one by Fanselow (1977), called FOCUS, or “Foci for Observing Communications Used in Settings.” One of the major features of Fanselow’s system is that it allows the observer to record interaction without judging it or evaluating it. Teachers are then free to perform their own analyses of the interaction patterns and draw their own conclusions. The nonjudgmental collection of data is critical for the improvement of our understanding of the learning and teaching processes; we need to prepare teachers to engage in classroom-centered research, as described by Allwright (1983), in order to provide the groundwork for changes to come (Long, 1983, p. 281).

By preparing TAs to use this kind of observation system and by sending them out to observe one another, we give them the skills they need to understand the teaching act as practiced by others (whether successfully or not) and the skills they need to analyze their own teaching. LCT TAs empowered to analyze their own teaching practices will be able to continue their professional development as professors, drawing conclusions and implementing changes as their own professional philosophies evolve and as researchers make new discoveries about the nature of foreign language acquisition. Furthermore, when we help LCT TAs develop the ability to describe the teaching act as rigorously as the structures of the language can be described (Fanselow, 1977, pp. 18–19), we ultimately promote the view that foreign language learning and instruction are far from mechanical processes and are subjects worthy of scholarly research in their own right.

The skill of careful observation, then, is one that we need to impart to LCT TAs in order for them to realize their full potential as foreign language professionals in the immediate, pressing context (“What did I do yesterday that went well/poorly?”) and in the context of their long-term professional growth. Furthermore, one might hope that LCT TAs, proficient in the use of an observation system with which they can analyze patterns in their own teaching practice, will ultimately be able to bring their teaching practice into agreement with their stated beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning foreign languages. In a study of the classroom interactions of teachers who

were recent graduates of ESL programs and who professed a belief in communicative language techniques, it was shown that the classroom discourse of these instructors remained fundamentally in the realm of the display question (i.e., a question to which both parties know the answer). These teachers, who had had at least two years' experience by the time of the study, proved that what goes on in the classroom is not the same as what the instructor wants to occur or what the instructors necessarily believe or even desire to occur (survey reported by Long, 1983, pp. 285-87). LCT teachers who analyze their own teaching practice and make changes in their own classroom interaction should be able to embrace future innovations in instruction. The systematic observation of the teaching act should help LCT TAs understand the notions of authentic input and communicative output in the context of the LCT classroom. If LCT TAs observe one another using the target language to provide learners with authentic input and giving learners opportunities to use the target language for meaningful communication in the LCT classroom, they will be better prepared to bring these ideas to bear in their own teaching more consistently. A demonstration lesson in Spanish or French may not suffice to convince a beginning instructor of Japanese of the value of fluency activities in an introductory or intermediate Japanese classroom, but a demonstration lesson in Chinese or Arabic — in which the Japanese TA can participate as a learner — will be more likely to make a lasting impression and have an impact on that TA's own teaching.

Discourse Theory

As Schulz (1991b, p. 20) describes it, "discourse theory posits that learners develop competence in a second language not simply by absorbing input, but by actively participating in communicative interaction, i.e. by negotiating meaning and filling information gaps." This tenet of discourse theory is often put into practice by providing students with role-plays in which they use language to work through situations both realistic and typical of the target culture. For instance, students in a second-year Arabic class could be given a role-play in which they are assigned "to make a hotel reservation for yourself and a companion for the night of _____ at a Cairo hotel, but be sure the nightly rate for your room is under the equivalent of \$100." Extending discourse theory of how students acquire language to how new TAs learn to teach suggests that the TAs need to practice teaching techniques actively. Thus, in learning to teach, TAs need opportunities to work through

situations that are both realistic and typical of classroom teaching. For example: “You are the instructor of a second-year Arabic class at a state university with a class of 12 students (8 male, 4 female). Design and implement a classroom activity of 15 minutes’ length in which students learn and practice using vocabulary and cultural formulas necessary for the topic ‘hotel.’ Anticipate and provide for any particular linguistic or cultural difficulties your students might encounter.”

Because LCT TAs themselves may not have had communicative language learning experiences on which to base their teaching practice, it is especially important for the LCT methods course to model the behavior that TAs should demonstrate in their own teaching. As Freeman (1989, p. 29) notes, it is a misconception to believe that the graduate methods course can parallel in structure traditional courses in literature and linguistics, offering students a series of readings, lectures, presentations, and seminar papers. These kinds of assignments and projects will not lead to improved teaching practice.

Woodward (1991, p. 13) explains that methods course activities should be designed to provide teacher trainees with learning experiences that they can use in their classrooms and calls the inclusion of such activities “loop input.” The content of the methods course activity is as important, therefore, as the process itself. Woodward provides an example of a methods course activity in jigsaw listening³ in which TAs learn about such activities by experiencing one themselves. According to Woodward’s model of loop input (1991, p. 43), TAs are better prepared to implement the practices described in the content of the methods course if these very same practices also constitute the process of the course:

In loop input, the content is as much in the process of the session as is the handouts, texts, or trainer’s talk. As mentioned earlier, it does take time and help for trainees to realize that answers to questions can be in what has just happened and not in the texts or in words coming from the trainer’s mouth. Once trainees have become sensitive to the idea behind loop input, however, they begin to look for information everywhere within the session. Very little is lost and there is less boredom since the trainees search for signs of practice during the preaching.

Woodward (1991, p. 13) thus proposes that the methods course borrow the activity frame of the foreign language classroom, but that the frame be filled

with content relevant to the methods course. In the context of the LCT methods course, TAs could design jigsaw reading lessons for one another, sharing information about features of their target cultures, such as the changing roles of women, for example, or gestures used for greetings and leavetakings, helping to make explicit the differences between the target and base cultures that others might not otherwise recognize.

Woodward's model of loop input is one important component of communicative interaction: TAs need to negotiate meaning and fill information gaps in order to acquire competence in the practice of communicative teaching. The other important component of this communicative interaction is the opportunity for TAs to design and implement teaching and learning activities in the context of the methods course. Knop's (1982) classic four-step lesson plan model of "overview, prime, drill, and check" can be productively applied to the methods course for each instructional unit (such as culture in the classroom and beyond, listening, reading, speaking and writing skills, fluency and accuracy, error correction, textbook comparison, assessment instruments, and so forth). The methods instructor can state the overview of the given instructional unit. The instructor can then prime the activity by ensuring that students have plenty of opportunities to observe and discuss the teaching act or feature in a variety of contexts including those with different languages and various teachers. In the drill or practice stage, the methods students should have opportunities to design and carry out lesson plans and to teach one another. Since the "students" in the class come from a variety of the LCTs, the TAs will face a group of novices in each microteaching segment. In the check stage, the TAs can carry out the same lesson (modified in view of experiences in the methods class) in their own language classrooms, record the lessons, and observe their own teaching, in order to assess their own performance. Loop input, combined with Knop's four-step lesson plan model, provides an excellent framework for the design of tasks and activities for TAs enrolled in the LCT methods course.

The loop input activities and the opportunities to plan and implement instruction, first in the safety of the methods course and later in the classroom, allow beginning TAs in the LCTs to practice problem solving in their own work and to help one another in the process. Celce-Murcia (1983, p. 98) cites problem-solving activities as the best means of bridging the gap between theory and practice that exists in many language teacher preparation programs.

The methods course instructor should design and implement activities that demonstrate not only solid teaching but also principles of second language acquisition in each of the four skills and in sociocultural proficiency. In so doing, the methods instructor provides LCT TAs with opportunities to participate in structured teaching and learning activities that they can ultimately use in their own classrooms.

Cognitive Theory

According to the cognitive theory of second language acquisition, learners must perform mental processes, analyzing the component subskills, before they can perform skill processes automatically. This means that learning can precede and promote acquisition. Teacher education should provide LCT TAs with ample opportunity to read about the development of the four modalities and sociocultural proficiency and about the use of technology and media in the foreign language classroom as they engage in the teaching and learning activities described above. Among the numerous articles, books, and anthologies available to meet this need, methods instructors for the LCTs might want to consider using R. Altman (1989), *The Video Connection*; Freed, ed. (1991), *Foreign Language Acquisition Research and the Classroom*; Nunan (1989), *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*; Omaggio (1986), *Teaching Language in Context: Proficiency-Oriented Instruction*; Omaggio, ed. (1985), *Proficiency, Curriculum and Articulation: The Ties That Bind*; Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes (1991), *Reading for Meaning: An Integrated Approach to Language Learning*; Teschner, ed. (1991), *Assessing Foreign Language Proficiency of Undergraduates*; and Ur (1984), *Teaching Listening Comprehension*. It is particularly productive for LCT TAs to use works such as these when assessing instructional materials available in their own and other languages and when designing instructional materials to compensate for the deficiencies of their textbooks.

A number of authors have written on topics for the methods course, including Donahue (1980), Ervin and Muyskens (1982), Gilbert and McArthur (1975), Knop and Herron (1982), Lalande (1991), Murphy (1991), and Muyskens (1984). Almost all of these writers are primarily concerned with the more commonly taught languages. The methods instructor of a heterogeneous group of TAs drawn from a number of LCTs will need to prepare opportunities for students to come to grips with issues relevant to these languages, such as the question of orality and literacy, the psychology that underlies reading processes in languages with fundamentally different

alphabetic or nonalphabetic scripts (Horiba, 1990), the use of romanization (and different schools of romanization) to support speaking skills for languages with nonalphabetic scripts, the selection of a dialect for languages with a number of competing dialects or diglossia (such as Arabic) or of a dialect for foreigners (as exists in Japanese: see Jorden, 1986). LCT methods course instructors will certainly want to consider the presentation of what Jorden (1991, p. 384) calls "acquired culture" and "learned culture." She defines "acquired culture" as "the mindset, the patterns of behavior, generally outside the consciousness" of target natives who are generally not aware of such patterns, which are "often mistaken for universal human behavior," while "learned culture" consists of those cultural patterns consciously learned by both foreigners and native speakers of the target culture. LCT TAs should address the issue of American perceptions and prejudices concerning their target cultures and should discuss ways to dispel preconceived notions, cultural stereotypes, and clichés in their classrooms. The course can provide a framework for examining cultural notions of the measurement of time or the definition of friendship among adult men and women and gestures and behavior appropriate for various social contexts. LCT methods course instructors might want to consult works by Allen (1990), Jorden (1986, 1991), Jorden and Walton (1987), Lubensky and Jarvis (1984), Parkinson (1985), Rammuny (1989), Ryding (1991), Stansfield and Harman (1987), Stansfield and Hiple (1987), Thompson (1991), Thompson, Thompson, and Hiple (1988), and Walton (1989). TAs can discuss the unique features of their target languages and cultures and help one another determine the communicative value of each of these features.

The LCT methods course will profit from "break-out" sessions for each of the participating language groups so that each group can address some particular issue and then report to the larger group on its findings. For instance, a Russian group could discuss the communicative value of grammatical aspect or of prefixed verbs of motion and examine how these grammatical topics are presented in instructional materials to determine whether students' communicative needs are recognized and accommodated. A Chinese group could discuss different methods for teaching tones or characters and strategies for developing students' abilities to discriminate between them and recognize meaning in genuine communication. A Japanese group could brainstorm different ways of conveying to American students the important role played by levels of politeness and the use of certain gestures within the context of appropriate sociolinguistic registers.

Within each of the groups, nonnative speakers might ask target natives to discuss some of the more sophisticated nuances of linguistic features or to design and conduct advanced-level activities for them. Target-native TAs might ask the base-natives to address some part of Americans' perception of their target culture and to provide some examples of these perceptions from the popular media. After each series of break-out sessions, representatives from each of the languages can make brief presentations to the entire class, asking TAs in other languages for their impressions and input. These kinds of activities promote successful collaboration both within and among the different languages participating in the LCT methods course. By exposing all TAs to one another's target cultures and the particular teaching challenges of different target languages, the LCT methods course can help TAs understand issues in LCT instruction and better address the needs of their learners. When native-speaker TAs in Japanese struggle to understand some element of Egyptian or Russian culture or the concept of tone in Chinese, they are more likely to recognize and understand the problems their own students face in studying Japanese. This awareness helps prepare TAs to solve those problems or help their learners solve them as they select appropriate instructional strategies and design lessons and class activities. Furthermore, this sharing process will help LCT TAs understand the importance of authentic input, communicative activities, and cultural validity for their learners at every level of the instructional process, since they themselves will have observed these features in the instruction of teachers in the more commonly taught languages and the less commonly taught.

The break-out sessions described above also provide the context for the discussion of issues and the demonstration of activities for lessons conducted in courses other than the introductory-level class. LCT methods instructors should also consider topics and questions raised by Lalande (1991), especially the issue of teacher behaviors that promote the development of students' speaking skills beyond the sentence level. The LCT methods course should, therefore, devote some attention to types and characteristics of discourse and discourse strategies in each of the target cultures, the cultural norms that govern them, and means of using these kinds of discourse in the classroom. For instance, in any of the more commonly taught languages, one might consider using print and broadcast advertisements to develop reading or listening skills, yet until very recently the concept of the "advertisement" was virtually unknown in Russian culture. On the other hand, Russian cities were inundated with political slogans emblazoned on banners hung on

buildings and across streets. Although target-culture natives generally ignored the banners and hardly noticed them, Americans visiting Russia were often struck by them and, much to the surprise of some of their hosts and guides, *wanted* to understand them. The Russian classroom could have provided students with the skills and tools to understand the slogans and their particular styles, as well as insight into why the Russians themselves ignored them. Now learners of Russian want and need to learn to make sense of the hand-made signs, placards, and posters that appear regularly at political demonstrations and rallies, a newly arisen form of discourse with its own linguistic characteristics.

To summarize, then, these three models of second language acquisition — acculturation, discourse, and cognitive theories — provide a solid foundation for the design of the goals, structures, and activities of the LCT methods course, the single most important opportunity during the course of graduate studies to provide LCT TAs with teacher education that will last them for their entire teaching careers. By focusing on the observation of the teaching act, teacher education provides LCT TAs with the skills and tools they need to assess their own instruction and implement changes in their teaching practices as needed.

LCT TA Supervision

Teacher training, in the form of preservice workshops and in-service practica, and teacher education, in the form of semester- or year-long methods courses, are the first two components of a professional development program for LCT TAs. The third component is TA supervision, the activities undertaken by the language instruction coordinator to guide LCT TAs toward improving their instruction. The nature of LCT TA supervision need not be distinct from supervision offered TAs in the more commonly taught languages. The LCT TA supervisor may supervise graduate students teaching a number of very diverse languages (e.g., in the case of a Department of Asian and Slavic Languages) or may supervise native-speaker TAs with ethnic hostilities toward one another (e.g., in the case of a Semitic Languages Department). LCT TA supervisors therefore may need time to develop some additional expertise to understand the nature of the languages and cultures taught by all of the TAs under their supervision.

LCT TA supervisors, who often have no formal training for their supervisory roles, should take care to use the supervision and observation/assessment processes to provide LCT TAs with information they can use to

assess themselves, rather than prescribing “recipes” for instruction. Prescriptive approaches to professional development for TAs may be effective in a given instructional context, but in the long run they keep TAs in a position of dependence on outside authorities for the design and delivery of instruction. Supervisors should therefore use the observation/evaluation experience as yet another opportunity for TAs to participate in a process of discovery. The TAs themselves should lead this discovery process, whenever possible, analyzing the data of their classroom interactions and determining for themselves what patterns they can find in these data and what new strategies or activities they would like to explore. This approach relieves the supervisor of the responsibility of having all the answers to instructional problems by handing to the TAs the tools they need to understand and improve their own teaching practices.

It is critical for the observation process to be systematic and structured, as described above, in order for the TA to derive maximum benefit. Moreover, the TAs themselves must be given the opportunity to analyze their own teaching and come to their own conclusions, rather than be provided the conclusions of any “authority.” This implies, of course, that the TA’s teaching must be recorded in some way, such as in accordance with Fanselow’s (1977) system described above. Meaning can only be discovered, not prescribed. Supervisory evaluation is prescription that denies TAs the possibility of solving problems for themselves, which deprives them of the independence they need to develop their own teaching styles and strategies. As Gebhard, Gaitan, and Oprandy (1987, p. 227) note, “teacher educators need to shift responsibility for decision making to classroom teachers, providing them with investigative skills and methodology for making decisions about what to teach.”

The implementation of this approach for LCT TAs may require some effort on the part of the LCT TA supervisor, especially when working with target-native TAs from cultures that place high value on strict hierarchical structures and conformity. Supervisors working with such TAs will have to lead them to an understanding of this approach, rather than accede to what may be their explicitly stated desire for prescription. Gebhard (1990) suggests that the supervisor’s role is not so much to evaluate the performance of TAs (unless, perhaps, their performance is so poor that the undergraduate students in their classes are at risk), but to help TAs observe their own teaching practices, recognize the patterns in their practices, interpret these patterns in accordance with theories of second language acquisition, and

provide assistance in the exploration of new teaching behaviors. Supervision should provide LCT TAs with assistance in performing self-assessment: LCT TAs should have opportunities to observe themselves on videotape and to assess their own teaching practices after careful analysis of the video record. Supervisors should promote self-assessment as an integral part of reflection, a key component of teacher education. Without developing the capacity to reflect on teaching practice, TAs will not be able to adapt their teaching practices to changing circumstances in the future, and the one thing we can be certain of is that circumstances will change. TAs could be required to keep a journal for reflection and self-assessment on a variety of tasks at regular intervals so that they learn how to continue learning on their own upon completion of their studies (H. Altman, 1983). Providing a framework for reflection on practice, together with a system for observation of the teaching act, should instill in TAs the desire to continue to learn about teaching and learning long after the grades for the methods course have been posted. It is to be hoped that some of our TAs, excited by the study of learning and teaching processes, will go on to write dissertations on problems specific to the acquisition of the LCTs.⁴

In order to reduce the threat of supervisor observation for LCT TAs, faculty members trained in the chosen observation system may want to observe TAs in languages other than the ones they themselves teach. Thus, the LCT TAs — especially those who are not native speakers of the given target language — need not worry excessively about their own language during this kind of observation, which can be more easily focused on the teaching practices themselves. (The proficiency of nonnative speakers of the target language can be evaluated outside the context of TAs' classroom performance.) As the TAs mature during the course of their graduate studies, they should be given increasingly challenging teaching assignments and responsibilities and be asked to help younger TAs as they join the teaching program. Sprague and Nyquist (1989) offer some excellent suggestions for differentiated supervision of TAs that differs in style and substance depending on the needs and previous experience of those being supervised.

Conclusions: Working Together to Break Out of the Vicious Circle

The steps described here for implementing a professional development program for LCT TAs are not meant to represent a final product; instead, they are an interim measure. If we in the LCTs work together now to create programs such as those described above, we will be able to break out of the vicious circle and produce a generation of LCT specialists who are ready to do more than we have been able to do in the past. The ultimate goal is for enough of our departments in each of the LCTs to implement full-fledged degree programs in second language acquisition and foreign language pedagogy so that we can train language acquisition and instruction specialists in each of our fields, providing them with thorough graduate-level training in these disciplines. Graduates of the new programs would then take their places as the new generation of LCT teacher trainers and TA supervisors.

The only way for the LCTs to break out of the vicious circle of limited opportunities for professional development is for instructors of these languages to join together. A new organization, the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages, has undertaken to help national teachers' associations, including the American Association of Teachers of Arabic, the Chinese Language Teachers Association, the Association of Teachers of Japanese, and the American Council of Teachers of Russian, work together to help solve problems afflicting all the LCTs.⁵ The council is helping the teachers' associations collect data on the current state of instruction in their languages and address pressing issues such as guidelines for curriculum and materials design, professional development programs for teachers, and the uses of new technologies in the LCT classroom. The council has worked with the National Endowment of the Humanities to sponsor national summer institutes for the training of teachers in Russian, Japanese, and in Southeast Asian languages, and will soon sponsor teacher training for African languages.

We must implement effective programs of professional development for LCT TAs in order to retain students beyond the first year of instruction and to promote students' abilities to use the languages we teach. Some will argue that we cannot establish professional development programs in our institutions without first hiring LCT teacher educators, which is another vicious circle. We must refuse to fall into this trap and instead agree to work

together, drawing upon one another's strengths, to provide our current TAs with the tools they need to become the next generation's teacher educators in our target languages. If we share the responsibilities of conducting the preservice workshop and the in-service practicum and methods course among LCT faculty members, none of us would have to teach an additional course more than once in two years. This additional course load is surely a small price to pay for a significant increase in the teacher preparation we offer our TAs. We can rely on some of the works cited above to help provide us with a framework for the design of methods courses and tasks and activities that would help our TAs acquire the skills they need to monitor their own instruction. Furthermore, in order to break out of the vicious circle we *can and must* teach methods courses even if we have never had the opportunity to take them ourselves. We can teach such courses by relying on our TAs to observe and question the teaching act and discover meaning themselves in the process. We must be ready for them to challenge us, for they *will* challenge our most basic assumptions about learning and instruction, assumptions we have used to design and implement instruction for years. The challenge, however, will be a healthy one, and will not necessarily lead to the rejection of all of our assumptions about foreign language acquisition and instruction. Those assumptions that withstand this challenge will be all the more valid in our eyes and in the eyes of our TAs.

The more commonly taught languages have been more successful than the LCTs in the more regular renewal of instructional materials and in the implementation of more permanent programs of professional development for TAs. One of the reasons for their relative success in these endeavors is the sheer numbers of their enrollments year after year. While we cannot hope to match their enrollments in the short term, we can take steps to solve these problems in our fields by coming together and working for common solutions. Over 135,000 students are enrolled in LCTs in American colleges, approximately one-third of the number of students enrolled in Spanish and one-half of those enrolled in French classes ("Foreign," 1991). These numbers should be sufficient to warrant the establishment of joint LCT professional development programs (teacher training, education, and supervision). In the context of collaboration in the establishment and administration of joint professional development programs, LCT teachers would have opportunities to discuss issues of singular importance to the learning and teaching of languages with "acquired cultures" (Jordan, 1991) far removed from the life experiences of American university students. Working together in

professional development for our TAs, we can strive to come to some agreement about curricular design and instructional goals. Enrollments in each of the more commonly taught languages are now sufficient to support a wide range of instructional materials based on a variety of theories of second language acquisition and approaches to foreign language instruction. Enrollments in each of our languages have not, in the past, been sufficient to support this kind of range of materials, making it all the more important that we come to some agreement, within each of our fields, as to priorities for the development, design, and production of instructional materials.

In working together to create and implement professional development programs for TAs, therefore, we can more effectively promote the design and implementation of second language acquisition research. We need solid research in order to improve our understanding of the learning processes involved in acquiring the less commonly taught languages, to improve our instructional materials, and to improve our teaching practices. The National Council of Organizations of Teachers of LCTs must continue to receive federal and other funds in order to promote the collection of data on instruction in the LCTs and the collaboration of LCT specialists in institutions across the country. As Walton (1991, p. 182) comments, LCT professionals must become "proactive rather than reactive in expanding the vision of foreign language education in the United States." More LCT TA supervisors and coordinators should join the AAUSC to participate in our organization's ongoing discussion of issues related to the professional development of TAs. Swaffar (1989, p. 131) has said that "uncommon language learning represents a common cause." What is true of language learning is no less true of language teaching. We should agree to devote more time and energy to working together because only through collaboration can we advance the common cause of uncommon language teaching.

Notes

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and Russian, respectively: Roger Allen and Dilworth Parkinson; Richard Chi and Ronald Walton; Eleanor Jordan and Hiroko Kataoka; and Richard Brecht and John Caemmerer.

2. For this study, I interviewed at least two specialists in each of the less commonly taught languages examined here. These interviews, each lasting 30-45 minutes, were conducted by telephone in January 1992. Those specialists willing to be identified are named in note 1.

3. A "jigsaw" listening or reading activity involves a series of listening or reading texts on similar or related topics, which together make a "whole." Each student participating in the activity is assigned to listen to or to read only one of the texts and then must share the information gained from this text with the other participants in order to solve a problem or achieve some result or conclusion.

4. There were many fewer dissertations in foreign/second language acquisition of the less commonly taught languages than of the more commonly taught languages in 1990, perhaps in part because there are fewer graduate departments of less commonly taught languages where such dissertations are encouraged or even acceptable for the doctoral degree (Benseler, 1991, pp. 333-34).

5. The National Council is a task force under the auspices of the National Foreign Language Center in Washington, DC, and, as such, has a very limited membership. For more information, write: The National Foreign Language Center, 1619 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036.

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