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Foreign Language Teaching Assistants' Development: How do their ideal language teacher selves unfold over time?

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by

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DEDICATION

I wouldn't be here if it were not because of you. ¡Gracias mamá!

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ABSTRACT

Using Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) and Kubanyiova's (2007, 2009) model of 'possible language teacher selves' as main theoretical frameworks, this multiple case study explored four language teaching assistants' developmental patterns with regards to their ideal language teacher selves over a two-year period. It also examined the challenges and limitations that these TAs faced, as well as the institutional support that they received over time. The data sources from this study included semi-structured interviews, class observations, and student artifacts (teaching philosophies, ideal teacher selves, and observation reflections). A thematic analysis of these sources revealed how TAs conceptualized their ideal teacher selves. For example, all four TAs were able to not only provide a clear description of their future visions of themselves, but were also able to use these visions to formulate mastery and performance-based goals, such us becoming expert teachers or constantly updating their teaching practices. Additionally, either as behavioral models or sources of inspiration, role models were also found to be associated with their (re)construction of their future selves. The findings also revealed how these four TAs coped with three main challenges: dealing with anxiety, balancing the curriculum requirements with the personal goals and preferences, and adjusting their style to the less-motivated students. Lastly, the findings of this study emphasized the need to provide language TAs with an appropriate level of preparation in teaching at a university setting, including relevant coursework, ongoing professional development, and reliable mentoring, among other elements that will help them with their current and potentially future teaching assignments.

<center>**CHAPTER ONE:**</center>

<center>**INTRODUCTION**</center>

Background of the Study

Over the last decade, there has been a growing interest to improve the foreign language teaching and learning processes in the US (Ferzli, et al., 2012). This interest has emerged in response to the multilingual needs of a globalized society in which a "rapidly developing technology and increased channels of transportation put second language users into contact with each other on a daily basis, requiring them to be flexible and appropriate in their interactions with people whose cultures they might only know superficially" (Angus, 2014, p. 10). The need to design 'strong' language preparation programs was particularly emphasized in the 2007 Modern Language Association (MLA) Report "Foreign Language and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World." In the report, the MLA committee encouraged departments of World Languages to "set clear standards of achievement for undergraduate majors … and to develop the programming necessary to meet these standards" (p. 8) as well as to "enhance and reward graduate student training in languages and in language teaching" (p. 8). Although this report does not expand on possible strategies to complete these tasks, such recommendations are rather critical for language departments because they were made to support graduate teaching assistants' development. As Gorsuch (2012) highlights, the number of universities employing graduate students to teach undergraduate courses has substantially increased since the early 1980s.

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As a matter of fact, in many US institutions, lower-level language courses are frequently assigned to graduate students (Enkin, 2015). According to the 1999 MLA survey on staffing in FL departments (N=888), 23.3% of instructors overall were graduate teaching assistants (TAs hereafter). What is more, "in some colleges and universities, graduate teaching assistants teach more than 35 percent of introductory courses, and many universities rely even more heavily on them" (Ferzli, et al., 2012). To illustrate these demographics, during the Fall 2016 semester, TAs from the language department where the current dissertation study was conducted taught 18 out of 24 introductory courses of Spanish (1st and 2nd semester) and seven out of seven introductory French courses. The number of TAs remained constant in the subsequent years.

It is also important to note that in many institutions, foreign language teaching assistants are in charge of all the teaching duties. As stated by Angus (2014), TAs are often "the instructors of record for their courses – planning lessons, creating assessments, and being the primary contact person that their students have with the department, albeit under the supervision of a faculty member" (p. 103). Multiple factors such as increasing number of undergraduate students, tenure-faculty needs and/or preferences to teach higher-level courses, and/or budget cuts have an effect on the language departments' decision to assign full teaching responsibilities to the TAs. This decision is certainly beneficial for graduate students as they are given opportunities to gain practical teaching experience. However, it requires an immense commitment and responsibility from the TAs since they are completely in charge of providing the foundations of the target language and, in many instances, of motivating and encouraging students to enroll in upper level language courses. The undergraduate students' learning experiences and interactions with the TAs in the lower-level courses become relevant since they will have an effect on "enrollment numbers and consequently the health of the FL department" (Angus, 2014, p. 12) or as Gorsuch

(2012) pointed out, "in a straightforward practical sense, the continued success of American Higher Education depends on effective development of TAs and ITAs [international teaching assistants]" (p. xi).

TAs are then expected to respond to the departmental goals and missions when it comes to their teaching assignments. These goals include fostering awareness of diversity and creating opportunities for communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Given the fact that many language TAs are fully in charge of the lower-level language classes, it is necessary to provide them with an appropriate level of preparation in teaching, including relevant coursework, ongoing professional development, mentoring, among other elements that will help them with their current and potentially future teaching assignments. Such TA preparation is recommended for all TAs but might be even more important for those who see themselves teaching languages after completing their graduate studies.

It is therefore recommended for foreign language undergraduate programs to treat their TAs as stakeholders and colleagues on the pathway to professoriate (Martinez, 2011). TAs could immensely contribute to the formation of the desired multilingual speaker by creating an effective learning environment in which students feel confident, motivated, and supported to learn languages. In this regard, Allen and Dupuy (2011) suggest that FL departments need to expand their pedagogy coursework for graduate students "beyond the initial semester of teaching and articulating other ongoing forms of professional development to support conceptual development" (p. 173) throughout the graduate teaching assistants' teaching trajectories. The need for an ongoing training and support to prepare graduate students for a variety of teaching situations was also emphasized by the committee on the status of Graduate Students in the Profession (MLA, 2013). Hence, language departments should go beyond conceptual

development (i.e., helping graduate students develop an understanding of teaching methods and techniques), exploring other elements/factors such as their own motivations, fears, and future desires, which in turn might aid or hinder their development as professionals.

TAs are "integral to the success of undergraduate education" (Ferzli, et al., 2012, p. 231). Nonetheless, TA development and the process of the search for and the construction of their identities as language instructors has been understudied in the field of applied linguistics. Exploring TA developmental patterns with regards to their motivations, fears, and future desires would not only contribute to documenting their paths to becoming language instructors but also to enhancing language preparation programs in general. As stated previously, the success of higher education and, in many instances, the enrollment of students depends on effective development of language TAs (Gorsuch, 2012).

While teacher identity and motivation have been widely explored during the last decades (e.g. Duff & Uchida, 1997; Morgan, 2007; Pavlenko, 2003), few qualitative studies have actually explored the ongoing development of TAs as language teachers across their teaching trajectories. Based on a thorough search of the literature, only a few studies have included the TAs' voices with respect to the relationship between the TAs initial teaching experiences and preparation and their actual performance in the classroom (e.g. Dupuy & Allen, 2012; Kanno & Stuart, 2011). More importantly, there is little known in how foreign language teaching assistants' conceptualizations of their future evolve over time, how they overcome challenges and limitations, or whether their experiences and/or support offered by their language departments result in motivating or demotivating elements to continue teaching the target language. This multiple-case study attempted to fill these gaps in order to shed light on new possibilities to inform and strengthen the support of future language TAs.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Using Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) and Kubanyiova's (2007, 2009) model of 'possible language teacher selves' as main theoretical frameworks, the current study explored four TAs' developmental patterns with regards to their ideal language teacher selves, dynamic positive future representations for the actual self (Hiver, 2013), examined the challenges and limitations these TAs faced during their teaching trajectories within their current context, and reflected on the institutional support they received during a two-year term. This study specifically focused on the ideal language teacher selves because it is a construct that embraces teachers' identity goals, aspirations, and wishes in terms of the desired future representation. The future-oriented aspect of the self constitutes a powerful motivator for teachers (Kubanyiova, 2009) to keep updating their pedagogical knowledge and instructional practices in order to reduce the discrepancy between their actual (who they are) and ideal (who they want to become) selves. Building on Kubanyiova's (2007, 2009) model of possible language teacher selves, this study attempted to bridge the gap between teacher motivation and teacher education research. It was exploratory in nature since "the notion of possible language teacher selves' acting as a drive for teachers' behavior has not yet been widely studied empirically" (Hiver, 2013).

That said, the study goals were to understand how the four TAs' ideal teacher selves took shape and evolved over the course of their graduate studies (two-year term), to investigate how TAs negotiated and overcome challenges and limitations within their current context, and to explore the perceptions of TAs with regards to the institutional support they received over the course of two years. The latter goal should not be seen as a program evaluation but as a component that needed to be discussed since it was part of the experiences lived by TAs and

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therefore played a role in their development. In short, these goals were developed to expand the growing discussion about language TAs and focused on understanding their development as language instructors. In this regards, Kubanyiova (2009) suggested that,

> the concept of ideal self may offer a powerful theoretical framework for understanding not only why teachers choose their career but also why they engage in specific classroom practices and, being particularly relevant here, why some of them develop as a result of a reform input [as a result of teacher development opportunities] (p. 318).

Additionally, these goals were designed to add to the existing TA research that calls for greater emphasis on the professional development of graduate students by examining the TAs' reflections on the support they receive and most importantly, by providing a discussion on how language departments might contribute to enhance such imperative support.

As stated above, the better the relation and experiences between the TA and the students, the higher the chances that students keep engaging with the target language, or in other words, the higher the chances they enroll in upper-level courses (Angus, 2014). However, only a few studies have considered the importance of monitoring the development of TAs during an extended period of time (Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Uzum, 2012). In addition, no study has used the theoretical framework of the L2MSS or the model of possible language teacher selves to investigate issues related to foreign language TAs' development and motivation to teach a language. These frameworks were specifically chosen because they provide a link between TA motivation and teacher education. Conducting a study that inquires about the desires and motivations of TAs might potentially contribute to understanding their development as language instructors. Thus, this study attempted to add to this limited number of studies by exploring the TAs' emerging ideal teacher selves, how they evolve over time, and how they might be (re)negotiated based on institutional dynamics.

Similarly, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the developmental process of TAs at a personal and institutional level (Aguilar, 2013). To do so, this study consolidated a comprehensive description of the cases as well as discussed cross-case comparisons. The descriptive account of each case took into consideration the TAs' individual differences, their personalities, teaching philosophy, preferred teaching method(s), FL proficiency, and cultural and teaching experiences, among all elements that derived from the data (Young & Pettigrew, 2012). Accounting for all these individual differences and for different languages might allow faculty to develop better strategies to prepare the TAs in their institutions (Martel, 2013).

Finally, although this study mainly informs the TA development and preparation program at the site of the present study, other programs might benefit from the findings of the current study. It incorporated the voices of the TAs to analyze their current and ideal language teacher selves as well as how impactful the professional development and support provided by faculty was in the development. Language programs could benefit from the findings of this study by developing foreign language TA training programs that take into consideration the TAs voices, challenges, limitations, and future desires. Also, this study provides recommendations as to developing a better support system for TAs and therefore has implications for TA preparation programs in general. These programs could make connections between the findings of this study and their own experiences or contexts to design or strenghten their own programs.

Research Questions

The current dissertation study was about foreign language graduate level teaching assistants who started their first-year of teaching at a large, public, southeastern university in the United States. Using the L2MSS framework and the model of possible language teacher selves,

this multiple-case study aimed at understanding in what ways the TAs' ideal language teacher selves evolved over the course of two years. Additionally, this study represented an attempt to identify the intersection between the TAs' self-representations and their current teaching practices and motivations, which in turn allowed for the discussion of potential implications to the development of TA preparation programs. The current study also inquired to what extent the TAs' current beliefs and practices were challenged by institutional constraints and limitations and whether in the course of time these challenges and limitations were eventually renegotiated and overcome. Last but not least, this study shed light on how TAs developed their identities as future foreign language instructors and how their preparation, supported by the faculty and administrators, led them to enhance their teaching practices and ultimately to contribute to the improvement of the foreign language undergraduate programs. Hence, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do foreign language teaching assistants' ideal teacher selves take shape and evolve over time?
    a. What are the initial expectations, hopes, fears, and desires of TAs with regards to the teaching profession?
    b. What developmental patterns, if any, can be observed from the TAs ideal teacher selves and from their instructional practices during and after two years teaching at the current institution? What aspects of teaching have evolved/changed over these two years?
2. How are TAs' challenges and limitations negotiated and overcome within their current context?

3. Which elements from the institutional support are perceived as more beneficial for the TAs and which ones need to be reevaluated?

Theoretical Framework

The current study uses the L2MSS and the possible language teacher selves as the main frameworks, which are based on perspectives offered by the psychological theory of "possible selves" (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987). The L2MSS is comprised of three main components: ideal L2 self (future representation of the person one wants to become), ought-to self (representation of the attributes that one believe should possess to meet societal expectations), and learning experience (past or present experiences with the target language) (Dörnyei, 2009). As mentioned above, these three elements were derived from the theory of the possible selves, which represents "individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming" (Marcus & Nuris, 1986, p. 954). These "ideal," "expected," and "feared" selves (Carver, Reynolds, & Scheier, 1994) provide a conceptual link between cognition and motivation (Hiver, 2013). This link is clearly described by Markus and Nurius (1987) as follows: "an individual's repertoire of possible selves can be viewed as the cognitive manifestation of enduring goals, aspiration, motives, fears, and threats. Possible selves provide the specific self-relevant form, meaning, organization, and directions to these dynamics" (p. 954).

Possible selves are therefore future self-guides that reflect a future and dynamic condition that can explain how an individual is moved from the present to the future (Dörnyei, 2009). In this regard, Higgins's (1987) self-discrepancy theory provides a coherent explanation of the motivational function of these future self-guides. In his framework, Higgins (1987) suggests that individuals are constantly motivated to reach a condition where their self-concept aligns with

their future self-guides. In other words, motivation for them is closely related to the desire to reduce the discrepancy between their actual selves and their ideal/ought to selves. These future self-guides will then "provide incentive, direction and impetus for action, and sufficient discrepancy between these and the actual self initiates distinctive self regulatory strategies with the aim to reduce the discrepancy" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 18).

The current study also takes into consideration the innovative theoretical discussion and research regarding the construct of "possible language teachers selves" (Kubanyiova, 2007, 2009). The 'Possible Language Teacher Self' (Kubanyiova, 2007, 2009) draws from the L2MSS and possible selves theories and is comprised from three main components: the ideal language teacher self, the ought-to language teacher self, and the feared language teacher self. The ideal language teacher self is the positive future representation for the actual self (Hiver, 2013). The ought-to language teacher self refers to the language teachers' visualizations of their duties and obligations with regard to their work. The last component is the feared self (Ogilvie, 1987), which "serves as a negative future reference for the actual self" (Hiver, 2013, p. 211), and represents the antithesis of what a language teacher wants to become in the future. These components are explained in detail in the following chapter.

Personal Perspective

This section is particularly helpful to understand my motivations to carry out the current study, my emic perspective, and the potential bias that could have emerged in the data analysis. I have been a TA in the US for nine years. Prior to the start of my Ph.D. studies, I completed a Master in Education and taught Spanish at a private liberal arts college in the Midwest. At that institution, I was part of a selected group of international students who were given a scholarship to pursue graduate studies in exchange for teaching our language and culture. Such enriching

opportunity allowed me to live, study, and work with TAs from China, France, Germany, Japan, Colombia, Mexico, and Spain. During my Ph.D. studies, I have taught Spanish, Introduction to Linguistics, Language Teaching Methods and I have also been both a research and administrative assistant. Most importantly, I have actively participated in a graduate instructional methods course for incoming Master students both as TA and invited speaker and in the yearly orientation for foreign language teaching assistants as a workshop leader. These last two experiences have been helpful to learn about and develop a relationship with many of the current and former TAs at this university. Additionally, the current study is motivated by my desire to continue to teach or assist future language instructors and TAs. Thus, my previous and current experiences, interests, and future desires are all factors that motivated me to conduct the current study.

All these previous experiences have shaped my slight understanding of what being a TA at the university level entails. The current dissertation study attempted to expand this limited understanding of the foreign language TAs community. That being said, my emic perspective was particularly important in this study. The fact that I have been part of the university system as a TA and that I have some knowledge of the TAs roles, responsibilities, and struggles was helpful when discussing with the TAs who participated in the study. I believe that being a peer/colleague actually helped enrich these discussions, offering TAs a chance to reflect on their overall experience as TAs. Last but not least, since this research was spurred by a personal interest and desire to help my colleagues and future TAs, the current dissertation represented an initial attempt to understand who we are, who we want to be, and hopefully, what we could do better to get there.

I also acknowledge the fact that a potential bias could have been present when analyzing data. However, in order to avoid this bias, I consistently monitored my interpretations by

including measures such as member checking and peer debriefing. I also made sure that all data, including the one related to the institutional support provided by the department, remained anonymous. By establishing some sort of trust with the participants, I tried to elicit personal insights on their development as TAs. These measures to avoid a potential bias are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER TWO:

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The first section of this literature review offers an overview of the major lines of research on graduate student teaching assistants and discusses possibilities for further research intended to expand the understanding of the TAs development. The next section includes a description of the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) framework, including its origins, main components, and significance and delineates current trends in research that use this framework, examining contexts and relevant findings. The subsequent section offers a discussion of the possible language teacher selves' framework and how it is a relevant model to explore TAs' motivation and development. The last section presents a discussion on the perceived gaps in the literature and how this study fills those gaps.

Existing Literature on TA Development

Understanding TA development constitutes an essential component of the study. The current dissertation follows Hiver's (2013) conceptualization of development as a "bottom-up process" (p. 212) that starts by the language teacher herself. According to him, teachers go through a continuing teacher development process. Such process goes beyond the initial teacher education or pre-service preparation and continues throughout the teacher career. Thus, TAs development is seen here as a dynamic process that started before they decided to become a TA and that continues throughout the entirety of their teaching trajectory. As Hiver (2013) suggests, teacher development "serves an enhancement function in relation to the teacher's professional

self as well as one of repairing perceived inadequacies of the self" (p. 212). These elements constitute a rationale to explore the ideal teacher selves of language TAs and to understand how their previous and current experiences might help or hinder them to reduce the discrepancy between their actual and ideal selves.

Even though no study has employed the L2MSS framework or the model of possible language teacher selves to investigate the development of TAs over a period of time, the number of studies that are concerned with this particular population is increasing. In fact, from the review of literature one can notice that research efforts and practice in TA education have substantially increased over the last decade. This is particularly relevant because, as Gorsuch (2012) states in her introduction to her edited volume *Working Theories for Teaching Assistant Development*, "TA and ITA education should be recognized as viable, theory-driven fields of research, and attract doctoral students and established scholars who will come to specialize in these areas" (p. xiii).

Some studies have focused on the importance of developing theories, models, and frameworks to examine TA education (Gorsuch, 2012). In her volume, she compiled various studies on both TA and ITA development, providing readers with both theoretical and empirical accounts. Hardré (2012), for example, developed a series of principles for designing TA development activities and programs. These principles were organized around six main topics: 1) knowledge and information; 2) thought and metacognition; 3) personal and social perception; 4) instructional skills and activities; 5) organization and strategic planning; and 6) assessment and evaluation. All the principles and strategies provided by Hardré (2012) are relevant for teacher development because they "utilize the benefit of distilling and capturing complex ideas in ways that are more easily grasped, understood, and remembered" (p. 30) and they include helpful

elements and topical areas that need to be considered when designing and implementing TAs'

preparation programs. Institutions, teachers, and researchers could then benefit from these

principles to guide TA preparation. Although Hardré (2012) believes that there is enough data to

create theory, he calls for caution with the claims made since this study only focuses on the

participants' first year in the graduate program. In the same volume, Griffee (2012) introduced a

'Teaching Assistant Teacher Theory' model. Specifically, the author used a grounded theory

design (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) to understand how foreign language TAs construct their teacher

theory, "the combination of beliefs teachers use to position themselves relative to who they are

and what they do" (Griffee, 2012, p. 206). Griffee's (2012) study was a one-year longitudinal

study of six foreign language and ESL TAs. Multiple interviews, classroom observations, and

published research reports were analyzed in this study. The learning outcomes, or "what he

learned" from the project, are focused on the importance of institutional support for TAs and the

application of grounded theory approaches. The following two outcomes from Griffee's study

are especially relevant for the current dissertation as they serve as key themes to consider when

discussing the institutional support TAs received over the course of two years:

a) According to Griffee (2012), second language acquisition courses do not produce
   noticeable changes in the TAs who take these courses, at least not during their first
   year. In other words, TAs need additional support throughout their entire program of
   studies.

b) Institutions can be perceived as "helpful, irrelevant, or as the enemy" (p. 226).
   Therefore, the institution needs to develop a way to also evaluate how it is doing and
   whether changes need to be made.

Some other studies have been concerned with the identity development of teaching assistants and often employ sociocultural perspectives to approach their data (Kanno & Stuart, 2011). Kanno and Stuart (2011), for example, examined how novice English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers learned to teach and how this learning-in-practice experience shaped their identity as teachers throughout an academic year. Particularly, they followed two graduate students (TAs) from a Master in TESOL as they taught their own ESL classes at a US institution. The study lasted one year and analyzed both cases drawing from a situated learning perspective (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Interestingly, the researchers noted that "moving from the identity of a graduate student to that of a teacher is not a quick and automatic transition, even for individuals who have made a clear commitment to become L2 teachers" (p. 249). The two novices, in fact, experienced a prolonged learning-in-practice process which in turn led them to view themselves as language teachers. This study also showed how through their emerging identities, the two participants were able to better shape their classroom practices. As the authors conclude, "one year of teaching was long enough for the two novices to identify what aspects of teaching constituted the core of their teacher identities and to improve in those areas" (p. 249). More importantly, this study showed that the identity of language teachers, in this case TAs, should be further explored and placed at the center of research on language teacher education. In this regard, Kanno and Stuart (2011) claim that novice L2 teachers should focus not so much on the acquisition of a pedagogical knowledge but on the development of a teacher identity. They go on by strongly encouraging researchers to reflect on this issue:

> What indeed? If we put the development of L2 teacher identity in the foreground and conceptualize the acquisition of teacher knowledge as part of this identity development, rather than the other way around, how would our research agenda change? What would an L2 teacher education program based on this perspective shift look like? If we took the task of helping novices develop their teacher identity seriously, how would it change the way we think about the required courses in MATESOL programs (p. 250).

Clearly, these are questions that trigger the further exploration of TAs development of their identities as language instructors and, for some, future language professoriate. Uzum (2012) also investigated the professional identity development of one Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant throughout an academic semester. This study was based on perspectives from language socialization (Ochs, 1993), sociocultural theory of second language learning (Lantolf, 2000), and language and social identity (Hall, 1996). These sociocultural perspectives posit that learning occurs as a result of social interaction. The data sets were video-recorded classroom observations (15 hours) and stimulated recall interviews (6 hours). Using ethnographic microanalysis (turn-by-turn analysis of classroom discourse) as an analytical framework, the author was able to emphasize the verbal and nonverbal aspects of the observed interactions. This analysis allowed for an exploration of the participant's beliefs about teaching and learning, her teaching methods, her reflections on her practices, and how these were transformed through dialogic mediation (Uzum, 2012, p. 423). Based on her experiences and constant reflections, the participant was able to (re)evaluate and eventually improve what she did in her classroom. These findings serve as a call for more research that investigates potential changes in beliefs and practices of different TA groups and settings.

Uzum (2017) also used the language socialization framework to investigate how an Uzbek novice language teacher negotiated her pedagogical beliefs and practices while teaching at a university in the US. Findings showed that biographical, contextual, and dialogical factors were in constant interaction and guided her socialization into a foreign cultural and educational context. More specifically, as the teacher reflected on her past and current experiences and tested different strategies to avoid uncertainty, her professional perspective developed in three main areas: challenges of the profession, dynamic teacher roles, and communication with students.

This study is a relevant example to illustrate how teachers "go through a professional socialization process in which their beliefs and practices transform in order to meet the expectations and requirements of their new workplace" (Uzum, 2017, p. 242). The study also provides a rationale on giving teachers opportunities to reflect on their early learning and teaching experiences and their current beliefs and practices. As Uzum (2017) states, "it is critical to address teachers' existing assumptions and conceptions about teaching and learning when teachers start working in a foreign educational context" (p. 256). Some ways to discuss and potentially challenge these beliefs include: writing a narrative about previous schooling experiences, reflective journals in professional development courses, and ethnographic projects. Further research involving these activities will potentially make language teachers aware of their implicit beliefs and help them find strategies to avoid uncertainty and discomfort.

More recently, Gallego and Busch's (2017) study identified some of the most common professional development opportunities for TAs. They include a combination of an orientation and a methods course (Angus, 2016; Lord, 2014), mentoring programs (Höbusch & Worley, 2012; Kost, 2008), training that focuses on reflective practices (Gallego, 2014), and courses in applied linguistics (Schechtman & Koser, 2008) and technology integration (Höbusch & Worley, 2012). In their study, Gallego and Busch (2017) addressed an important aspect that should be included in TA preparation: working with a diverse student population. They evaluated the effectiveness of three workshops and ongoing mentoring on accessibility awareness. Findings showed that TA's knowledge and confidence in supporting students with disabilities increased. This study suggests that the impact of training and ongoing mentoring should continue to be explored so as to raise TAs' awareness concerning challenges and expectations they might

experience and equally important, "to provide an equitable and engaging college experience for all undergraduate learners" (Gallego & Busch, 2017, p. 788).

In summary, the scholarship on TA development presents multiple opportunities for further research. Particularly, it shows the need to continue exploring the novice teacher development, taking into account training and contextual aspects such as the institution, peers, administrators, students, etc. Moreover, a salient theme has to do with the need to increase the number of long-term studies on the development of novice language teachers' identities and motivations. These long-term studies will eventually show how the teachers' beliefs, actions, behaviors, and practices evolve over time. They will also help to better understand how teachers overcome (if so) the challenges that they face while teaching. Additionally, although the studies presented above are meaningful to shed light on the development of English as a Second Language TAs, still very little is known with regards to the development of TAs who teach foreign languages other than English (LOTEs). Lastly, further research is needed that particularly explores how foreign language TAs' emerging identities shape their classroom practices. These future studies and their corresponding approaches need to account for the ways through which TAs construct their identities, the multiple contexts in which identities are formed, the internal and external factors that are in constant conflict in the teachers' minds, the strategies that could be implemented to avoid uncertainty and discomfort, and any other elements that directly or indirectly impact the ways language teachers come to identify and envision themselves within a community.

The L2MSS: Foundations and Main Components

As stated above, the current study uses Dörnyei's (2005) *L2 Motivational Self-System* (L2MSS) as one of the main frameworks. This framework was chosen because it allows to

explore beliefs, actions, behaviors, desires, and practices of both language teachers and students. Although the L2MSS was conceived to investigate language learning motivation, it is mandatory to review it in the current study because it provides the foundations to understand the main theoretical concepts of the study. The L2MSS concept was developed in response to paradigmatic shifts and changing global realities and it incorporates contemporary notions of self and identity. It provides a major rethinking of Gardner and Lambert's (1972) and Gardner's (1985) *integrative orientation,* that is, the positive attitude towards and interest in "the people and culture represented by the other language group" (Lambert, 1974, p. 98). Rather than assuming that the L2 learners should identify themselves with an external reference group (basic premise of the integrative concept), Dörnyei (2005) develops the L2MSS to show that the process of identification "might be better explained as an internal process of identification within the person's self-concept" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, p. 3).

The L2MSS draws then on Higgins's (1987) Self-Discrepancy Theory, which itself is derived from the psychological theory of 'possible selves' (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The possible selves represent "individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming" (Marcus & Nuris, 1986, p 954). In other words, this construct refers to "personalized as well as socially-constructed images of who they could potentially be in the future" (Kubanyiova, 2007, p. 81). These imagined selves could be positive, representing goals, hopes, desires, or negative, depicting fears or worries. Both of them are considered instrumental to motivating behavior because "they are associated with the individual's self-regulatory activity directed towards either attaining the positive possible selves or avoiding the negative ones" (Kubanyiova, 2007, p. 81).

One of the theories that helps explain this regulatory activity is Higgins's (1987) Self-Discrepancy Theory which conceptualizes a three-part system: *actual self, ideal self, and ought self*. The first one represents the individual's current self, whereas the others represent future possible selves that one ideally wants to become or that one believes is her obligation or responsibility to accomplish (Higgins, 1987). One of the main tenets of this theory is that the individual will do whatever is necessary to reduce any discrepancy between her actual self and her ideal or ought-to self (Higgins, 1987). Drawing from these possible selves constructs, Dörnyei (2005) conceives the L2MSS framework, which highlights "both L2 learners' future self-guides as well as their social contexts in L2 learning in the L2 motivational self system" (Chan, 2013, p. 400). Therefore, the L2MSS consists of three main components: *ideal L2 self, ought-to self, and learning experience*:

- Ideal L2 self: it represents the person one wants to become with regards to a second language and therefore constitutes a powerful motivator. The concepts of language learning vision and imagery are crucial to reach the ideal L2 selves (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009).

- Ought-to L2 self: it represents the attributes that one believes one should possess in order to meet societal expectations and to avoid negative consequences of not learning the target language (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009 2015).

- L2 learning experience: it represents the learner's past or current experiences and the immediate language-learning environment. Some examples include positive or negative experiences in the classroom, quality of a language course and/or instructor, etc.

The current dissertation focuses on the ideal teacher self component, which will be further explored in the following section.

More recently, Thompson and Vásquez (2015) introduced a third component of the self: anti-ought-to self. This innovative construct draws on the psychological reactance theory and refers to a reaction against societal expectations. Such reaction occurs "in the opposite manner than is defined in Dörnyei's ought-to L2 self dimension" (p. 171). In other words, it represents the attributes that one develops as a reaction to physical or psychological external pressures, specifically those pressures that urge to do the contrary. As an example, a language learner/student could experience psychological reactance in the form of her desire to prove wrong the professors who had given her lower grades or the ones who advised her to change majors. The anti-ought to self could then be seen as a "self guide that is sensitive to external pressures (similar to the ought-to self), but that also has a promotion focus (similar to the ideal L2 self)" (Thompson, 2017, p. 40). Although this construct is relatively new to the SLA field, current research is further exploring psychological reactance and its potential link to motivation, particularly with regards to L2MSS and individual differences (Alharbi, 2017; Huensch & Thompson, 2017; Thompson, 2017; Liu & Thompson, 2017).

Existing Literature on the Ideal L2 Self

The three components of the L2MSS have been validated by empirical data from different contexts (Al-Hoorie, 2018; Thompson, 2017; Dörnyei & Kybanyiova, 2014; Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Chan, 2013; Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Henry, 2009; Ryan, 2009; Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Lamb, 2007). These studies have confirmed the motivational impact of the components in language learning. Although all three components might emerge in the current study, there is a focus on the ideal L2 self because it is a "strong predictor of various criterion measures related to language learning" (Chan, 2013), and more specifically, because it could directly impact students' motivations. Thus, this section contains a review of the studies that focus on the ideal

L2 self component, as this is the construct from which the ideal language teacher selves originated. This section specifically provides a rationale of the relevance of the concept of the ideal self, discusses its key dimensions including vision and mental imagery, and reviews the literature concerning the ideal self in LOTEs.

Csizér and Lukács (2010), for example, explored how the motivational and attitudinal dispositions of 237 learners of English and German differ for the two languages. They used a motivation questionnaire that comprised questions about several topics, including: ideal L2/L3 self, ought to L2/L3 self, learning experiences, attitudes towards English/German, English/German use and class anxiety, parental encouragement, cultural interest, direct contact with L2/L2 speakers, and motivated leaning behavior. One piece of their results is particularly relevant for the present study. Csizér and Lukács (2010) indicated that students' ideal L2 self was the most significant component of predicting motivated learning behavior for both English and German as a first or second language. In short, ideal selves are considered important attractors in language learning and therefore salient guides that can directly affect the learning processes.

Chan (2013) explored one of the key dimensions of the ideal L2 self, mental imagery, in three doctoral candidates from a British university. Mental imagery refers to the "conscious or sub-conscious creation of images in the mind, which is transformational in nature" (Chan, 2013, p. 398). The author used in-depth interviews to explore how imagery was used to motivate participants' L2 learning, their doctoral research, and their career choices. Findings indicated that participants created five imagery types: goal achievement (i.e., functioning as a professional), process-based (i.e., reflecting on how many steps one would need to reach the goal), mental rehearsal (i.e., imagining oneself giving a teaching demonstration), negative (i.e., failing to

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complete one's doctoral degree), and the imagery of bridging cultural barriers (i.e., imagining conversing with some target language speakers). Additionally, Chan (2013) found four imagery functions: motivational (i.e., envisioning oneself as an effective teacher has an effect on subsequent actions, such as preparing a lesson), preventive (i.e., imagining negative scenarios could have a preventive action), cognitive (i.e., imagery used as a mental rehearsal or as a writing strategy to visualize the end product), and affective (i.e., powerful imagery might impact students' affect). Finally, Chan's (2013) study provided a comprehensive review of certain conditions that are needed for imagery "to attain a powerful motivating capacity" (p. 407). Some of them include the need to be linked with a strong desire, to be specific, to be grounded in reality, and to be accompanied by a concrete plan of actions. This set of types, functions, and conditions shaped and influenced the achievement of the participants' desired goals. It is important to note that all the types, functions, and conditions suggested by Chan (2013) were helpful when analyzing the mental imagery of the TAs who participated in the current study and how their imagery constituted a powerful motivator for them to reach their goals.

In another study, Dörnyei and Chan (2013) tested a hypothesis that suggests that the intensity of motivation is partly dependent on the learners' ability to create mental imagery. The authors surveyed 172 Chinese students using a self-report questionnaire focusing on two languages, English and Mandarin. They specifically investigated "whether learner characteristics are related to sensory and imagery aspects with indices of the strength of the learners' future L2 self guides and how these variables are linked to learning achievement in the two languages" (p. 437). The results showed significant relationships between the future self-guides and intended effort and actual grades, particularly between the ideal L2 self and these measures. Thus, the motivational power of the ideal L2 self was confirmed in this study. In their study, Dörnyei and

Chan (2013) also argued that the ideal L2 images associated with different target languages are distinct or as they suggest, "coexisting ideal L2 self images constitute fairly distinct L2 specific visions, which can then interfere with each other both in a positive way… or in a negative, demotivating manner" (p. 455). These conclusions are not only relevant to verify the motivational power of the ideal L2 selves but also to provide empirical evidence that shows that imagery is a fundamental aspect of desired future language selves and is L2 independent. In other words, ideal-self images are not affected by the nature of the target language involved and therefore form distinct L2-specific visions. These claims were relevant when discussing the fact that some of the TAs who participated in the current study were teaching a language they learned.

Following the discussion about motivation among multiple languages, Thompson and Vásquez (2015) conducted a study in which they analyzed the narratives of 3 non-native speaker (NNS) foreign language teachers/learners. This study reexamined the L2MSS framework, added data sources from different learning contexts, and introduced the concept of anti-ought-to self (going against the suggestions and/or expectations of society) as a potentially powerful motivator. The analysis of the participants' narratives (in-depth narrative interviews) focused on several components needed to create a successful future self, including: future-oriented imagery, perceived plausibility of the future self, harmony between the ideal and ought-to selves, and strategy use to overcome obstacles. An analysis of these components allowed the researchers to create the participants' profiles, clearly stating their primary motivations, role models, future imagery, obstacles, and action plans. This study, in particular, is very helpful for the current study because it provides a review of the components of the L2MSS and, more importantly, vivid examples of the ways in which these components are revealed in the participants' narrative

accounts. Additionally, this study is relevant since it provided an analysis of the motivational

systems of 3 NNS language teachers and their interactions with different language learning

contexts, aspects that were considered in the present study.

All of the above studies included English as the target language or at least as one of the

languages studied. Fewer studies have actually explored the motivation to learn languages other

than English (LOTEs) (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017; Oakes, 2013; Thompson, 2017; Ushioda &

Dörnyei, 2017). In this regard, Mendoza and Phung (2018) found 119 studies using the L2MSS

between 2005 and 2018. Out of these studies, thirty-two (26.9%) included LOTEs and were

conducted in high schools and universities across Western Europe, East Asia, and English-

dominant countries. Twelve of the studies included French as one of the languages and eleven

pertained to Spanish. Oakes (2013), for example, investigated U.K. students' motivation to learn

foreign languages (Spanish and French), and documented how motivations varied between

students who take courses at a language department and those "non-specialist" language learners

who are enrolled in non-credit courses in a university language center. In Oakes' study, the ideal

L2 self construct was found to be more beneficial for understanding motivation for learning

LOTEs. Moreover, the non-specialist language learners provided a greater variety of

motivations. It is relevant to note that although these learners were studying the language in a

voluntary way, the strength of their motivations was rather weak. Thompson (2017) also

investigated the relationship among motivation, language choice, and multilingualism. She

suggested that there might be potentially different reasons for the development of the ideal and

ought-to selves when LOTEs are the languages under investigation (i.e. family connection or

interest in culture). In fact, in a LOTE context, "students could have two distinct ideal selves:

one with a focus on interpersonal communication and the other with a focus on more general

goals of work and study" (Thompson, 2017, p. 498). In other words, while someone who is studying English would need a strong ideal to communicate with others and to succeed at work and study, the ideal self for someone who is studying a foreign language might be quite different depending on the context and language community. Further research is needed to corroborate the above findings concerning learners of LOTEs.

As shown above, numerous studies have investigated the motivational impact of the ideal L2 self component in different contexts and with different populations (Al-Hoorie, 2018; Chan, 2013; Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Dörnyei and Chan, 2013; Henry, 2009; Lamb 2007; Oakes, 2013; Ryan, 2009; Thompson, 2017; Thompson & Vásquez, 2015). Among the three components from the L2MSS, these studies showed the ideal L2 self as the most influential factor of L2 motivation. These studies examined the L2MSS and provided a comprehensive review of the elements that are closely related to the development of the ideal L2 self component, including elaborate, vivid, and regularly activated imagery, vision, perceived plausibility of the future self, harmony between the ideal and ought-to selves, strategy use to overcome challenges, and more recently the anti-ought-to self. These elements constitute the theoretical concepts of the current study. Additionally, these studies, seen as a whole, provide clear examples of how one can examine the ideal self, including the use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Nevertheless, one gap that these studies did not addressed explicitly, because it was not part of their main foci, was how their participants' ideal L2 selves evolved over time. The current dissertation study attempted to fill this gap by showing different stages of the graduate students' TA development and examining how the participants' interactions, professional development opportunities, and other factors might trigger change in their ideal selves and teaching practices.

The following section constitutes a transition from a language learner perspective, offered by most of the L2MSS existing literature, to a teacher perspective, using both the L2MSS as the core framework and connecting its components to the possible language teacher selves framework, which, as mentioned before, was originated based on the L2MSS and its foundational theories.

Teacher Motivation and The Possible Language Teacher Selves

Research on teacher motivation has significantly increased since the late 1990s (Han & Yin, 2016). Much of this research focuses on pre-service teacher motivation (Karavas, 2010; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Richardson & Watt, 2006), employs social-cognitive theories such as achievement goal (Malmberg, 2008), expectancy-value (Richardson & Watt, 2006), and self-determination (Roth et al., 2007). These studies discuss motivating factors such as intrinsic (i.e. teachers' own expectations) (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992) and extrinsic (i.e. job security) (Richardson & Watt, 2006) values, prior teaching and learning experiences (Watt & Richardson, 2007), social and cultural context (Richardson & Watt, 2008) and working environment (Sinclair, 2008). Research on in-service teachers has explored not only the aforementioned motivating factors but also demotivating factors such as inadequate working conditions (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Kiziltepe, 2006), insufficient self-efficacy (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011), extrinsic values such as low salaries (Kiziltepe, 2008), and students' attitudes and behaviors (Kiziltepe, 2006). Several factors remain underexplored though. One of them has to do with the influence of role models into teacher motivation. The field of psychology provides the foundations to understand how a role model might be a potential source of motivation for teachers. In an in-depth analysis of the existing literature on role models, Morgenroth, Ryan, and Peters (2015) argue that role models can serve as behavioral models (showing how to perform an

activity) (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2008), representations of the possible (showing that a goal is attainable) (Lockwood, 2006; McIntyre et al., 2011), and sources of inspiration (showing that a goal is desirable) (Gauntlett, 2002; Paice et al., 2002).

During the last decade, the field of language teacher education has also fostered a rather innovative theoretical discussion and research regarding the concept of *Possible Language Teachers Selves* (Barkhuizen, 2016; Hiver, 2013; Kubanyiova, 2007, 2009; Valmori, 2014). This theoretical understanding has emerged as a result of the growing interest to investigate the complexity and dynamicity of the teacher motivation process. It explores the relationship between the model of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Higgins, 1987) and second language (L2) learning motivation, particularly the L2MSS (Dörnyei, 2005). Kubanyiova's (2007) concept of *'Possible Language Teacher Self'* was conceived to expand the understanding of the individuals' possible selves, specifically in language teacher education. Drawing elements from the foundational theories described above, this framework consists of three main components: *the ideal language teacher self, the ought-to language teacher self, and the feared language teacher self* (Kubanyiova, 2007). The first two are related to the ideal and ought-to selves from the L2MSS and the latter, although not explicitly stated, is part of the prevention focus of the ought-to self since it represents "someone that the teacher could become if either the ideals or perceived obligations and responsibilities are not lived up to" (Kubanyiova, 2009, p. 316).

The Ideal Language Teacher Self

The ideal language teacher self is the positive future representation for the actual self (Hiver, 2013). Like the ideal L2 self (Dörnyei, 2005), but focusing on teachers, the ideal language teacher self embraces the teacher's identity goals, aspirations, and wishes in terms of

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that desired future state. Traditional integrative and internalized instrumental motives belong to this component of the theory. This component contains the attributes that teachers would ideally like to possess. As an example, a novice language teacher who hopes she will become an effective teacher carries much more than such an abstract hope. Instead, the teacher has a well-elaborated current self that represents this hope –the self as designer of engaging lessons, as a teacher who enjoys the interaction with her students, as a teacher who has few classroom management issues, among other goals. Similarly, if the novice language teacher envisions herself as someone who designs engaging lessons, the ideal language teacher self constitutes a powerful motivator to keep updating her instructional practices because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between her actual and ideal selves.

In the ideal language teacher self component, powerful imagery (Chan, 2013; Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Oyserman & James, 2009) is essential for teachers to imagine themselves as effective teachers. Imagery refers to the conscious or subconscious creation or re-creation of images in the mind, a process that is transformational in nature (Chan, 2013). As a matter of fact, Dörnyei (2009) believes that imagery is "what makes the concept of future self guides such as the ideal and the ought to selves suitable to the lynchpins of a broad theory of L2 motivation" (p. 17). Imagery can be based on both desired and actual experiences (Wraga & Kossilyn, 2002; Finke, 2014). The concept of vision is equally important to understand this first component of the framework. van der Helm (2009) argues that vision promotes motivation, transformation, and inspiration. In their book, *Motivating learners, motivating teachers: Building vision in the language classroom,* Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) also refer to vision as one of the single most important factors for language learning. According to them, "vision is one of the highest-order motivational forces, one that is particularly fitting to explain the long-term, and often

lifelong, process of mastering a second language" (p. 3). As demonstrated above, vision can have a significant impact on students' motivation and actions. This could also be the case for language teachers who need to 'see' themselves as effective teachers and who need to have a clear vision of where the learning process can take them.

The Ought-to Language Teacher Self

The ought-to language teacher self refers to the language teachers' visualizations of their duties and obligations with regard to their work. It contains the same features of the second component of the L2MSS (Dörnyei, 2005); nonetheless, they are adapted for teachers. The ought-to self has been shown to be socially constructed as teachers' idealized images of themselves are often influenced by others' attitudes towards the duties, obligations, and responsibilities (Hiver, 2013). These images are often shaped by the expectations of colleagues, parents, and students, as well as other external pressures such as the school policies and norms. Such expectations might then result in potential challenges and limitations for teachers. Unlike the first component of the framework, traditional extrinsic, less internalized, motives belong to this ought-to language teacher self.

The Feared Teacher Self

The last component of Kubanyiova's Possible Language Teacher Selves framework is the feared self (Demirezen, 2016; Ogilvie, 1987), which "serves as a negative future reference for the actual self" (Hiver, 2013, p. 211), and represents what a language teacher is afraid of becoming. In other words, the feared self "regulates behavior by guiding the individual away from something" (Dörnyei, 2009). Images that emerge from the feared self are in fact the ones that an individual wants to avoid and overcome. This component can be seen as part of the ought-to self, previously elaborated by the self-discrepancy theory and the L2MSS, since an

individual tries to possess all the desired attributes that are expected from her and therefore, does her best to avoid/prevent those undesired selves. The main source of a teacher's motivation to reduce the actual vs ought-to self-discrepancy is then the teacher's vision of negative consequences, which "could materialize if the perceived obligations and responsibilities are not lived up to" (Kubanyiova, 2012). As an example, if a novice teacher fears becoming a "boring teacher" or giving the impression to students as someone chaotic or disorganized, she will attempt to do whatever is needed to avoid that feared self.

The three components (ideal language teacher self, ought-to language teacher self, and the feared language teacher self) combined will "derive their motivational function from their ability to guide a person's behavior towards an ideal, away from fear, and either towards or away from an ought" (Hiver, 2013, p. 211). A motivated teacher would therefore be the one who is able to visualize a successful future self, who can reduce the distance between the current self and the ideal self, and who can increase the distance between the current self and the feared self (Kubanyiova, 2007). The motivational function of these future self guides has two main foci: whereas the ideal-self guides have a *promotion* focus, closely related to achievements and accomplishments, the ought self-guides have a *prevention* focus, "regulating the absence or presence of negative outcomes associated with failing to live up to various responsibilities and obligations" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 18). Lastly, these components contain multiple affective factors such as positive and negative emotions and are derived from past and current experiential elements (Hiver, 2013). By exploring these three components, the current study attempted to gain some understanding of the TAs development, including their goals, aspirations, fears, and wishes in relation to their desired future condition.

Existing Literature on the Possible Language Teacher Selves Framework

Most of the research using the framework of possible language teacher self has focused on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. For example, Kubanyiova, (2007, 2008, 2015) applied it to non-native speaking EFL teachers in Slovakia. Hiver (2013) also obtained data from EFL teachers in Korea, Gao and Xu (2014) from China, Pineda González and Arnold Morgan (2016) from Spain, and Kumazawa (2013) from Japan. It is important to mention that most of these studies tend to focus on novice teachers as they "are believed to exhibit particularly dynamic developmental aspects of self-concept" (Kumazawa, 2013). It is also important to note that no study was found that uses this framework to explore foreign language teaching assistants (FLTAs).

Research using the framework indicates that exploring the interaction between the multiple identity goals language teachers have and the dissonance between teachers' actual and desired future selves is crucial to understand language teacher development (Kubanyiova, 2007, 2009). In her longitudinal classroom-based mixed methods study, Kubanyiova (2007) argues that although all three components of the framework "are not necessarily available and/or readily accessible to every teacher" (p. 330), they still need to be explored in order to understand language teacher conceptual change. She also found that the ideal language teacher self, in particular, seems to have an impact on the teachers' classroom strategies and practices. Similarly, Hiver (2013) conducted a qualitative study in which he investigated the roles that possible language teachers self play in the teacher development choices of seven in-service Korean English teachers. Like Kubanyiova's (2007) study, Hiver (2013) also found that each type of possible language teacher self plays a key role in "initiating and sustaining in-service Korean

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public school English teachers' motivation to engage in continuing teacher development" (p. 215).

Kubanyiova's (2015) study adds an interesting perspective to the discussion of the selves since it combines both teachers' use of language in teacher-led discourse (TLD) and opportunities for L2 development. Through a moment-by-moment analysis of TLD data and a grounded theory ethnographic approach, Kubanyiova (2015) explored one teacher's "inner landscapes of action" (expectations, beliefs, voices, fears, anxieties) and how these inner resources influence and help explain the teacher's interactions with students in TLD. Exploring these elements clearly opens a new research agenda in the relationship between teacher cognition and SLA, which had previously been understudied. In her findings, Kubanyiova suggested that the role of teachers' future self-guides, conceptualized as language teachers' possible selves, had a clear influence on how the participant dealt with classroom interaction and the L2 development opportunities. To illustrate this, Kubanyiova documented her study participant's beliefs about language learning and how they often clashed with the notion of interaction as a vehicle for L2 development. As a matter of fact, data across interactional modes showed that the participant had an "overarching and pervasive desire to be in charge" (p. 578), which explains why her ideal teacher self (as someone who is important to students and who is in full control of the teaching process) was threatened "whenever she lost ownership and control of the knowledge being generated" through class discussions. This study concludes with a reflection on how the participant could benefit from training in her classroom discourse strategies, but most importantly from the transformation of her vision, eventually moving from a language teacher who is in full charge of the teaching process to one who creates an interactional space in which her students could lead their way through learning the target language. That being said, this study

provides potential implications for teacher education programs as a whole. Such programs need to provide opportunities to reflect on and, if needed, to challenge the teachers' images of what it means to be an effective teacher. This aligns with the current study because TAs had the chance to "engage more deeply with philosophies of teaching" (Kubanyiova, 2015), as well as with her ideal language teacher selves reflections and classroom practices. Their reflections were especially critical not only to recognize the TAs visions but also to determine what initiatives could be taken to improve their institutional support. Therefore, language departments could potentially benefit from initiatives and/or recommendations that aim to closely monitoring the development of their TAs and hopefully to strengthen their TA training opportunities.

White and Ding (2009) also conducted a qualitative study with 23 experienced teachers in China, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand. They employed the ideal and ought-to teacher selves constructs to show how the teachers' self-concept had an impact on, and was impacted by, the language teacher engagement within an e-learning environment. The study was conducted over a nine-month period and analyzed data from interviews, participants' reflective journals, and blog entries. The authors provided a brief sample of the participants' ideal teacher selves but focused on one participant because of her "clear personal vision of her ideal teacher self [which] she articulated at different stages of her experience of e-learning technology" (White & Ding, 2009, p. 7). In this study, the authors showed how her ideal teacher self was a powerful motivator at different stages of the project, how it developed after multiple interactions with other group participants, and how it led her to envision a "teacher for whom technology is essential in enabling her to relate her self to the world of distance language teaching" (p. 11). This study is particularly useful because it shows that possible selves, specifically the ideal teacher selves, are powerful motivators that evolve from experiences, activities, interactions, and

practices mediated by others. The current study considered such reflection to investigate how

TAs ideal teachers selves took shape and evolved over time.

Kumazawa (2013) also employed the possible teacher self in his study of four novice

secondary school EFL teachers in Japan. Kumazawa conducted a narrative analysis of interview

data in order to identify the relationship between the participants' occupational motivation and

their self-concept by using the possible selves theory. Findings suggest that conflicts between the

participants' ideal and ought-to selves frequently "reduced their power to move positively toward

achieving their ideal selves" (p. 53). These conflicts were particularly evident at the beginning of

their teaching trajectories since the teachers were continuously receiving external pressures,

expectations, and limitations from their environment. These findings are consistent with the

literature on the possible selves in that they show how multiple external factors often play a

pivotal role to either help the individuals meet their goals or hinder their development. In

Kumazawa's study, such conflicts eventually created self-reflection among the participants and a

subsequent transformation of their self-concepts and motivation. The current dissertation

attempted to provide similar opportunities to reflect on the conflicts, challenges, and limitations

TAs experienced over the course of two years. TAs were then encouraged to reflect on the

strategies they used to overcome those challenges and how the support they received impacted

their development of their teacher selves.

Gao and Xu (2014) employed Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory to examine the

motivation to teach and professional commitment of a group of ten English teachers in rural

secondary schools in China. Biographical interviews were the main data sources of the study.

Even though most of the participants did not associate teaching with their ideal selves

immediately after finishing their high school studies, they chose to become teachers as it helped

them achieve some sort of social mobility. Later, seven of those participants associated teaching with their visions of ideal self as they realized the potential impact they could have on their students. However, given the fact that the teachers were working in remote rural schools in China and with little to no resources, they experienced a series of disappointments and contradictions between what they would like to do and what they were expected to do by others. These challenges led them to further their education and seek for opportunities to teach in better schools. This study called for more strategies to retain teachers from those under-privileged settings. More specifically, it invited "teacher educators and educational administrators to see what teachers value as core of their visions of 'ideal self' so that we can help them sustain their commitment to the English language teaching profession in extremely deprived conditions" (p. 166). Ongoing discussions concerning the teachers' ideal selves could potentially lead them to recognize the underlying reasons why they chose the profession and the support they need to remain committed to teaching.

More recently, Pineda González and Arnold Morgan (2016) developed an intervention program for the development of the ideal language teacher self of six L2 teacher trainees from the University of Sevilla, Spain. Participants from the study were interviewed twice (beginning and end of the intervention program) and attended five meetings where they shared five different writing narratives concerning their ideal language teacher selves. These narratives elicited information about the participants' prior learning experiences, mental imagery, current selves, potential challenges in the profession, feared language teacher selves, and short-term goals and strategies to reach them. Such guided program was found to be effective for these six L2 teacher trainees as they were able to visualize and reflect on their current, ideal, and feared language teacher selves. The program also served as a tool to guide teacher trainees in their decisions

regarding their professional development. As an example, while participating in the program helped five of these trainees to reinforce their interest in becoming L2 teachers, it made one of them reevaluate her career goals and consider other options for her future. This finding illustrates how reflecting on the ideal language teacher self construct could potentially serve as an important source to understand teachers' motivations and decisions concerning their future.

The findings described above not only confirm the relevance of the possible language teacher selves framework to explore language teacher motivation but also encourage future research, such as the one conducted here, to continue addressing all three components of the framework: ideal, ought-to, and feared selves. By doing so, the fields of applied linguistics and language teacher education will continue to better understand language teacher development and motivation and what is more, they will be able to better inform their research and teaching practices. By exploring the participants' ideal teacher selves, for example, this study discussed initial expectations, hopes, fears, and desires of TAs with regards to the teaching profession. Additionally, this study attempted to identify developmental patterns from the TAs ideal teacher selves and how, based on the TAs' perspectives, they have influenced their teaching practices. Lastly, this study explored the TAs' immediate environment, closely related to the third component of the L2MSS framework –learning experience-, to identify the challenges and limitations they might have experienced, how they overcome them within their current context, and to explore the elements from the institutional support that were perceived as beneficial and/or problematic at times.

Perceived Gaps and Summary

This literature review discussed the theoretical frameworks that are used in this study and examined some of the existing literature on TA development. The use of the possible language

teacher self is relatively new and offers potential implications to further understand language teachers' motivation and development. From the review of the literature, one can conclude that the model has not been applied to teachers of languages other than English. Further research is therefore needed to shift the focus of these studies in order to broaden the potential implications of the possible language teacher selves framework. Also, most of the research was conducted with novice teachers. Consequently, further studies could expand on the understanding of the possible selves of in-practice or midcareer teachers. Future idealized selves, in this particular case, the ideal language teacher selves, might be therefore combined with all the experiential elements from these somewhat more experienced teachers. By hearing and including their voices, researchers are able to address potential challenges that could be relevant to wider settings. Lastly, no study has been conducted on this matter with foreign language teaching assistants. They constitute an important but often marginalized group by research and administration due to the fact that, in many cases, they are seen as graduate students who will eventually graduate and that, therefore, will not be teaching for an extended period of time at the universities. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, TAs are often in charge of most, if not all, lower-level teaching assignments and thus require all possible guidance to become successful graduate students, effective foreign language instructors, or even TA supervisors in the future. By adopting the framework of L2MSS and its version for teachers, possible language teacher selves, one can get some important insights on the TAs' ongoing development as well as their motivations and fears concerning the teaching profession. As documented above, these frameworks actually offer a holistic and promising approach to understanding the facets of the teacher self and to capture multiple aspects of teacher development.

CHAPTER THREE:

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methods that were used in this study. First, the research design and its pertinence in this line of inquiry are discussed. Next, a detailed description of the participant selection and the sampling rationale are included. After that, the data collection methods and the procedures that were followed to collect data are outlined. Lastly, the data analysis plan, along with a discussion of validation strategies and issues of reliability are presented.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand the development of foreign language teaching assistants over time, particularly, how the TAs' ideal language teacher selves evolved throughout their teaching trajectories at a southeastern US institution. In order to attain this goal, the following research questions were investigated in this study:

1. How do foreign language teaching assistants' ideal teacher selves take shape and evolve over time?

   a. What are the initial expectations, hopes, fears, and desires of TAs with regards to the teaching profession?

   b. What developmental patterns, if any, can be observed from the TAs ideal teacher selves and from their instructional practices during and after two years

teaching at the current institution? What aspects of teaching have

evolved/changed over these two years?

2. How are TAs' challenges and limitations negotiated and overcome within their

current context?

3. Which elements from the institutional support are perceived as more beneficial

for the TAs and which ones need to be reevaluated?

Research Design

The study focused on the TAs' experiences within their current academic institution and

relied on classroom observation reflections, interviews, and TA artifacts. The main research

methodology was a multiple case study (Duff, 2008; Stake, 2006). This type of case study was

chosen because it "increases the sense of representativeness of, or variation among, cases" (Duff,

2008, p. 36) and most importantly, because it might help gain further understanding of the

processes, challenges, and factors associated with the development of foreign language TAs,

especially concerning how their ideal teacher selves evolve after receiving the required training,

adjusting to the dynamics of the institution, and teaching for about two years at their current

institution. Furthermore, this type of case study requires a thorough analysis of the cases – thick

or rich description – (Duff, 2008), which in turn may generate further insight into the theoretical

explanations of how TAs' ideal language teacher selves developed within their current context as

well as into new levels of understanding of the impact of the institutional support not only on

their performance as TAs but also on the development of their future teacher selves.

Research Setting

The selected setting for this study was the language department at a large, public,

southeastern university. It is relevant to note that the information presented below was collected

from several sources, including official documents from the office managers and supervisors, course schedule search tools from the university, and the institution's website. This department offers a Bachelor degree in World Languages and Cultures, MA programs in Applied Linguistics, French, and Spanish and a Ph.D. in Linguistics and Applied Language Studies. The department provides foreign language instruction and culture courses to more than 1900 students from all 14 colleges at the university. The course offerings in this department include: Arabic, Chinese, Classical Greek, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latin, Modern Greek, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. As documented in the existing literature (Enkin, 2015), TAs are in charge of most of the lower and some of the intermediate level courses for the commonly taught languages (i.e., Spanish, French) at this institution. They are, most often, MA students in the languages they teach. Though, it is relevant to note that not all foreign language programs use TAs to the same extent at this university.

In Fall 2016, for example, the department employed 47 TAs (MA=33 and Ph.D.=13). While some of these TAs were hired to serve as instructors of record (face-to-face and/or online), others worked as language tutors, and/or research assistants. It is relevant to mention that the number of language TAs in the department fluctuates every semester due to the fact that some students graduate and/or the increase or drop in the number of language courses. Moreover, most of these language TAs are graduate students from the MA and Ph.D. programs from the language department. However, there is a small number of TAs from other programs, such as Political Science, History, and Latin American Studies. These TAs are offered a teaching assistantship to help fund their graduate studies. Some of these TAs lack the pedagogical training required to teach a language; however, each case needs to be analyzed individually and therefore, it is the

department's responsibility to prepare them for their, in many cases, first language teaching experience.

Professional development opportunities are, therefore, crucial for the language department. Several new language TAs at this university, including new lab tutors, Spanish, French, and in some cases, German TAs, generally participate in a three-day orientation workshop organized by the language department at the beginning of every fall semester. Some of the topics that are covered during this workshop include classroom management, potential issues in the classroom, lesson planning, first day preparation, technology use, target language use, communicative activities, among other language-specific topics. The majority of language TAs who participate in the workshop also enroll in a one-semester graduate instructional methods course intended to help graduate teaching assistants develop skills and knowledge that allow them to effectively engage in teaching languages. Some specific topics that are discussed in this course include: communicative language teaching, key teacher interventions, classroom management, language learning motivation, and autonomy (Thompson, 2015).

Language TAs also have the option to enroll in another methods course that is taught by the applied linguistics faculty and that is specifically tailored for students from the Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics. It is important to note that both methods courses are quite different in nature. While the graduate instructional methods course for TAs is essentially a hands-on-training in day-to-day issues in the classroom with a basic theoretical emphasis, the applied linguistics methods course offers a more thorough exploration of the theory. Also, the applied linguistics methods course is for those graduate students who are choosing teaching languages as a career path, whereas the graduate instructional methods course is for graduate students who are currently language TAs. Both courses have been certified by the graduate school and therefore

may replace the mandatory TA training, which consists of an online set of modules and a one-day face-to-face seminar.

Other professional development opportunities offered by the university include a one-day introduction to graduate student teaching at the institution and the Preparing for College Teaching (PCT) course, an optional ten-week program to help TAs prepare to become college instructors or professors; however both of them are open to all TAs and ITAs from the university and therefore do not necessarily address issues that are relevant in the language classroom such as promoting the use of the target language, motivating students who are enrolled in a language class to fulfill a requirement, helping students cope with language learning anxiety, among other issues.

Participant Selection and Rationale

In order to gain multiple perspectives in how teaching assistants' ideal teacher selves evolved over the course of two years (duration of their MA programs), purposeful sampling (Duff, 2008) was utilized. This sampling is drawn from the larger pool of accessible cases (Duff, 2008). In this particular study, the TAs who took part of the graduate instructional methods course offered in Fall 2015 were asked to participate in the study. This group of participants was also acquainted with the construct of the ideal language teacher self. As a matter of fact, all of the participants submitted multiple assignments in which they reflected on their ideal selves, their beliefs about teaching, and their teaching practices. Having this already-existing information allowed for further analysis on how their current and ideal selves had evolved since they started teaching at the current institution. Thus, four TAs from the language department were recruited. They were either French or Spanish TAs because no other language was represented in the aforementioned graduate instructional methods course. These TAs were

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graduate students from the language department and they were teaching one or two sections of a lower-level language course at the time of the study.

A maximum variation approach to the participant selection was utilized in the current study. Recruiting TAs of different languages, in this particular case Spanish and French, was an attempt to maximize what one could learn from them (Martinez, 2011) and from the department as a whole. Also, according to Duff (2014), four to six cases can be ideal because they "permit multiple ways of reporting the findings and can mitigate against possible attrition among participants" (p. 237) and they can also provide relevant contrasts and opportunities for corroboration across cases (Duff, 2008). The participants all had various degrees of teaching experience, which is documented when describing each case. Recruiting both novice and experienced teachers helped illustrate different stages of their teaching trajectories. In the context of this study, all participants were new TAs at the start of their graduate program and they finished their second year at the moment of this study. Accounting for the TAs teaching experiences was helpful to discuss how the professional development series offered at this institution might have influenced their ongoing development as language instructors.

Finally, as mentioned above, all the participants were enrolled in the same graduate instructional methods course, which took place during their first year of teaching. During that course, they submitted various assignments that were used as data in the current study. Having already existing data from these TAs was relevant to characterize their first year of teaching at the current institution and to compare and contrast across cases. It is also important to emphasize that these TAs were enrolled in literature-based Masters programs (Spanish and French) with no emphasis on language teaching. Additionally, none of these TAs had any other language pedagogy coursework since the graduate instructional methods course. Some of them

participated in workshops or in other forms of professional development but not within their required curriculum. A discussion of other forms of professional development received by these four TAs is included in the next chapter.

Recruitment Plan

The participants were identified with the assistance of the graduate instructional methods course professor from Fall 2015. She served as gatekeeper or person who was able to assist the researcher in gaining access and developing trust with the TA community (Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2003). An informal conversation about the potential participants was held between the gatekeeper and the researcher. This conversation aimed at selecting potential participants from the graduate instructional methods course. After analyzing the demographics of the class (Spanish TAs=9; French TAs=4), a total of 8 potential participants was identified. Five students from the course were not included as potential participants because four of them were not teaching a face-to-face class during the graduate instructional methods course, and one of them was about to graduate. The four TAs that were teaching online were not included because they did not have the same teaching opportunities that their colleagues had teaching face-to-face, including contact with students, lesson preparation, day-to-day teaching issues, among others. Those opportunities clearly impacted these four TAs' reflections on their actual and ideal selves. Thus, the existing artifacts from these TAs would have not been comparable to the data obtained from the ones who taught face-to-face in Fall 2015.

Once participants were identified, the researcher informally asked whether they would be interested in participating in his study during their last semester at the university. Upon receiving positive responses, the researcher proceeded to create the study proposal. Once the committee members approved the proposal, a request for approval to the Internal Review Board (IRB) of

the university was submitted. After getting the approval for the study (Appendix A), voluntary participation of the TAs who were identified as potential participants was requested. In order to do so, an email with an explanation of the purpose of the study to the students who met the selection criteria of this study was sent. After receiving positive responses from prospective participants, a meeting to explain in detail the purpose of the study and what participating in this study entailed was scheduled. In this meeting, participants discussed the project features and proceeded to complete a consent form in English (Appendix B). The TAs who agreed to participate were asked to return the form to the researcher at their earliest convenience. It is important to note that all meetings, interviews, and explanations were in English. This measure was taken as an attempt to keep a common language for the study.

The Foreign Language Teaching Assistants

This section introduces Lauren, Mark, Claire, and Susana. They are the four language TAs who agreed to participate in the study. They all started their Masters program in Fall 2015 and graduated in Spring 2017. Lauren and Mark taught Spanish and Claire and Susana taught French during these two years. Claire, Lauren, and Mark were born in the United States and Susana was born in Morocco.

Concerning their experience teaching languages, Lauren and Mark never taught Spanish in a formal setting before starting their Masters program. During their first semester, they taught one lower-level Spanish course and the subsequent semesters they were in charge of two lower-level courses. On the contrary, Susana and Claire had experience teaching French before they came to pursue their Masters program. Susana, for example, taught at a private French institute and an elementary school in her home country, Morocco. Claire also taught French to high school students before she started her Masters degree. The implications of having some teaching

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experienced (Claire and Susana) and being novice teachers (Lauren and Mark) are discussed

when presenting each case. All four TAs taught beginner levels at the institution, with the

exception of Susana who taught French III during her last semester. Also, all four TAs were

teaching two lower-level language courses at the end of the data collection stage. Table 1

contains general information about the TAs' languages and previous teaching experiences.

Table 1. *Teaching Assistants' Profiles*

Teaching Assistant	Origin	L1	Language Taught	Number of Years of Teaching Experience	Level Taught *
Lauren	US	English	Spanish	0	None
Mark	US	English	Spanish	0	None
Claire	US	English	French	6	High School
Susana	Morocco	Arabic	French	6	Elementary

Note. Participants' teaching experience prior becoming a foreign language TA.

Data Collection

Yin (2003) suggests that data from case studies is likely to be much more persuasive and

precise if it is based on multiple sources of information. Similarly, Duff (2008) states that the use

of considerable data sources "enables readers to get to know the cases well and to consider

corroborating cases or counter-examples" (p. 44). Thus, data sources of this study included:

language background questionnaire, existing TA artifacts (philosophy of teaching, ideal teacher

selves reflections, and peer-observation and formal observation reflections), a revised version of

the artifacts (philosophy of teaching, ideal teacher selves reflection, and classroom practices

reflection), in-depth semi-structured interviews with the TAs, and a researcher reflective journal.

It is important to note that the existing TA artifacts were required assignments in the

graduate instructional methods course they took in Fall 2015. The current study utilized these

already-existing data and it also requested participants to provide an updated version of these artifacts during their last semester of studies.

Language Background Questionnaire. A language history questionnaire was administered in order to gather demographic information from the participants (Appendix C). More specifically, the TAs reported the languages they speak, a self-rating of their level in these languages, the amount of interaction with the target language, reasons to study the target language(s), language(s) spoken at home, and preferred language based on different settings. The questionnaire is an adaptation of the L2 Language History Background Questionnaire (Li et al., 2006). The questionnaire was administered in English and it was used to create the participants' biographical sketches. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants as a measure to protect their privacy and confidentiality and all data was scanned and stored in both, a cabinet that can only be accessed by the researcher and a password-protected computer.

Participant Artifacts. Once the study obtained the necessary approvals by the IRB, the researcher requested access to four written documents that the TAs produced during their graduate instructional methods course from Fall 2015. They included: a) philosophy of teaching; b) ideal teacher selves' reflections (two versions); c) peer-observation reflection; and d) formal observation reflection. Appendix D contains the prompts that were used to describe these assignments (Thompson, 2015). These artifacts represent the existing data of the current project. Since all the participants were enrolled in the same graduate instructional methods course, they provided reflections about their beliefs about teaching and learning (philosophy of teaching); characterized their ideal teacher selves (ideal teacher selves' reflection); created their own materials (lesson plans and e-portfolios); and self-evaluated their teaching practices based on their peer comments and on a video they recorded from one of their classes (formal and peer-

observation reflections). Upon discussion with the course instructor, many of these artifacts were elaborated under the foundation of reflective teaching as a convenient approach to support the ongoing process of professional development (Richards & Farrell, 2011). The four artifacts that were analyzed provided an initial point to explore/compare the development of the TAs' possible selves, more specifically their ideal language teacher selves (ideal language teacher selves' reflection), to understand their beliefs and reasoning behind their teaching choices (philosophy of teaching), and to include their reflections about their own teaching practices (peer and formal observation reflections).

In the last semester of the TAs at this university (Spring 2017), participants were asked to revise their philosophy of teaching (Appendix E) and to write two more reflections: one in which they discuss their current and ideal teacher selves (Appendix F) and another in which they reflect on their current teaching practices (Appendix G). The latter was similar to the formal observation reflection they wrote during their graduate instructional methods course, that is, participants were asked to video-record one of their classes and they were also given guiding questions to consider when writing their reflection. In their reflection, participants were also asked to explain how their teaching practices have changed, if so, in comparison to when they started teaching at this university. These documents provided a last written account of the TAs' perspectives with regards to teaching and learning and they particularly allowed for an analysis of how their idealized future representations, beliefs, and actions differ or remain the same when compared to their first semester at this university. For the purpose of data analysis, all personal identifying information from the documents was erased. Also, pseudonyms to each one of the TAs were assigned as a confidentiality measure.

Semi-Structured Interviews. A semi-structured interview is "one where the interviewer

has a clear picture of the topics that need to be covered … but is prepared to allow the interview to develop in unexpected directions where these open up important new areas" (Richards, 2009, p. 186). Thus, as Richards (2009) suggests, using this type of interview requires the researcher to be skillful in allowing the conversation to develop naturally, making sure that the interviewee is actively participating and not merely answering plain and 'boring' questions. For that reason, the interviews were based on an interview protocol, a document that served as a guide to identify the main topics that need to be discussed (Richards, 2009). These interview protocols were reviewed by two professors who had extensive experience with interview design and implementation. Both reviewers were asked to check the items in both interview protocols and provide feedback on the clarity of the questions. In a nutshell, they provided suggestions to reword three questions and to include two more as follow-up questions. Once all questions were revised, the interview was piloted with one language TA from the Spanish department. Although no major issues arose, this final piloting stage was helpful to identify the questions that needed more elaboration and follow-up (i.e., the ones related to the TAs ideal language teacher selves) and to corroborate with the TA that there were no issues regarding the clarity of the questions.

TAs were interviewed at the beginning and end of their last semester of teaching at the current institution. Each interview lasted one hour approximately. They were all conducted in the researcher's office. Since the interviews were scheduled in the researcher's office, the researcher made sure to plan the interviews at times where the office was not being used by anyone else. The interviews were audio-recorded, and notes were taken during the interviews.

The initial interview protocol (Appendix H) contains questions about the TAs' previous and current teaching experiences, their actual selves, and how their ideal teacher selves have evolved since they started to teach at that institution. It also asks about the transition they

experienced from being a language learner to a language instructor, acknowledging the fact that some learned the target language they teach and some others learned English, the impact of being multilingual on their teaching, the challenges they face/have faced inside and outside the classroom, and how they envision themselves in a couple of years. It also includes questions related to the preliminary findings of the analysis of the artifacts. The end of the semester interview protocol (Appendix I) consists of a series of questions about the TAs' perceived changes concerning their beliefs, perceptions experienced during their teaching trajectories, perceived changes in terms of their actual and ideal language teacher selves, current teaching practices, professional development series that might have or have not contributed to their development, and ideas to improve the TA preparation at the institution. Some of the questions relate to the ways in which their teaching practice has changed/evolved (or not) since they were first observed and to what extent other factors might have increased or decreased their motivation to teach during their teaching trajectories. These interviews allowed the researcher to inquire about their ideal language teachers' selves since they comprised their aspirations, goals, and desires with regards to teaching. They also allowed him to identify some of the institutional elements that may have positively or negatively influenced them. Lastly, they encouraged TAs to reflect on their strengths and elements that they needed to improve as language instructors. It is important to note though that each interview had its "own discourse context" (Duff, 2008), meaning that the topics that were discussed evolved both during each interview and from one interview to another. Thus, these dynamic interviews had to be cautiously analyzed to provide an 'accurate' interpretation of the investigated phenomena. As part of this cautious analysis, participants from this study were also able to provide feedback on the researcher's interpretations, a process called member checking (Duff, 2008).

Classroom Practices Reflection and Teaching Videos. The current study had access to the classroom practices' reflections that TAs created during their first semester at this university. In addition to this data, participants were asked to video-record one of their classes during their last semester of teaching and to submit one reflection about the recorded class. The recording generally lasted between 50 and 75 minutes since these times represent the length of a lower or intermediate language class at this university. Participants could record any class during the semester but they had a deadline to submit their observation reflection. There are three main reasons why they were asked to record their classes one last time: a) to offer them an opportunity to reflect on their process as teachers, the activities they plan, the aspects they feel confident about, the elements they need to improve, among other aspects that may arise; b) to gain additional information about the TAs' teaching practices and the classroom dynamics that take place when students and TAs interact; and c) to encourage them to do an updated video for job applications.

When given the instructions for their reflection, the TAs also received the departmental rubric (Thompson, 2015) (Appendix J), which contains elements to take into consideration when evaluating a language class. These elements gave them some ideas to reflect on their own teaching practices. Analyzing the TAs' videos also let the researcher prepare questions about specific times when they perform or indicate changes, challenges, or any other fluctuations in their teaching practices. It also allowed the researcher to include statements/questions extracted from the class that challenge TAs to reflect about their actual classroom practices.

One must note that, as suggested by Duff (2008), the researcher played a social role in the research site, as colleague of the TAs, which might have had an effect on the interactions, activities, and/or behaviors that occurred during the interviews and eventually during their

preparation for the class they needed to record. This social role was critical for the current study and needed to be cautiously considered by the researcher when analyzing the obtained data. That being said, the class recording and subsequent reflection constituted important data points to illustrate some of the TAs' current teaching practices and they were supported with other data collection techniques such as the interviews and the participants' artifacts. These groups of data sets helped consolidate and corroborate the cases.

Researcher Journal. All the researcher's personal notes (ideas, questions, observations, preliminary interpretations) were kept in a researcher journal. These notes took the form of analytic memos (Hesse-Biber & Levy, 2006). Keeping these memos allowed the researcher to record all codes, categories, relationships, initial reactions, assumptions, expectations, and biases about the research process. These elements are helpful during the data analysis stage because they "can help you organize and focus your emerging interpretation" (Heigham & Sakui, 2009). In other words, these memos were ways of summarizing where the researcher was at during the analysis and addressed potential interpretations about the data. Below is an example of an analytic memo that was written based on raw artifact data from one of the students from the graduate instructional methods course. The following are excerpts of the raw data written by the student:

> An ideal teacher, in my opinion is able to create this vision in students' minds through a dynamic and interactive learning environment since I think we learn a lot better through repetition and output production. It is a lot easier to learn in small bits every single day because we are able to build this adhesive knowledge layer where the next information layer can adhere more firmly. Why it is so hard to learn a new language? Because you have a very small knowledge layer on which new information can adhere upon, that is why the repetition is so crucial since it fortifies the layer and increases its surface so that new and more information layers can adhere onto it faster and tighter (Andrea).

The following is the analytic memo that the researcher wrote about the data:

> *Analytic Memo # 1* – Andrea's interest in finding answers that might possibly help her to become an effective teacher (crucial element of her ideal self) is complemented by her desire to theorize about language acquisition. According to Andrea, one "learns a lot better through repetition and output production." She believes that it is "a lot easier to learn in small bits every single day because we [students] are able to build this adhesive knowledge layer where the next information layer can adhere more firmly." She goes on by attempting to answer a rather complex question: why is it so hard to learn a language? She does it by suggesting that individuals have a "very small knowledge layer on which new information can adhere upon", what makes repetition crucial since it "fortifies the layer and increases its surface so that new and more information layers can adhere onto it faster and tighter". Her desire to theorize has probably emerged as a result of the initial classroom discussions from the graduate instructional methods course. Although Andrea does not provide any empirical evidence to support her statements, these lines show her strong beliefs about the importance of repetition and output on language learning. Through an in-depth analysis of her previous language experiences, I could eventually better understand the root of such beliefs.

Data Analysis

The data analysis began as soon as the first data sets were collected. According to Creswell (2007), "data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process—they are interrelated and often go simultaneously in a research project" (p. 150). The current study used theoretical concepts from the L2MSS and the Possible Language Teacher Selves frameworks to analyze the data sources. Although the process was dynamic and complex, seven phases of data analysis were followed: piloting the analysis, analyzing the existing artifacts, reflecting during data collection, initial read through the data, re-reading through the data, consolidating the cases, and making sense of the cases. These phases are an adaptation of the ones proposed by Martel (2013) and include the essential components of the analytical framework used by Kumazawa (2013).

Piloting Phase – sample analysis: This was the phase in which data analysis procedures were piloted. This phase occurred in Fall 2016. A sample of the analysis of one of the prospective participants' ideal language teacher selves' reflection was included in this phase

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(Appendix K). In this sample account, a brief biographical sketch of the participant was sketched as well as a detailed characterization of how the participant envisions herself as a language teacher. This sample analysis included the initial expectations, hopes, and desires of the prospective participant with regards to the teaching profession. More importantly, it allowed the researcher to utilize theoretical concepts from both L2MSS and possible language teacher selves when drafting and discussing the case. These constructs (powerful imagery, creation and strengthening of vision, and visualizations of potential challenges in the classroom) are further explored in each one of the cases.

Phase I – analyzing the existing artifacts: This was the preliminary phase, after obtaining IRB permission to conduct the study, and includes a thematic analysis of the texts produced by the participants in Fall 2015. These texts included: philosophy of teaching, ideal teacher selves reflections, peer-observation reflection, and formal observation reflection. These data constituted the starting point of comparison to examine how the TAs' ideal teacher selves evolved throughout their teaching trajectory at the current institution and which factors might have aided or hindered their motivations with regards to teaching and learning. In this phase, all the documents were imported to a web-supported application called Dedoose, developed by SocioCultural Research Consultants (SCRC). Dedoose was chosen because of the researcher's prior positive experiences working with the software and most importantly, because it integrates an easy coding platform with interactive data visualizations. Once all the data was imported to Dedoose, a thematic analysis of the texts was conducted. Data was coded using a process that Merriam (2009) calls "open coding." Therefore, "notations next to the bits of data that strike [the researcher] as potentially relevant for answering the research questions" (p. 178) were assigned. Through actively engaging with the data, emerging themes were identified, which helped noting

how TAs described their ideal teacher selves during their first semester. It is relevant to mention that these codes and themes changed throughout the subsequent phases of analysis as the researcher thought "more deeply about the data" and he incorporated theoretical "concepts to use as analytical lenses" (Martel, 2013, p. 82).

Phase II – reflecting during data collection: As data was collected during the participants' last semester of teaching, a researcher journal was kept in which reflections, assumptions, expectations, and questions about the participants' development as language instructors were posed. These reflections were in the form of analytic memos. Preliminary profiles for each participant were written and discussed with the participants to make sure they felt comfortable with the interpretations. These profiles were based on the information obtained in the background questionnaire and the preliminary analysis of the TA artifacts from fall 2015. The length of these preliminary profiles was 1-2 pages. Participants received an email with these profiles and were encouraged to provide feedback and engage in the discussion. Even though no major changes were made to the profiles, this member checking process allowed the researcher to double check the interpretations that were made. This reflection represented the first attempt to analyze how the data spoke to the research questions.

Phase III – initial read through all of the data: Once the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed into a Word document and imported to Dedoose. The revised artifacts were also imported to this platform. All the remaining coding was conducted as soon as all data sets were collected. The emerging themes from the interviews and revised artifacts were compared and contrasted with the ones gathered from the previous phases. This phase helped the researcher to get familiar with all the data and it helped revise and update the profiles for each participant.

Phase IV – re-reading through the data: This phase not only served to re-read the data but also to reflect further on each one of the codes and emerging themes. Some of the codes and themes included in the last version were different from the ones that emerged at an earlier phase of the analysis.

Phase V – consolidating the cases: This was the most complex and decisive phase of the analysis. Based on the collected data sources, drafted profiles, and themes, a profile was consolidated for each participant. At this stage, all elements that supported each case were included. This process encompassed what Duff (2008) refers as thick description. The length of these cases varied. Theses cases were shared with the participants via email. No changes were made to the cases, as participants were satisfied with the interpretations.

Phase VI – making sense of the cases: In this phase, a cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006) was employed to merge the findings across the cases. This method allowed the researcher to describe and interpret the themes that were salient and the ones that were extremely different across all cases. 'Saturation' was reached once no new codes or combination of codes could be assigned. This in-depth analysis was helpful to gain further perspectives on the TAs developing ideal language teacher selves, how their beliefs and motivations about teaching languages changed throughout the different stages of their teaching path at this institution, and how the institutional support offered at this institution aided or hindered their development as TAs. Lastly, based on these cases and supported by the TAs voices, this study attempted to provide a series of recommendations that expand, improve, or (re)evaluate the ongoing TA professional development program at this institution and potentially to other TA preparation programs across the US. Table 2 contains a summary of the data sources and analysis conducted to answer each one of the research questions.

Table 2. *Research Questions, Data Sources, and Analysis*

RQ	Data Sources	Thematic Analysis
1. How do foreign language teaching assistants' ideal teacher selves take shape and evolve over time? a) What are the initial expectations, hopes, fears, and desires of TAs with regards to the teaching profession?	<u>Existing Artifacts</u> Two Ideal Teacher Selves reflections, peer-observation, and formal observation reflections, and philosophy of teaching)	• *Phase 0 – Pilot Study Analyses* (sample of the analysis – ideal teachers selves reflection Fall 2015) • *Phase I – analyzing the existing artifacts (*thematic analysis of the texts produced by the participants in Fall 2015) • *Phase II – reflecting during data collection (preliminary profiles)* • *Phase III – initial read-through of the data (*emerging themes from the interviews and revised artifacts will be compared and contrasted with the ones gathered from the previous phases) • *Phase IV – re-reading through the data* • *Phase V – consolidating the cases (b*ased on the collected data sources, drafted profiles, and themes, a profile will be consolidated for each participant) • *Phase VI – making sense of the cases (cross-case analysis -* This method will allow to describe and interpret the themes that are salient and the ones that are extremely different across all cases).
b) What developmental patterns, if any, can be observed from the TAs ideal teacher selves and from their instructional practices during and after two years teaching at the current institution? What aspects of teaching have evolved/changed over these two years?	<u>New Artifacts</u> Revised version of TAs' Ideal Teacher Selves reflection, philosophy of teaching, and classroom practices reflection (based on a recording of one of their classes).	
2. How are TAs' challenges and limitations negotiated and overcome within their current context?	Semi-structured Interviews	
3. Which elements from the institutional support are perceived as more beneficial for the TAs and which ones need to be reevaluated?	Semi-structured Interviews	

Validation Strategies

To ensure credibility of the claims that were made, four validation strategies were used: triangulation, researcher reflexivity, peer debriefing, and member checks (Duff, 2008). First, data collected from the interviews was triangulated with data from the two sets of artifacts to formulate answers to the research questions. Moreover, in order to enhance reflexivity, a field log was completed throughout the study. A record of dates, places, persons, and activities were kept in the field log. These elements were helpful to describe the participants and the data collection methods and procedures. A researcher reflective journal was also maintained during the entire study to take notes as the process evolved. All decisions in the process of constructing the cases and their corresponding justification were kept in this journal. This "chain of evidence" (Yin, 2003) constituted a measure to increase the validity of each analytic step and of the conclusions of the study.

It must be noted that since the researcher was a TA at the time of study, there was a potential bias on the analysis. Claims, thus, were made with caution. In order to avoid this bias, participants were asked to read and provide feedback on the interpretation of the findings. By conducting this member-checking process (Duff, 2008), the writing was monitored to avoid distortion, oversimplification, or generalization of the analyzed information. Even though participants appeared to be generally satisfied with the interpretations, this step was not only helpful to check the analysis conducted but also gave them a chance to get hands-on experience to evaluate research. Also, it was necessary to find sufficient sources that support all interpretive comments. This is the reason why it was crucial to include a comprehensive description of each case as well as an explicit discussion of the findings and their relation with the existing literature. In addition, two peer debriefers or "impartial colleagues" (Frels & Onwuegbuzie,

2012) were recruited to contribute to enhancing credibility in this study: a professor whose area

of expertise is qualitative methodologies and a Ph.D. student whose current research agenda is

related to the one proposed in this study. No compensation was provided. Both peer debriefers

critically reviewed the information about the implementation and evolution of the study (Frels &

Onwuegbuzie, 2012) and they provided feedback regarding the interview protocols and the

process as a whole. The researcher met with the peer debriefers twice: once at the beginning of

the spring 2017 semester and another time when all data sets were collected and the analysis was

ongoing (end of Spring 2017 semester). These meetings were helpful to fine-tune the interview

protocols, to share preliminary interpretations, and to discuss any potential questions about the

feedback provided by the peer debriefers.

CHAPTER FOUR:

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter focuses on the conceptualization and evolution of the teaching assistants' ideal teacher selves and the challenges and limitations they experienced over the course of two years. First, it provides a brief summary of the main theoretical constructs that were considered in the analysis. It then discusses the first research question concerning the participants' initial expectations, hopes, fears, and desires concerning language teaching (Fall 2015), followed by the perceived changes in both, their ideal teacher selves and their own teaching practices (Spring 2017). It also includes an analysis of the TAs teaching practices in two different moments: first and last semester of instruction. The chapter concludes with the findings corresponding to the second research question: TAs' challenges and limitations. The TAs' assessment of the institutional support (research question three), their recommendations, and the conclusions and limitations of this study are discussed in Chapter 5.

Ideal Language Teacher Self: Main Constructs

Previous research on L2MSS (Dörnyei, 2005) and Ideal Language Teacher Self (Kubanyiova, 2007) provided the main theoretical constructs to describe the ideal language teacher selves of the TAs from this study. In this section, there is a focus on some of the main articles that guided the current study. A detailed review of the literature concerning these constructs can be found in the literature review chapter.

In the current study, ideal teacher selves were associated with salient imagery and visualization components (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Kim & Kim, 2011; Kim, 2009). Different

types of mental imagery were considered (Chan, 2014) when characterizing the TAs' ideal selves. These types included goal achievement (i.e., functioning as a professional), process-based (i.e., reflecting on how many steps one would need to reach the goal), mental rehearsal (i.e., imagining oneself teaching a class for the first time), negative (i.e., failing to complete one's goals), and the imagery of bridging cultural barriers (i.e., providing opportunities for learners to meet target language speakers). Chan's (2014) four imagery functions were also relevant to understand the TAs' ideal teacher selves' representation. They included motivational (i.e., envisioning oneself as an effective teacher has an effect on subsequent actions, such as preparing a lesson), preventive (i.e., imagining negative scenarios could have a preventive action), cognitive (i.e., imagery used as a mental rehearsal or as a writing strategy to visualize the end product), and affective (i.e., powerful imagery might impact TAs' affect). The discussion of the above-mentioned types of mental imagery and imagery functions (Chan, 2014) allowed for a detailed characterization of the participants' ideal teacher selves.

Thompson and Vásquez's (2015) analysis of the language learning narratives of three NNS foreign language teachers was also relevant to understand some of the components TAs employed when reflecting about their future selves. They included: future-oriented imagery, perceived plausibility of the future self, harmony between the ideal and ought-to selves, and strategy use to overcome obstacles. Referring to these components was then crucial when constructing the participants' profiles, identifying their primary motivations, role models, future imagery, obstacles, strategies, and action plans.

Hiver (2013) also informed the current study by sharing three patterns that encouraged participants to engage in continuing professional development: repairing inadequacies of the self; enhancing the self; and adhering to normative obligations. In the current study, these patterns

were apparent when participants illustrated the changes they (un)consciously made to their ideal teacher selves.

RQ1 - In Search of an Ideal Language Teacher Self

This section reproduces the TAs language learning and teaching experiences as they voice them through the artifacts and interviews that were analyzed. It first provides the background information of how these participants ended up teaching languages. Next, it includes a characterization of the TAs' ideal language teacher selves, as of the Fall of 2015. Lastly, a discussion of the participants' perceived changes of their ideal language teacher selves and their teaching practices after two years of experience is presented. It begins with Mark, a TA from the Spanish section.

Mark

Becoming a Language Teaching Assistant

Mark or 'Marco', as he would introduce himself to his students and colleagues from the Spanish department, is a clear example of what a language learner and therefore, non-native speaker teacher of Spanish, can achieve in terms of language proficiency through motivation, dedication, and passion for the language. Only four and a half years of formal language instruction were needed for him to become a Spanish instructor. Mark's experiences as language learner helped him shape his beliefs and practices as Spanish teaching assistant. Mark began to study Spanish in 2010, after some previous language experiences with Russian for a short study abroad program, and Greek and Hebrew for religious purposes. His first formal encounter with the language occurred shortly after he graduated from his undergraduate studies in English literature and cultural studies and after he started his first job as an assistant office manager.

During our first interview (01/24/17), Mark stated that Spanish represented the language that he always wanted to study but that, due to external circumstances, it was the language that he encountered last. Mark also recalled that he took his first course with Professor Cassidy [pseudonym], who later played a key role in his motivation to continue learning and teaching Spanish. Although Mark admitted that he was "dabbling a bit" during this first encounter with the language, he absolutely loved it.

Mark's incessant desire to learn the language led him to make important decisions. As mentioned above, he was working as an office assistant and later in 2011, he had started a second job at a local newspaper; however, he decided to leave both jobs to continue his Spanish learning process. Mark started working with two of his closest friends doing commercial metal roofing. He saw that as a language learning opportunity because he was the only non-Spanish speaker in the team and therefore he "kind of had to learn." Mark clearly described his life-changing decision as follows: "I took a pay cut. I was getting paid eight dollars an hour to do commercial metal roofing, but for me I was like: they're paying me to learn Spanish basically." He acknowledged having learnt a lot during the roofing because he was using Spanish "pretty much every day" (01/25/2017: 1st Interview).

Upon further exploration of the reasons why he would be so interested in the language, I realized that there was much more than simply love for the Spanish language. Mark had a strong desire to "build cultural bridges" through both English and Spanish. He imagined an ideal community in which people use both languages to interact with each other. Such type of mental imagery is known as bridging cultural barriers (Chan, 2013) and it is internalized in Mark's desires to learn and teach languages. As a matter of fact, at the time of this project, Mark was actively involved with his local community and served as volunteer in different Spanish-

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speaking churches to help immigrants and/or American citizens learn both languages. Mark recalled during our first interview that being involved in music groups, bible studies, home groups, and simply going to people's homes to "just eat together" were meaningful experiences that gave him some insight of the Spanish language and cultures.

Mark's successful language learning experience and his desire to help his local community led him to consider starting his Masters in Spanish, which in turn, allowed him to get his first experience teaching Spanish at a formal setting. Mark's development as a language TA is seen here as a dynamic process that started before he decided to become a TA and that continued throughout the entirety of his teaching trajectory (Hiver, 2013).

Ideal-Teacher Self – Fall 2015

Mark's initial vision of his future ideal language teacher self was constructed by many different resources and experiences. One of these resources has to do with Mark's language learning experience with his role model: Professor Cassidy. As stated above, Mark took his first Spanish course with her and he loved that course. Later in 2011, Mark enrolled in two more courses with Professor Cassidy and once again, he praised her courses. As a matter of fact, during our first interview (01/25/17), Mark stated that her "method really left a mark" on him. He described Professor Cassidy as the person who inspired him to actually consider teaching Spanish. Mark clearly saw her as a positive role model.

Mark's professor not only served as an inspiration to choose a career but also influenced his teaching beliefs and style. Her "teaching ability" and "wonderful style" not only "made a lasting impression" on him, but also provided a vivid example of how to provide students with constant exposure to the target language through real life situations. In this regard, Trejo-Guzmán (2010) suggests that the behaviors teachers display in the classroom often serve as

stimulus for students to envision the ideal teacher they want to become and "to realize the types of values they [teachers] are promoting through their interactions with student teachers" (p. 159). According to Mark, Professor Cassidy's class was very interactive; she "would explain concepts or talk about vocab, and make connections between the vocab, but really, quickly jumping into practice" (01/25/2017: 1st Interview). Later on this chapter, one can realize that Mark attempts to reproduce in his classroom what he describes as effective from Professor Cassidy's lessons. Thompson (2017) also discusses how having strong role models, such as Professor Cassidy, is "crucial for visualizing and realizing the ideal self concept and provides a concrete example of the integration of theory and practice" (p. 233).

Mark's role model was very influential in his choices and teaching style and contributed to the construction of Mark's visions of his ideal language teacher self. Role models are in fact crucial for language learners and teachers' development since they help validate their possible selves (Higgins, 1987). When discussing about the elements that helped him the most with regards to teaching, Mark provided a detailed description of how important role models are for both, teachers and students.

I can't thank her enough… sometimes on a daily basis I'm thinking about, wow, what would she do? Just having good models of those people you can look up to that can inspire you to say, "wow, they were such awesome professors, I would like to be more like that", and keeping that reminder. (01/25/2017: 1st Interview)

Similar to the moment when he decided to start learning Spanish, Mark was determined to face the challenge of teaching the language for the first time. Even though he felt nervous that "he wouldn't be good enough" or that "he would say the wrong thing in class" because of his lack of teaching experience, he really wanted to teach Spanish and therefore, he used these

doubts as his initial motivation. As an example, Mark initially imagined potential negative

scenarios in the classroom and used them to create his own plan to face the challenge of teaching

Spanish for the first time. Chan (2013) describes this function of imagery as preventive.

> I just decided I wanted to do this, this is why I came here, so I'm going to be excited
>
> about it, and anything I'm worried about, I'm just going to use as motivation to solve that
>
> doubt, whatever, just like that. Am I unsure how to explain this, or say it? Okay, practice
>
> it, figure it out, look it up, that became like a motivation in that way. I just said, now, I
>
> want to do this. I'm not going to spend time worrying about it. I'm going to use those
>
> doubts to make me a better teacher. (01/25/2017: 1st Interview)

When reflecting on his first experiences at the university setting, Mark provided his

initial description of his ideal teacher self (Fall 2015). He envisioned himself as someone who

created a fun and engaging environment for his students. Clearly influenced by his learning

experience with Professor Cassidy, Mark was concerned with maintaining the majority, "or the

totality" of classroom time as interactive as possible. He even had a clear idea of what his ideal

interactions with students would look like. Such powerful and elaborate mental imagery was

transformational in nature (Chan, 2013) as he envisioned himself taking the necessary steps he

would need to reach his goal of becoming an effective teacher.

> Asking questions to which the students are linguistically capable of responding, keeping
>
> to their level while also continuously introducing new materials, playing games relating
>
> to the material, creating mock scenarios, and inviting the students into real life scenarios
>
> in which they can practice the language. (Fall 2015: Ideal Teacher Self Reflection)

In the first version of his philosophy of teaching (Fall 2015), Mark also emphasized on

his desire to provide an environment in which his students "enjoy Spanish, make use of the

language, and learn new things about cultures of other Spanish-speaking populations." These goals, although broad, were plausible and gave Mark a clear direction to prepare his lessons. I observed his class during the first semester and I could attest that his preparation aimed at providing students with the necessary tools to interact with the teacher, the students, and ideally, with other speakers of Spanish. As an example, during his Fall 2015 class, I noticed instances in which Mark provided and requested practical examples on how to use the target structure they were studying that day, used humor to make students feel comfortable in the class, and implemented a short speaking activity that hindered dialogue and interaction with his students.

The analysis of Mark's observation reflection, ideal teacher self reflections, and teaching philosophy from Fall 2015 also showed a common element in his ideal teacher self: Mark's desire to incorporate authentic language and cultural materials to his classroom. In his initial idealized version of an effective teacher, Mark expressed his wishes to bring "a balance of authentic materials in the Spanish language as well as pedagogical materials designed for first year language-learners" (Fall 2015: Teaching Philosophy) so that students receive plenty of opportunities to communicate with their peers, which in turn "facilitates a sense of learning together." To exemplify that, during his first semester, Mark recalled having engaged students' creativity and engagement through the use of games such as Charades, Pictionary, and Two Truths and a Lie. According to him, when they played those games, students were able to use the tools they had developed over the past few weeks "to express themselves effectively to their classmates" (Fall 2015: Teaching Philosophy).

Mark's excitement and motivation to share all his knowledge about the Spanish-speaking world with his students was impressive and praised among colleagues and supervisors. He was one of the few teaching assistants that was known for playing Latin music in his classes, as well

as occasional songs in English related to Spanish-speaking cultures such as "Spanish is the Loving Tongue" and "El Paso." Mark would play popular songs as students were coming into class as well as during activities and, in numerous occasions, depending on the content of the song, he would explain the different interpretations of the lyrics or simply point out key vocabulary familiar to the students (Fall 2015: Ideal Teacher Self Reflection).

In his first ideal language teacher self reflection, Mark also suggested that his projected vision of himself as successful Spanish instructor included being confident enough to provide "answers for the students' questions." Perhaps motivated by the need to explain complex grammar constructions such as the Spanish Preterit, Imperfect, and/or Subjunctive in beginner level Spanish courses, Mark expressed his desire to have "a better understanding of the grammar rules and constructions beyond just surface level." Although he felt comfortable explaining basic grammar rules, introducing vocabulary, and discussing certain pronunciation patterns during his first semester as a TA, he acknowledged that there were many interesting aspects within the grammar of the Spanish language that he did not understand and thus, "would like to understand in order to more effectively, confidently, faithfully teach my [his] students" (Fall 2015: Ideal Language Teacher Self Reflection).

Ideal-Teacher Self – Spring 2017

The analysis of Mark's updated artifacts (Fall 2017), including the updated account of his ideal teacher self reflection and the two semi-structured interviews, allowed me to further conceptualize Mark's description of his ideal language teacher. Mark's vision of his future ideal language teacher self was strengthened after his experiences as language TA. The following themes show how Mark updated and developed new visions concerning his ideal teacher self: a)

(re)building his confidence in teaching; b) finding connections with the language; c) promoting interaction and communication; and d) self-evaluating his teaching practices.

One aspect that evolved over the course of the two years was Mark's view of confidence. During his last semester as a TA (Spring 2017), he referred to this sense of confidence as becoming an expert in both language and culture, not limiting himself to being able to explain all grammar concepts. Mark's continuous interest in enhancing his current self (Hiver, 2013) could help explain these gains in confidence. During the last interview (4/24/17), Mark also suggested that he would still like to know everything concerning the Spanish language, but acknowledged the illusory aspect of this idea. In this same interview, Mark emphasized that his sense of confidence was gained after having taught for almost two years at the current institution. Thus, his ideal teacher self was clearly influenced by that particular teaching and learning environment.

Moreover, Mark updated his vision as someone who can facilitate language learning, "you can't make someone be interested, but I think you can facilitate" (Fall 2017: 2nd Interview). He further elaborated this idea by suggesting that language instructors can help students position themselves to find a connection to the target language. This is crucial when trying to understand his interest in teaching and learning Spanish since Mark himself found such connection to the language through prior language experiences, his role model, and his interactions with friends and community members. This finding is consistent with Itoi's (2014) description of the importance of interpersonal relationships (e.g. role models, peers) on the development of new possible teacher selves.

Even when we're doing something as seemingly mundane as the vocab, the new vocab, all kinds of cultural connections come up. Oh, did you know that this word in this country

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means this? And actually, this one is used here and you could say this… and, have you ever heard this mentioned before? It becomes a dialog. Even reading through that list becomes a dialog, and I think that seems to engage students. (4/24/17: 2nd Interview)

Mark's desire to facilitate student-student interactions and student led group exercises was also consistent across his discourse over the two years. He, in fact, reiterated that he wanted to incorporate at least one type of activity that promotes interaction in each one of his classes so "the students are consistently being asked to use their language skills to communicate in real-time and invent, re-invent, and expand their speech patterns as well vocabulary" (Spring 2017: Ideal Language Teacher Self Reflection). Mark was a Spanish TA who truly cared about his students and who, based on his own experiences as learner, attempted to provide effective strategies that could contribute to his students' learning process.

Even that, like being able to relate in that way [as a former language learner], and say, hey, it's okay that you haven't been learning this since you were in kindergarten. I just started after leaving college, yeah. I had to learn study habits, and here's some strategies I learned that were helpful to me. (01/25/2017: 1st Interview)

Mark also kept reminding himself about the importance of "being involved, making that connection" (01/25/2017: 1st Interview) with the language, and being able to help facilitate situations where students truly enjoy Spanish. One example he used consistently was incorporating popular music to relate to and engage with students.

Music, things like that where I can continue to, hey, we've got a group playing some Spanish songs tonight at this place, community center, or whatever, if anyone wants to come. Here's a little extra credit, or something for coming and practicing your Spanish, something like that. (01/25/2017: 1st Interview)

When reviewing his last ideal teacher self reflection (Spring 2017), Mark voiced that his objectives set during his first year as a teaching assistant had been met and surprisingly, after two years, had exceeded his previous insecurities. Mark also recognized that some of these goals that used to be his priorities were now his own expectations of his performance as TA. One of these goals was being able to balance between explaining complex grammatical constructs such as the subjunctive and providing fun and engaging communicative activities. As mentioned by him, this change in terms of expectations could have been product of his continuous development and self-evaluation, recognizing where he was "falling short" and "adjusting" his classroom practices accordingly. In line with Dörnyei (2009), Mark's motivations to be an effective teacher were influenced by his experience of a discrepancy between his current and ideal self. He would see himself as someone who is currently preparing students to succeed in a test-driven curriculum while he would ideally want to prepare them to use the target language in authentic communicative settings. Although he was adhering to the normative obligations (Hiver, 2013) of the institution, Mark also perceived them as a challenge for him and his students. Mark's desire to include at least one activity per class that focuses on real world applications of the target language/structure, constant collaboration with colleagues (e.g. preparing joined review sessions for students), and ability to relate to students as a former language student were some indicators or strategies he used to overcome the discrepancy between his current and ideal self.

One last aspect that Mark believed changed over time but in which he still needed to work on is enhancing the use of the target language in the classroom. Although he said he had gotten better at using Spanish as the instructional language after two years of instruction, he admitted that more instruction in Spanish was required from his side. Even though he did not explicitly mention the reasons why he believed that, one could hypothesize that Mark resorted to

using English more to make sure that all students understand the material covered (i.e. Spanish Preterit and Imperfect, Subjunctive, Indirect Object Pronouns). Mark described the need to enhance the use of the target language as a learning process, even for the instructor, who needs to find a balance and change "the view of it [expanding the use of the target language] being a necessity" (01/25/2017: 1st Interview). By doing so, students will also feel some sort of "pressure" to use the target language in the classroom (e.g. asking for clarification, responding to teachers' requests, interacting with classmates, etc.). This finding illustrates Mark' reflection on the current inadequacies of his teacher self (Hiver, 2013) and his ongoing interest in identifying potential strategies to repair such shortcomings.

Table 3 summarizes Mark's characterization of some of the attributes of his ideal teacher self at two different periods: a) Fall 2015 – Mark's first semester as a TA and b) Spring 2017: Mark's last semester as a TA. The elements from Fall 2015 represent Mark's initial ideas concerning his ideal teacher self. The elements in parenthesis and/or bolded from Spring 2017 illustrate the changes that were noticed in the analysis of the data sources.

Table 3. *Mark's Description of his Ideal Language Teacher Self*

My ideal language teacher self is someone who…

Fall 2015	Spring 2017
stimulates an engaging classroom environment in which students develop their a) language skills, b) interest in Spanish-speaking cultures, c) and desire to continue learning the language	stimulates a student-centered classroom environment **(is invested in his students' learning and teaching career; promotes the use of the target language; incorporates authentic materials)**
is confident when answering students' questions (has a deep understanding of grammar)	shows confidence when teaching **(not only sees himself as a grammar expert but also as someone who provides clear connection to the target language cultures)**
is organized and well-prepared at all times	is organized in his classes and **promotes the same sense of organization among colleagues (e.g. serving as a group leader in joined study sessions)**
N/A	recognizes where needs improvement and adjusts his practices accordingly (e.g. seeks more experience and practice teaching Spanish at different levels)

Mark's Spanish Class

After having observed Mark's classroom practices both, in Fall 2015 and Spring 2017, I could notice some aspects that have changed and others that remained the same in terms of his

instruction over time. I must note that most of the elements discussed here are present in the departmental rubric the participants of this study used as a reference to talk about their classroom practices (Appendix J). The first aspect has to do with the use of the target language throughout the lesson. While Mark seemed to use a similar amount of English and Spanish in Fall 2015 (leaning toward using more English to explain grammar and provide instructions), he was able to explain features of the use of the subjunctive in stem-changing verbs and to provide most instructions in Spanish during the 50-minute class I observed in Spring 2017. It is relevant to note though that the extensive use of Spanish during the 2017 class might be due to the fact that students were reviewing material from the previous two classes. After corroborating this hypothesis with Mark, he admitted that he had taught the material in English before and perhaps that was the reason why students were quick to respond to his questions in Spanish. Thus, Mark seemed to use more English when presenting new grammatical concepts and Spanish when implementing practice activities. His decision of using each language for different purposes might have been spurred by the amount of grammar that Mark covered each class and the limited time to practice these structures. As an example, Mark provided instruction on *usted* and *ustedes* commands and the subjunctive in the same class I observed in Spring 2017.

Mark's interest in providing clear grammar explanations remained consistent over time, as it was evident during the last observation. For example, Mark used different strategies not only to provide an explanation of the new material but also to elicit students' participation and interaction. Some of these strategies included using different color markers to differentiate the stem change and the subjunctive ending, asking for and offering specific examples with verbs such as "conducir", "decir", and asking comprehension check questions after each one of the examples. Mark even spent a few minutes reviewing the differences between "saber" and

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"conocer" when students mentioned the subjunctive of saber. In his Classroom Practices

Reflection, he refers to this episode as follows:

> I'm glad I did not let this moment pass as I try to continue to reiterate previous lessons
>
> learned even as we move along. I encourage the class to take a few steps back when
>
> moving forward as not to forget anything when learning something new.

Mark's passion for Spanish language and culture was also found to be consistent across

the two years. To illustrate this, Mark's lesson planning for both classes not only aimed at

providing a clear explanation of the grammar but also at exposing students to the Spanish-

speaking world through music. In both classes (2015 and 2017), Mark tried to incorporate songs

in which students could identify vocabulary and grammar for these two particular lessons and

perhaps most importantly, enjoy learning about language and culture. He used a song as a warm

up activity in Fall 2015 and he planned a practice activity of the subjunctive in Spring 2017.

Mark's idea of stimulating a student-centered environment was not as evident in either of

the observations, perhaps due to time constraints and curriculum requirements. As an example, in

the 2017 class, the review of the *usted* and *ustedes* commands and the subjunctive lasted 23

minutes approximately with limited student interaction. After that time, students worked in pairs

for about 10 minutes in order to complete a subjunctive-related conjugation activity from their

textbook. Once students completed the activity, Mark elicited the answers and provided further

explanation when needed. Unfortunately, Mark had to skip the main practice activity he had

planned for that particular day due to technology-related issues. Such activity consisted of a

listening exercise using the song "Cuando tú te vayas". In this activity the students were

supposed to fill in the blanks on a lyrics sheet. All the blanks were related to subjunctive and

commands conjugations – with a discussion afterwards of the vocabulary and language used. The class concluded ten minutes earlier than the allotted time.

The fact that, at the time of the current study, the curriculum heavily focused on grammar created a challenge and disconnect between Mark's actual classroom performances and his ideal classroom practices. In both classes, Mark had to focus on providing clear grammar explanations and examples so that his students were able to pass the tests instead of providing opportunities to use the target structures in context. During the 2017 class, Mark even made a concrete reference to the final exam as he told his students that the final was "a big opportunity to up the grade" because the material they were covering that day was "pretty straight-forward, pretty simple compared to what they did in the last chapter". This contrasted with the fact that one student later commented on other potentially difficult topics that would appear in the final, including differences between *por* and *para* and *preterit* and *imperfect*, which in turn might have created more anxiety and concern in some students. Further strategy exploration is needed so that TAs like Mark can find a balance between the elements and activities that they consider effective in language teaching and those activities that aim at fulfilling curriculum requirements (e.g. passing a grammar test).

Even though further classroom observations would be needed to provide a more complete description of Mark's teaching practices, data from this study show that Mark's class evolved around the idea of relating to his students and helping them to succeed in class. Success in this particular class seemed to be equated to passing the test so Mark made sure to provide some encouragement and discuss potential strategies to excel in the tests. One can certainly notice his desire to reproduce in his classroom what he described as effective from his role model, Professor Cassidy, (e.g. making quick connections between the vocabulary and grammar and

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"quickly jumping into practice", maintaining the majority "or the totality" of classroom time as interactive as possible). However, challenges and disconnections were present in both classes, particularly when promoting a student-centered environment. What is important though is that Mark was clearly doing his best to prepare his students to pass the required tests while, when possible, he provided opportunities to interact and enjoy the Spanish language and cultures.

Lauren

Becoming a Language Teaching Assistant

Lauren's story of how she started to learn Spanish and how she eventually became a teaching assistant is as interesting as Mark's. She came to Florida directly from Michigan where she finished her high school. During her middle and high school studies, Lauren took Spanish courses, excelling all throughout these years. Spanish was not her first choice for her undergraduate studies though; it was psychology. Her interest for the Spanish language never really went away; on the contrary, it reappeared vigorously during a semester abroad in Spain. Lauren referred to this experience overseas as a major turning point in her career. Originally, she had planned to start her Ph.D. in Psychology and Spanish was only "in the background." However, after studying abroad for a semester, Lauren started to consider a career in Spanish. Drawing on Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008), Lauren's experiences as a language learner and exchange student caused an unpredictable change in Lauren's motivational profile (Thompson, 2017). Instead of starting her Ph.D. studies in Psychology, Lauren decided to join a Masters program in Spanish, clearly altering her original career plan. This sudden and unintentional system change illustrates the complexity and dynamicity of one's motivation (Larsen-Freeman, 2008).

Then, when I went to Spain, being there for five months and really being in that culture

made me realize that I love Spanish and I love learning the language and the culture. And

it was that time I was there when I realized that I could actually do something in Spanish

as well, you know? That it wasn't only psychology, that I have other things that I love

and that I would love to do and study. (01/23/2017: 1st Interview)

Immediately after she graduated from her undergraduate studies, Lauren joined the

Masters in Spanish. She was a little hesitant to join the program at first because she wanted to

continue her path to a doctorate in psychology. However, she decided to embark this new

learning experience. During the first interview, she remembered how she gave herself some

words of encouragement, acknowledging that it was just a transition program to then join a

doctoral program in psychology: "get through these two years, then you can start your psych."

Later on, she commented that other Spanish instructors might have also slightly influenced her to

join the Masters program in Spanish. They tried to convince her to continue studying Spanish

and also shared that the Master program offered qualified graduate students, like her, the

opportunity to become language teaching assistants. Even though, these instructors were not

necessarily Lauren's role models, she still took their advice and gladly enjoyed the experience.

…It was a good experience for me to start. And I had people tell me before, "I think

you'll really like teaching." And both my grandfathers were teachers and stuff, so I was

like, "I'll see if I like it." And I was surprised at how much I ended up liking it.

(04/24/2017: 2nd Interview)

Lauren saw the Masters in Spanish as an opportunity to advance in her career since her

ideal job would be working in her field, psychology, with Spanish-speaking patients. However,

her decision to pursue her graduate studies in Spanish was mainly motivated by the idea of having a degree that attests to her proficiency in the language. This is relevant since it was evident from the artifacts that I analyzed that Lauren referred to her status of "non-native speaker" when she wanted to provide a rationale for her personal and pedagogical decisions. Lauren was constructing her ideal L2 self on the basis of other professionals in Psychology who, even though may speak the language, cannot demonstrate any credentials to their future employers.

> It occurred to me that since I'm not a native speaker that it would be very advantageous
>
> for me to do a Master's program and have a graduate degree. (01/23/2017: 1st Interview)

Interestingly, during the first interview, Lauren mentioned that, despite having doubts of her abilities to teach during her first semester [after some of her students -who were heritage speakers- challenged her explanations], she eventually realized that she was qualified to teach the material her students needed, and that her status of "non-native" was actually very helpful for her students. As an example, she mentioned that she could help students anticipate potential problems with the Spanish preterit and imperfect or with the distinction between *ser* and *estar*, a distinction that she also struggled with as a language learner.

> I also realize that, as me not being a native speaker and the new students coming and
>
> learning Spanish, that I maybe had some wisdom to impart. Like 'when I was learning I
>
> had a problem with this or this' and I think that was something that excited me a lot about
>
> it [teaching Spanish], it was being able to pass it on, the struggles I had gone through, to
>
> new students and hopefully help them. (01/23/2017: 1st Interview)

Lauren then felt ready to start her new graduate level experience in the Masters program; however, she was not completely sure about what her teaching assignment entailed. In her first

interview, Lauren admitted that she "had no idea what was going on." She had not taught before and she was feeling a bit overwhelmed by the idea of facing a classroom full of undergraduate students who could be her same age: 23. It was only until the week before her class started (orientation week) when she realized what teaching preparation meant. In fact, during our meetings, she often recalled how important it was for her to participate in the TAs' annual orientation because it made her reflect on her previous experiences as learner, and how these experiences plus the suggested practices offered during the orientation could be beneficial for her as TA and for her students.

Lauren's transition from learner to instructor was "not easy" (01/23/2017: 1st Interview). As Kanno and Stuart (2011) argued, "moving from the identity of a graduate student to that of a teacher is not a quick and automatic transition" (p. 249), more so for individuals like Lauren who have not made a clear commitment to become L2 teachers. When she reflected on her own practices, she suggested that it was particularly difficult to cater to her students' learning styles at the beginning, but that she had gotten better at it through experience. Lauren's beliefs about language teaching had also evolved after her first semester of teaching. According to her, if she had been presented with an opportunity to teach Spanish prior to coming to this university, she "would have thought it [teaching] was all just doing grammar." After she attended the TA orientation and took the graduate instructional methods course, she was able to realize "how important it was to bring in other aspects of it [language]" (01/23/2017: 1st Interview) such as integrating cultural elements from Spanish-speaking countries and providing students with opportunities to use the target language in context. The training she received during her first semester also made her reflect on the importance of using the target language starting from day one (e.g. providing explanations and instructions in Spanish) to provide as much input/exposure

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to the language as possible. She commented that she had never been taught "right out of the bat in Spanish", it was until she became a TA that she realized "teaching in Spanish was as important" (01/23/2017: 1st Interview).

Ideal-Teacher Self – Fall 2015

Reflecting on her teaching beliefs and practices led Lauren to construct an initial vision of herself as a Spanish teacher. According to her, one of the most important attributes that her ideal teacher should possess is being empathetic to the students. Lauren referred to this attribute as a characteristic that would allow her to connect with her students and to encourage them to "continue in Spanish."

> If I'm not good at anything else at teaching, I'm good at being empathetic and
> understanding that they're trying to learn and always trying to encourage them to do their
> best and it's okay to make mistakes and I'll even tell them [students], if a student is
> particularly struggling, "It's okay. When I was learning Spanish, I had the same problem,"
> or, "It doesn't matter how long it takes you to say a sentence, just try and say it the best
> you can." (01/23/2017: 1st Interview)

Lauren then used her previous and current experiential elements (Hiver, 2013) to empathize with her students' struggles "whatever they may be." In fact, she believed that by demonstrating this characteristic, students would ultimately realize that "learning a foreign language does not have to be scary and that some teachers really do care about them learning Spanish." (Fall 2015: Ideal Language Teacher Self Reflection)

When building her vision of her ideal language teacher self, Lauren also relied on her own positive and negative experiences and emotions as Spanish language learner. As a matter of fact, during the first interview, she said that she would do her best to create an enjoyable and

engaging environment for her students as an attempt to prevent or lessen the nervousness and confusion they might experience when learning Spanish.

Based on the artifacts I analyzed and the interviews with Lauren, I came to the conclusion that the engaging environment she envisioned could be described as an atmosphere of "cohesion and mutual reliance amongst the students" (Spring 2017: Classroom Practices Reflection) and her. In this regard, Lauren envisioned a student-driven ambiance in which the students are always respectful and helpful to one another. Lauren's role as a teacher would then be helping students whenever they need it, but always making them aware of the importance of relying on their classmates first. Similarly, Lauren's ideal language teacher would be the one who promotes a strong sense of autonomy in her students. She strongly argued for that during the discussions and in both versions of her teaching philosophy: "although the teacher can give many of the tools needed for the student to be successful, ultimately it is up to the student to take responsibility for his own learning" (Fall 2015 and Spring 2017: Teaching Philosophy). From my observations and her classroom practices reflections, I was able to corroborate that Lauren preferred not to introduce every single detail about grammar, but on the contrary, she would let her students explore the new grammatical concepts on their own first before providing an explicit explanation. As an example, during my last teaching observation (Spring 2017), Lauren first paired students so they could test their hypothesis concerning the uses of both preterit and imperfect, before actually providing an explicit explanation of both forms.

Ideal-Teacher Self – Spring 2017

Lauren's conceptualization of her ideal teacher self kept evolving over the course of two years and was authenticated by her teaching experiences and interactions with her students and colleagues. The following themes show how Lauren updated and/or developed her visions

concerning her ideal teacher self: a) bridging the gap between current and ideal self; b) learning to teach; and c) disengaging when needed.

Lauren believed that her current self (2017) was represented by all the attributes she developed over the last two years; however, she admitted that these attributes would continue to evolve as she accrues more experience. As she pointed out during the first interview (01/23/2017), "the more you teach, the more your ideas of what the best teacher is change." Lauren developed an understanding of what her ideal teacher meant (see attributes in Table 4) based on her present practices and interactions with colleagues and students. For example, Lauren suggested that she would often reflect on potential gaps between her actual teacher self and her future representation of the self. Such gaps motivated her to seek strategies to continue developing as a language teacher (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013).

> I don't think it's possible to ever really reach that [an ideal self] because you reach one characteristic that before you found important, but as soon as you reach that one, you realize, "I also wish I was this, or I wish I could do this in class." I don't think it's ever possible to be like, "I'm my ideal teacher," it's always gonna keep changing, you know? (01/23/2017: 1st Interview)

Lauren's self-revision of her ideal language teacher self is then an ongoing process. The previous excerpt, for example, shows how Lauren believes that reaching her future self is neither easy nor comfortable and requires her continuous effort. As Oyserman and James (2009) suggest, one will not show a significant increase in effort if reaching the future self is too likely or too unlikely. This idea is also closely related to Ruvolo and Markus's (1992) concept of plausibility. Lauren believes that an ideal teacher self exists and is attainable (Gregersen & McIntyre, 2014); however, knowing that it keeps evolving impacts her motivation to improve her

self and her practices. In this regard, Dörnyei (2009) illustrates how individuals like Lauren develop specific plans and goal-setting strategies for accomplishing their ideal selves. These ideal visions, plans, and strategies seem to be attainable, yet ever changing (Dörnyei, 2009). The ideal self is then a complex dynamic system that is open to outside influences and that continues to move and change (Larsen-Freeman, 2014). As Pineda González (2014) suggests:

los possible selves cambian porque la identidad de la persona es una narración que se narra y renarra constantemente, cambiando a cada momento, y si los possible selves cambian, con ellos se modifican las metas y los planes de acción que los sostienen" (p. 164).

Despite some challenges, which are presented in the following chapter, Lauren also developed her understanding of what it meant to be a language teacher and appreciated the opportunity to teach. She skillfully summarized it as follows: "I think my teaching style has changed quite a bit. Perhaps it is better to say that my strengths have augmented quite a bit and I have worked a lot to diminish my weaknesses" (Spring 2017: Classroom Practices Reflection). Also, even though Lauren did not have any teaching experience and did not really want to become a Spanish teacher at first, her experiences at the current institution led her to appreciate and enjoy the profession. Perhaps motivated by her positive experiences both as a TA and Masters' student, she decided to reach another milestone with the Spanish Language: a Ph.D. in Spanish Literature. Lauren is currently working as a graduate teaching assistant at the institution where she is pursuing her doctorate.

Lauren's conceptualization of her ideal language teacher self as someone who establish good rapport with her students remained consistent over time. During the last interview (04/24/2017), she suggested that by being easily approachable, enthusiastic, and sensitive to her

students' needs, she had been successful overall establishing good rapport with her students. However, during the same interview, she mentioned that she also learnt to detach herself from students since she used to blame herself when students performed badly or lacked interest. This sudden change appear to have impacted her ideal teacher self. In fact, during that last interview, Lauren said that she used to envision herself as a teacher who was laid back and open with all her students; however, after having these rather negative experiences, she now preferred to be a more reserved and cautious teacher. The changes and adjustments of her future representations then took place in order to respond to these experiences, or as Carroll et al. (2015) argue, these changes in the ideal selves occurred to "improve their fit with environmental feedback" (Carroll et al., 2015, p. 483).

Table 4 summarizes Lauren's characterization of her ideal teacher self at two different periods: a) Fall 2015 – Lauren's first semester as a TA and b) Spring 2017: Lauren's last semester as a TA. The elements from Fall 2015 represent Lauren's initial ideas concerning her ideal teacher self. The elements in parenthesis and/or bolded from Spring 2017 illustrate the changes that were noticed in the analysis of the data sources.

Table 4. *Lauren's Description of her Ideal Language Teacher Self*

My ideal language teacher self is someone who…	
Fall 2015	Spring 2017
serves as a role model to learn the language	serves as a **role model and mentor** to learn the language
maintains authority while creating an engaging environment	establishes herself as an authoritative figure while **ideally promotes a student-centered environment**
establishes good rapport with her students	establishes good rapport with her students **(however, disengages when needed)**
N/A	keeps updating her practices based on her teaching and learning experiences (e.g. future desire to teach Spanish language and culture at all levels)

Lauren's Spanish Class

Some specific elements of Lauren's instruction have also strengthened and/or changed over time. It is relevant to mention that most of the elements discussed below are present in the departmental rubric the participants of this study used as a reference to talk about their classroom practices (Appendix J). One of them had to do with Lauren's desire to use the target language more during her classes. Although Lauren attempted to use the target language during both classes (Fall 2015 and Spring 2017), she used more Spanish in the 2017 one, as per her own self-evaluation and my observation. In this regard, Lauren argued that it was challenging to be consistent with the use of the target language at times due to the amount of information that she

felt "obliged" to cover each class. As an example, Lauren had to prepare a review of the use the preterit and imperfect, the differences between *por* and *para*, the direct and indirect object pronouns, and the *verbos reflexivos* during the week I observed her. Yet, during the 2017 class, Lauren chose to explain the differences between preterit and imperfect, provided all instructions, and offered feedback in Spanish. The use of the target language in this class appeared to increase, compared to the 2015 class, in which the use of English was more salient (e.g. explanations and instructions were given in English). However, I must note that more classroom observations are needed to confirm these findings.

I also noticed a reduced amount of teacher talk in Spring 2017, compared to Fall 2015. While in 2015, Lauren used her knowledge and teacher talk as strategies to establish authority in her class (i.e. providing both explanation and examples with little to no interaction), later she learned that by promoting a student-centered environment and a sense of community, she would be more effective at engaging students and at stimulating interaction. Lauren's updated teaching style focused more on giving the students "just enough to get through the activities" (e.g. 3-minute explanation of the differences between preterit and imperfect) and then relied on them "to work in groups and pairs to figure out the answers together rather than relying on me to give them every piece of information" (Fall 2017: Classroom Practices Reflection). I noticed the implementation of these ideas in the Spring 2017 class observation. Lauren, for example, constantly involved students throughout that particular lesson. Students were able to answer to other classmates' questions (e.g. offering the meaning of the word *mudarse*), provided feedback to other classmates' responses (e.g. pointing out to the elements that need to be replaced), and worked in groups the majority of the class time to complete the conjugation-related tasks. According to Lauren (04/24/2017: Second Interview), she stimulated learner's autonomy by

implementing three or more student-centered activities each class, always providing assistance

when needed. These motivations and activities became apparent during my observation in Fall

2017. As an example, Lauren paired students to complete an activity that required some

hypothesis testing; that is, selecting the appropriate form to complete a text. She then moved

around the room to answer questions and provide feedback. However, perhaps due to the topic

difficulty and time constraints, student-student interactions in her class seemed to be rather

limited to conjugating verbs in the preterit and imperfect. In that regard, Lauren commented that

one of the things she struggled the most when teaching was "to make it a super interactive class

and coming up with new and novel things to do in class" (Fall 2017: Classroom Practices

Reflection). She even provided a conceptualization of what her ideal class would look like:

> Although the activities that I gave them [students] are helpful, I wish I could be more
>
> creative with what I give them to do and find ways to make preterit and imperfect more
>
> interesting. Ideally, the students would get up and walk around and be laughing and
>
> having fun during the lesson. But I find that it is usually quite difficult to do this,
>
> especially in a university setting. Something I need to work on more is creating different
>
> activities that will make them more interactive, rather than just giving them activities on
>
> the board to complete. (Fall 2017: Classroom Practices Reflection)

Last but not least, since day one, Lauren demonstrated that she truly cared about her

students' learning. In both of the lessons I observed, Lauren approached students who seemed to

struggle with the material, sat down, and helped them individually. This was certainly

meaningful given the fact that she was a language learner herself and recognizes that she needs

to cater to the needs and learning strategies of her students. Most students, in that particular class

(Spring 2017), appeared to be comfortable with her explanations and some of the students who

appeared to struggle at first even volunteered to provide the answers to the whole group. I must note though that there were some other students who were not paying attention and/or using their phones during the class. During the last interview (04/24/2017), Lauren stated that she needed to work on engaging the unmotivated and often passive students. Lauren's reflections on these challenges will be discussed in the following chapter.

Susana

Becoming a Language Teaching Assistant

Originally from Morocco, Susana decided to come to the United States to pursue her Masters in French in 2015. She started teaching after she graduated from her undergraduate degree in Economics. During the first interview (02/01/2017), Susana stated that she completely changed her career path after her sister introduced her to the owner of a private language academy in 2009, who happened to be from France. Susana was able to observe the lessons she offered at her institution and from that moment on, she decided to focus on her teaching career. The teacher she observed ended up being her boss and one of her role models for her language classroom. Susana's role model undoubtedly served as a source of inspiration (Gauntlett, 2002; Paice et al., 2002) for her career change and as a behavioral model (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2008) to teach the target language. This unpredictable event affected Susana's decision to pursue a career in teaching and appeared to be one of the first times when she started to create a vision of herself as a future language teacher. The complex and dynamic nature of her motivation to teach was later strengthened by her passion for studying the French language, literature, and culture. Such passion and her sudden interest in updating her teaching practices encouraged her to make another big decision, moving from Morocco to Florida. She wanted to pursue a Masters degree in French so she decided to bring all her immediate family with her.

Despite having almost six years of teaching experience in Morocco, Susana's adjustment to the university setting was difficult. Susana's description of the orientation week, for example, illustrated her feelings of anxiety and unpreparedness. She was bombarded with a lot of unfamiliar information concerning teaching at a university setting. Coming from a different educational system, having zero experience teaching undergraduate students, and receiving a quick training on current trends in language teaching clearly overwhelmed and worried her.

> It was a scary orientation. They [workshop leaders] just tell you, "they are another level of students, they don't need to feel the fear in you, they don't need to feel [that] you, like, hesitated. They need to feel like you're firm, yeah you know, otherwise they would just make it a game and a play." Stuff like that; it was scary. (02/01/2017: 1st Interview)

Susana's way of speaking about the orientation reflects some of the initial challenges she faced in her path to becoming a language TA. In the first interview, she reiterated that it had been difficult to adjust to this sudden change in dynamics. She even mentioned that two of her colleagues, who were also "strangers to the American system," were experiencing similar feelings. According to Susana, that first semester was challenging but she eventually became familiar with teaching French at the university. She achieved a sense of comfort and familiarity with the university setting through collaboration with her colleagues and supervisor. Additionally, she evaluated in a positive way the methods class she took during her first semester and the additional workshops suggested by her section supervisor, describing them as valuable opportunities for her to learn about the American system and students.

Ideal-Teacher Self - 2015

After analyzing Susana's artifacts from 2015, it was evident that Susana was very passionate about teaching French. In the teaching philosophy statement, for example, Susana

mentioned that at the age of ten, she had a French teacher who "inspired" her about teaching. Her first French teacher was actually her first role model and she seemed to continue being an inspiration for Susana. Susana's description of her French teacher is quite vivid and clearly illustrated how influential this particular teacher has been in Susana's life.

> She was a passionate teacher and the most wonderful person that I've ever met before. She was different than the others because she used to be open-minded and very supportive for her students. She was energetic and she had an interactive approach. I kept this image in my head and I just projected [it] on me as teacher. (Fall 2015: Teaching Philosophy)

Susana's observation that she kept her teacher's image and projected it onto her own one meant that Susana perceived those attributes as the ones she would need to become an effective French teacher. In her account of what her ideal teacher self would look like, Susana has a similar vision of herself as a French teacher. She envisioned herself as a teacher who has a passion for her profession, who shows a genuine interest in her students' needs and struggles, who encourages and leads her students to "love the French language and get them more involved with French culture" (Fall 2015: Teaching Philosophy) and who eventually becomes a role model for some of her students. Similar to Mark's, Susana's role model helped her construct her possible selves (McIntyre et al., 2011; Lockwood, 2006; Higgins, 1987).

Susana's enthusiasm to have an impact on her students also suggested that she was concerned about providing a fun and engaging environment for learning French. Susana took her role as French teacher very seriously, indicating that she needed "to give 100% and be creative" (02/01/2017: 1st Interview). In the same interview, she further developed her idea of being fully engaged by suggesting that language teachers need to continuously update their classroom

practices (e.g. implementing technology in the classroom; adjusting her practices to current developments in language pedagogy): "there is always new stuff coming in, and you need to be aware about the new things." Although Susana recognized that "they [students] might come with this love, like this passion for language, or they just come in as they want to experience a new language" (02/01/2017: 1st Interview), she strongly believed that it is the language teacher's responsibility to make them love that language.

Susana's passion for sharing the French language and culture with her students also developed a sense of satisfaction for a job well done "I am proud to be a teacher and I feel pleased when my students progress and pass the class" (Fall 2015: Ideal Language Teacher Self Reflection). Susana even went beyond helping them pass the class. She added that she saw being a teacher of French as "a chance to get involved in the future" (Fall 2015: Ideal Language Teacher Self Reflection). According to her, "a teacher is an important element to build a knowledgeable nation because an ideal teacher leaves the trails of his footsteps for his students to follow and create their own path in this world. He is the role model who could influence generations by giving them advices and offering them guidance" (Fall 2015: Ideal Language Teacher Self Reflection).

Ideal-Teacher Self - 2017

The following themes show how Susana updated and/or developed new visions concerning her ideal teacher self after two years of instruction: a) changing one's practices when needed; b) learning from negative experiences; and c) becoming an expert teacher.

An ideal attribute that Susana constructed during her time teaching at the current institution was being open to change. According to her, language teachers should self-evaluate their teaching practices on a daily basis, reflecting on the aspects of their classes that are not

working and being willing to change and/or adjust them when needed. Susana's reflection illustrates how she was eager to repair any inadequacies of her teacher self (Hiver, 2013). As a matter of fact, Susana envisioned herself as an effective teacher that was able to modify her teaching style when needed. Such detailed vision was derived from her positive and negative experiences at the current institution (e.g. teaching a group of students who were not particularly motivated to learn French), allowed her to visualize her future self, and encouraged her to take action toward her imagined ideal self (Ryan & Irie, 2014).

> …Not getting mad because your method is not working, it's okay. It's not working. If it worked last year, it's not gonna work this year. If it worked last night, it's not gonna work today. So just be open-minded for that. (02/01/2017: 1st Interview).

Similar to Lauren's description of her role model, Susana believed that her ideal teacher needed to be sensitive to the dynamicity of a classroom. According to Susana, a language teacher needs to be dynamic and flexible in order to respond to the needs and struggles of her students. The concept of affective imagery (Chan, 2013) is useful here to illustrate how her emotions would fluctuate depending on her lived experiences and how her actions might have an impact on students' affect.

> Be aware that things change, your students change. Yesterday they came happy and they were so good with you. And today they're just not [good], you don't feel good. They just give you that negative energy. Don't take it personal, just, this is how they are. People change. (02/01/2017: 1st Interview)

Susana's reference to not taking some students' negative attitudes personal emerged after a couple of negative experiences she had in the classroom. Although she did not comment on specific instances, it seemed that she started to "detach" herself from students who were

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"difficult" at times. When reflecting on such experiences, Susana mentioned that it was not necessarily her performance as language teacher but it was her students' behaviors and motivations that were affecting the dynamics of the classrooms. In Hiver and Dörnyei's (2015) terms, Susana developed "some form of immunity…to maintain a form of professional equilibrium" (p. 15). In a way, Susana imagined a desired classroom in which negative scenarios such as having unmotivated students were motivators to create a response or preventive action (Chan, 2013), in her particular case, disengaging herself from these students. Thus, response mechanisms such as not taking things personally and detaching from these types of students could be some indicators of Susana's learning process and development as a professional.

One last attribute that evolved over time had to do with the idea of becoming an "expert" in teaching. As a matter of fact, Susana offered an updated account of the vision of her ideal teacher self in which she concluded: "an ideal teacher is a continuous job in order to be an expert in teaching" (Spring 2017: Ideal Language Teacher Self Reflection). Susana's desire to become an expert teacher can be explained through achievement goal theory (Retelsdorf et al., 2010). Throughout her teaching trajectory, Susana has developed and refined specific mastery (desire to enhance one's teaching skills) and performance-approach (desire to proof extraordinary teaching skills) goals. In that updated teacher self reflection (Spring, 2017), for example, she said that she had learned a lot for her teaching during the two years she taught at the university level, attributing these positive outcomes to the experience she gained teaching French 1, 2, and 3, and the content from the graduate instructional methods course. Perhaps motivated by the later course, Susana developed an idea that "classroom management and lesson plans are the tools of the ideal teacher success" (Fall 2015 and Spring 2017: Ideal Language Teacher Self Reflections). Susana's desire to enhance her current teacher self (Hiver, 2013) motivated her to work hard on

lesson plan preparation and execution. These two elements were vital for her to maintain a clear agenda of the topics she needed to introduce, to provide learners with opportunities to enjoy learning the target language, and to keep working toward her desire goal of becoming an "expert" in teaching.

In spite of the challenges Susana experienced since the very beginning of her teaching trajectory at the university setting, she was satisfied with what she has achieved so far as a teacher. According to Susana, creativity, enthusiasm, and passion for sharing the French language and culture continue to be key ingredients of her classroom (02/01/2017: 1st Interview). Such ingredients contributed to the creation of a fun and engaging environment for her students. She also acknowledged that her teaching and learning experiences at the university level contributed immensely to her growth as current and future language teacher. During both interviews, Susana expressed that she felt prepared and ready to continue teaching French in the US. She did not only see herself teaching language and culture at the university but she also planned to do her Ph.D. in French relatively soon. Similarly, Susana pointed out that she felt ready to continue teaching at different levels: "I feel like for my employer or whatever …I feel like I'm gonna give them that energy so they're gonna feel it in me, that dynamism, that creativity" (02/01/2017: 1st Interview). Being a TA for beginner and intermediate French classes not only helped her gain more teaching experience but also strengthen her desire to continue teaching French, ideally upper level language courses.

Table 5 summarizes Susana's characterization of her ideal teacher self at the two different periods: a) Fall 2015 – Susana's first semester as a TA and b) Spring 2017: Susana's last semester as a TA. The elements from Fall 2015 represent Susana's initial ideas concerning

her ideal teacher self. The elements in parenthesis and/or bolded from Spring 2017 illustrate the changes that were noticed in the analysis of the data sources.

Table 5. *Susana's Description of her Ideal Language Teacher Self*

My ideal language teacher self is someone who…

Fall 2015	Spring 2017
serves as a role model for her students	serves as a role model and **guides them to appreciate language and culture**
is organized and prepares her lessons thoroughly	is organized and manages her classes effectively – **is an expert in teaching (e.g. establishes clear lesson objectives, manages the class time appropriately, and provides a coherent sequence of activities**)
keeps updating her teaching practices	keeps updating her teaching practices **(e.g. implements new technologies)**
N/A	**Is flexible to changes in the classroom dynamics** (e.g. acknowledges that every classroom requires different approaches to teaching and learning; understands fluctuations in students' mood)

Susana's French Class

Susana's experiences as former teacher in Morocco and language TA allowed her to evaluate her own teaching practices. From the analysis of her classroom practices reflection, interviews, and teaching videos, I could perceive certain elements that were recurrent and some

changes that occurred in her instructional practices. It is relevant to mention that most of the elements discussed below are present in the departmental rubric the participants of this study used as a reference to talk about their classroom practices (Appendix J).

Some elements that appeared to be consistent and representative of Susana's classes had to do with her organization and time management. Based on the interviews and observations, I realized that Susana's view of organization was closely tied to her desire to implement all the activities she plans for a day. She believes that lesson plans are crucial to manage her classes effectively. As an example, in both classes I observed, Susana wrote down an overview of the activities and topics that were going to be discussed and reminded students about upcoming assignments. This helped her manage the class time and kept students on track concerning the class activities. Even though there was a lot of content to cover during both classes (Fall 2015: past tense; Spring 2017: imperatives), Susana was able to implement all the activities she had planned (e.g. 2017 class: warm up activity to recall action verbs, introduction of the French imperative, two grammar practice activities using the board and the textbook, and a Kahoot game to review the material).

Interestingly, Susana's use the target language fluctuated throughout her time as TA. While she first used French as her main language of instruction (Fall 2015), she then started to incorporate more English into her classes. According to Susana, her students were not happy with her talking in French at all times. Later on, she reflected on how she "was obligated to switch between English and French" (Spring 2017: Classroom Practices Reflection) as an attempt to take her students' concerns and difficulties into consideration. These changes in terms of the use of both languages were clear during my last observation. Susana used French when providing explanations and instructions but replied to most of students' inquiries in English.

During our last interview, Susana was content that she was able to conduct most her classes in French, while using English in limited occasions to clarify or check for comprehension. Susana mentioned that she would try to follow the ACTFL (2010) recommendation to use the target language as exclusively as possible (90% plus) in her classroom, allowing students to rely on their L1 when needed. Her reflection and explicit mention of ACTFL's recommendation might have emerged from the graduate instructional methods classes. Susana's ideal language teacher, although not explicitly mentioned by her, could also be seen as an educator who follows that recommendation.

Susana's enthusiasm and genuine interest to help her students also remained consistent across both time periods. In both classes (Fall 2015 and Spring 2017), Susana created review activities in which she tried to incorporate as many elements as possible to help students review for the upcoming tests. As an example, in the 2017 class, Susana created an online game using Kahoot in order to get students' attention and to review the material covered. Susana also showed her students that she was passionate about teaching French (e.g. bringing French cultural references into the classroom) and that she would do her best to help them learning the language (e.g. designing an online review package that she shared and later revised with the whole class). Susana's visualization of herself as a teacher who promotes a classroom atmosphere based on students' comfort, enthusiasm, and motivation was then apparent through her teaching practices.

Claire

Becoming a Language Teaching Assistant

Claire realized that she wanted to be a French teacher immediately after graduating from high school. She completed her undergraduate in international studies at a southeastern university in the US. and immediately began teaching French in high school at her home state.

Although Claire enjoyed the six years she taught high school students, she struggled with all the bureaucracy and administrative issues that were recurrent in public schools. Thus, Claire and her husband decided to move to Tampa from her home state because he had gotten accepted to a residency program. They both saw this move as a big opportunity for him to advance in his career and also for her to get away from "all the administrative stuff that we [high school teachers] were being asked to do" (01/25/2017: 1st Interview). In Claire's own words, she was getting "beat down" with that experience so she needed an immediate change. That much-needed change occurred immediately after they arrived to Tampa. Claire was accepted into the Masters program in French and she was also hired as a teaching assistant.

Ideal-Teacher Self – 2015

Claire's passion for teaching was evident throughout all her artifacts and interviews. Mainly motivated by her mother, who was her English teacher during High School, she decided that teaching was going to be part of her future.

> I wanted to do this. As I said before, passion, like I feel like you have to want it, it can't be a fall back for you, it can't be a paycheck. It can't be a lack-thereof. It's a volunteer post. (01/25/2017: 1st Interview)

When reflecting on her mother's teaching experiences and all the advice she had received throughout the years, Claire was very emotional and stressed the major role her mother played when building her identity as a language teacher. Claire not only had firsthand experience of what her mother's teaching style was like (as one of her former students) but she was also able to notice how much her mother cared about her former students. Seeing her mother as a strong positive role model clearly motivated Claire to become an effective educator.

There were students in her class who might have been a little bit more difficult to deal with, or weren't easily motivated, or struggling, and those were my mom's specialty. The more the kids struggled, the more my mom connected with them. You'd see them run into her at Walmart and they were these huge, 6'5" black boys, just turning into mush when they see her. Like little puppy dogs, running to her and wanting to give her big hugs. (01/25/2017: 1st Interview)

Claire's role model was then essential for "visualizing and realizing the ideal teacher self concept" (Thompson, 2017). The behaviors and values Claire's mother displayed inside and outside the classroom actually served as stimulus for Claire to envision the ideal teacher she wanted to become (Trejo-Guzmán, 2010). According to Claire, she knew that connecting with her students was going to be essential in her career, "even before I [she] stepped into a classroom" (01/25/2017: 1st Interview). Claire's pedagogical training [in the form of a teaching certificate] and prior learning and teaching experiences allowed her to construct an elaborate and vivid image of the kind of teacher she would like to be. Ideally, "a teacher should be enthusiastic, compassionate, knowledgeable, organized, empathetic, welcoming, flexible, and foster a love of learning in herself and in her students" (Fall 2015: Ideal Language Teacher Self Reflection). In her ideal teacher self reflections from 2015, Claire provided clear examples from her classroom to illustrate each attribute. As an example, she envisioned herself as someone who has a real impact, no matter if momentary, on her students' learning process. By building rapport with her students and providing a fun environment, these elements were confirmed during our first interview. Claire truly believed that all her students, no matter what their motivations for taking the course are, could enjoy and, ultimately, learn to love French language and cultures.

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We're gonna have fun while we're doing it, learn it while you're in here. Even if I can't [motivate you]… by all the reasons I've given you why this language is important. If you still don't care about any of that stuff, I totally understand, but you're here, so let's make the best of it. And try to reach the students. That has been the transition, because I just can't comprehend why you wouldn't want to learn French. (01/25/2017: 1st Interview)

Another very important attribute for Claire was being enthusiastic. She described herself as an active person who is usually moving in the classroom and who will always do her best to show her students the benefits of learning French. She seemed to transfer how enthusiastic she was when teaching high school to the university setting. She provided a very practical example from her own classroom: "especially when you're teaching beginners in a language, it doesn't matter how infantile the activity feels, they [students] are going to buy into it if I'm enthusiastic enough and if I can show them how this activity is going to help them" (01/25/2017: 1st Interview). Although I was able to see how enthusiastic Claire was during both class observations, I did not see an actual implementation of the idea of incorporating activities that might feel infantile for students. Further observations would be needed to corroborate her claims.

Ideal-Teacher Self – 2017

Even though most of the attributes Claire would like to possess remained the same after two years (Table 6), she still reflected on some elements that were strengthened over the course of two years. They included: a) becoming an expert teacher; b) helping students become autonomous; and c) transferring one's learning to different settings.

Claire acknowledged that her desire to become an expert in the subject matter got strengthened by the experience she gained teaching undergraduate students. During the second interview, she elaborated that idea by commenting that she would like to answer every single

question that her students might pose. Even though this is rather illusory statement, it suggests that Claire was concerned about the accuracy of her explanations and her students' reactions toward them. She also equated this desire of becoming an expert teacher to being able to use the target language consistently throughout every class (e.g. providing grammar explanations and instructions in French). Even though she thought she had improved after two years, Claire still felt that she could do better in that regard as she resorted to English whenever students seemed to struggle with the material. Her future self-guides were then strengthened by her prior experiences and subsequent "repertoire of appropriate plans, scripts, and self-regulatory strategies" (Dörnyei, 2009).

Claire's updated account of her ideal self (Fall 2017) was also authenticated by her recognizing the need to plan effective lessons that not only contribute to "student motivation," but also to "student ownership." According to her, the ideal teacher knows how to encourage students to become autonomous learners.

> She [ideal teacher] provides them [students] with opportunities to make choices on what to learn, how to learn it, and how to show that they've learned it. She provides them with chances to take their learning out of the classroom and encourages them to take advantage of them. The motivation she instills in them drives their desire to learn independently (Spring 2017: Ideal Language Teacher Self Reflections).

Her ideal language teacher ensures that her students can and will learn with or without her. Although this goal seemed difficult to achieve for Claire, I could observe a couple of instances where she attempted to model autonomous learning. As an example, once she could not remember a word she wanted to use in one of her French I classes so she immediately looked it up on her dictionary app. When reflecting about that occurrence, Claire said that this type of

situation "shows them [students] that it's okay not to know everything when learning another language — I've been speaking this language for 16 years and still have to look for words that I've either forgotten or never knew!" (Spring 2017: Classroom Practices Reflection).

When talking about her overall experience at the university, Claire stated that she had learned a lot about what an ideal language classroom could look like, and what a teacher could accomplish. Claire also felt grateful for the opportunities she had to identify some of the differences between teaching undergraduate students and high school students as well as for the freedoms that she got when teaching at the university. Claire was certain that the time she spent at the current institution allowed her to reflect and update her classroom practices. However, according to her, it was time to start thinking about how these practices could be transferred back to a high school setting.

> I've had this taste now, so I can see how a college classroom is different than my previous experience, and how to tailor my teaching to that. It's cool to see too, that I don't have to change who I am in order to teach at a college level, because like I said, the passion and the enthusiasm and the rapport with my students is all stuff that comes naturally. I had to learn about classroom management, and lesson plans, and all that kind of stuff. Those things were things I came in not even realizing that they were important. (05/04/2017: 2nd Interview)

This last quote synthesized Claire's reflective practices, current attributes, and genuine interest in her students. Reflecting on her ideal teacher self helped Claire realize that although some the attributes she considered important prior teaching at the university remained strong, there were certain methodological elements that she needed to be aware of to be an effective TA.

Claire's near future definitely includes teaching French language and culture. At the time of our last meeting, she was not sure yet whether she would be at the college level, or she would go back to the high school level (preferably at the latter). An interesting comment from the last interview is that Claire was excited to "kind of do a social experiment, and go back to high school and try all the stuff that I've [she has] learned here in a high school classroom" (05/04/2017: 2nd Interview). Such comment showed that her experience teaching at the university level had been productive and most importantly, that she would like to go back to face the high school challenge once again. She would even be willing to consider an administrative role (e.g. principal) in a further future, as a way to enhance her current self (Hiver, 2013) and to respond to the challenges she experienced and might continue to experience when teaching in high school. One of Pineda González' (2014) participants, Brönte, showed similar patterns of development. More specifically, neither Brönte nor Claire seemed to have major discrepancies between their current and ideal selves with regards to teaching. Their discrepancies were rather connected to the context. Both of them referred to obstacles that were present outside the classroom and that might influence their ideal self. Additionally, they both mentioned potential opportunities for their future; showing that reflecting on their ideal selves seemed to be a useful strategy to begin (or continue) to visualize the teachers' future endeavors (Pineda, 2014).

Table 6 summarizes Claire's characterization of her ideal teacher self at two different periods: a) Fall 2015 – Claire's first semester as a TA and b) Spring 2017: Claire's last semester as a TA. The elements from Fall 2015 represent Claire's initial ideas concerning her ideal teacher self. The elements in parenthesis and/or bolded from Spring 2017 illustrate the changes that were noticed in the analysis of the data sources.

Table 6. *Claire's Description of her Ideal Language Teacher Self*

My ideal language teacher self is someone who…

Fall 2015	Spring 2017
is passionate about teaching language and culture	is passionate about teaching language and culture
promotes a classroom atmosphere based on students' comfort, enthusiasm, and motivation	promotes a classroom atmosphere based on students' comfort, enthusiasm, and motivation
is an expert in the subject matter	is an expert in the subject matter **(teaches her classes in the target language and provides feedback when needed)**
prepares her lessons thoroughly	prepares her lessons thoroughly **(e.g. bringing new materials and discussion topics / fostering student interaction)**

Claire's French Class

Some elements of Claire's instruction have strengthened and/or changed over time. It is relevant to mention that most of the elements discussed below are present in the departmental rubric the participants of this study used as a reference to talk about their classroom practices (Appendix J). An element that seemed to fluctuate depending on the content that was being covered was the amount of teacher talk. From the class observations and reflections, I could conclude that there was a lot of teacher talk throughout both lessons (Fall 2015 and Spring 2017). In fact, Claire spent the majority of the class time providing explanations and examples of the structures covered with limited student participation. Although Claire mentioned that these

instances did not represent "a norm" for her, it became apparent that Claire needed to cover a lot of material in little time. It was also clear that some of her students (for these two classes in particular) were difficult to engage because of tiredness (e.g. they were taking an early morning and a late afternoon class) and/or lack of interest and participation. As she stated, "between needing to review the previous chapter and starting a new chapter, I feel into a typical rhythm of more lecturing and less interaction" (Spring 2017: Classroom Practices Reflection). Claire's awareness of her shortcomings allowed her to reflect on the need to develop strategies to involve her students more into the lesson. This reflection led her to self-evaluate her performance regularly and to envision a detailed plan to improve (e.g. designing activities that combine vocabulary and grammar in order to foster speaking in the target language).

Another element that evolved from her experience as a TA was the use of the target language. Claire encouraged her students to use the target language more in her Spring 2017 class (e.g. eliciting basic questions and answers, asking for clarification, expressing a request). In her last classroom practices reflection, she said that the fact that students should use the target language more is one of her "biggest take-aways when going back into 'the real world'" (Spring 2017). She admitted that it was challenging at first but she recognized that her experiences as a French TA taught her "to be more conscious and intentional" with the use of the target language. Most importantly, she is convinced that one "can teach a foreign language from day one in the target language and not have students cry, get frustrated, or shut down" (Spring 2017: Classroom Practices Reflection). In her opinion, it is a matter of developing methods and strategies to help students be comfortable with ambiguity.

Finally, an element that Claire would like to incorporate in her classes but that was not evident is enhancing student interaction. Even though Claire was able to use the target language

more in her classes, she did not provide ample opportunities for student interaction in neither of

the two classes I observed. Perhaps due to the amount of teacher talk and heavy grammar focus,

Claire acknowledged that she needed to work harder on fostering target language use. As a

matter of fact, during our last interview (05/04/2017: 2nd Interview), she stated that it was

challenging for her to get students to interact with each other in the target language. This

comment is very salient as it calls for more training for TAs in this particular area.

RQ2 - Overcoming Challenges in the Classroom

The current study also inquired the ways in which the TAs' current beliefs and practices

were challenged by institutional constraints and limitations and whether in the course of time

these challenges and limitations were eventually renegotiated and overcome. Overall, three main

challenges became apparent after analyzing the TAs artifacts, interviews, and my field notes.

They were: a) overcoming anxiety; b) doing what I believe is more effective vs doing what is

required; and c) dealing with "unmotivated" students.

Overcoming Anxiety

Although all four TAs expressed having positive experiences overall, it was clear that

they had to overcome certain challenges since their very first week of teaching. One of them had

to do with overcoming the anxiety they all felt during the first semester teaching at the

university. Mark and Lauren, who had never taught Spanish in a formal setting, were particularly

anxious; however, they found support in their section colleagues and the Professors and TAs

who were in charge of delivering the workshops during the TA orientation week. Mark believed

that the orientation made a huge difference because it allowed him to "go from, okay, I'm really

nervous, to oh, ok I get an idea of what they are expecting" (01/25/2017: 1st Interview). He

added that all the aspects they covered, including practical ideas for the first day of classes, basic

layouts of a class, aspects TAs need to cover within a class, and sample activities were very helpful, particularly during the first semester.

When preparing for the first encounter with her students, Susana also perceived that the orientation had helped TAs to be prepared "at least for what we're gonna expect, with what we're gonna work" (02/01/2017: 1st Interview). In the same interview, Susana referred to the first day of classes as the most important day of her first semester: "yeah, for me personally it was just that, to get a good impression the first day for my students, because I think the whole semester is gonna play on that first day" (02/01/2017: 1st Interview). Susana later added that it was "scary" at first because she had not taught at the university level, something that none of the participants from this study had done, and because of certain expectations of the department (e.g. using the target language during most of the class time, even when explaining grammar).

> Yeah, it's [first day of classes] important for me, and it was important for me also because I am just discovering, I just knew about another level or category of students that I haven't dealt with before... And plus, the expectation of the department, they don't want you to, let's say, give that bad impression to students about the French language because we want them to love the language. (02/01/2017: 1st Interview)

The expectations and guidelines that the TAs received during the orientation week created anxiety and some sort of pressure to rapidly respond and adjust to what the department needed from them. This pressure was intensified due to the lack of pedagogical training for Mark and Lauren, and the sudden change of educational setting for Susana and Claire (both coming from teaching elementary and high school in Morocco and Louisiana respectively). The fact that they were very receptive and willing to incorporate new ideas into their classrooms contributed to their adjustment to teaching at the university level. Additionally, they valued their interactions

with their colleagues, expressing that they supported each other by exchanging ideas and materials to enhance their classrooms. The graduate instructional methods course these four TAs took during their first semester also contributed to form a better understanding of what it meant for them to be a language instructor. During the second interview (04/24/2017), for example, Mark described this course as a "brainstorming class" that allowed them to connect the theory they discussed with their actual teaching practices and share potential strategies to overcome any classroom issues they faced during the first semester.

Doing What I Belief is More Effective vs Doing What is Required

Another challenge that these TAs mentioned and was apparent in the class observations was the difficulty to maintain a balance between their personal goals as language TAs (e.g. helping students develop effective communication skills that allow them to participate in real-life scenarios; introducing and appreciating Spanish-speaking cultures) and having to prepare their students to succeed in the class (often equated to passing multiple grammar-based exams). As an example, all the classes I observed evolved around a grammar topic, which required TAs to spend a significant amount of class time introducing and practicing the forms. Additionally, even though students interacted with each other when completing the assigned tasks, most activities involved using the target grammatical structures in isolated contexts. The ought-to language teacher self construct might help understand this finding as TAs' idealized images of themselves as grammar experts (e.g. Claire and Mark) appeared to be heavily influenced by the department's attitudes towards the duties, obligations, and responsibilities (Hiver, 2013). External pressures such as the department's expectations (e.g. TAs should prepare engaging classes so that students enjoy learning the language and potentially enroll in upper level classes – paraphrased from a mandatory TA meeting conducted by the chair of the department), class length (four 50-minute

classes per week), and grammar-focused curriculum clearly effected TAs' pedagogical decisions. Mark illustrated this challenge early on during his first semester.

> I think language learning should be essentially interactive. However, my focus has been difficult to maintain in this first week and a half. After seeing the structure of the first exam, I was able to orient the material to make sure we covered sufficiently the vocabulary, sentence structures, and interrogative questions included in this first test. Yet I do not wish to teach to "pass the test." My main concern is the development of their daily language skills, interests in the Hispanic cultures, and desire to continue learning Spanish! (Fall 2015: Ideal Language Teacher Self Reflection)

The heavy focus on grammar was sometimes frustrating for some of the TAs, such is the case of Lauren, who often had to remind herself that she had gone through the same learning process at one point, and that therefore, her students were not going to process every single detail she explained as quickly as she expected.

> …I find once in a while I'll be frustrated, I'll be like, "I told you guys this two weeks ago." Or something, then I have to remember, no, you're teaching them so much, you can't expect them to remember every little rule, or every word that you teach to them and stuff. (04/24/2017: 2nd Interview)

Since some of the beginning language courses are "based on grammar" (Susana, Fall 2017: Classroom Practices Reflection), TAs also found it challenging to maintain a constant use of the target language in class. Susana, for example, got emails in which students described their anxiety and mentioned the possibility of dropping the course due to her using French the majority of the class time. Those pressures led her to ultimately incorporate more English when providing explanations, instructions, and feedback.

As per their own perceptions and my observations, TAs like Lauren and Claire were able to make progress in using the target language more during their last semester, even when they introduced grammatical structures. The fact that all TAs referenced the use of the target language shows that the graduate instructional methods course and subsequent experiences (e.g. teaching for two years at the same institution, sharing ideas with colleagues and supervisors, and/or participating in this project) were helpful to recognize important elements from their ideal classroom. Additionally, these opportunities were found useful for TAs to reflect on their present needs. They all stated that they were interested in creating an environment in which their students feel comfortable to take risks and interact with their classmates. However, interaction, at least in the classes I observed, was limited to pair or group work in which students completed grammar exercises. Professional development opportunities are then needed to help future TAs prepare classes in which grammar is practiced in a more dynamic and contextual manner.

Dealing with "Unmotivated" Students

All four TAs experienced what we all have lived through at some point in our teaching careers: having less-motivated or under-prepared students. Although not always the case, some of these students often enroll in a language class to satisfy a language requirement to complete their degrees. Lauren and Susana, for example, narrated their experiences with two classes they taught. Lauren attributed her students' unwillingness to interact in the classroom to having a "weird combination of students" (04/24/2017: 2nd Interview) and Susana to French being "technically the last thing" (05/03/2017: 2nd Interview) for her students' daily schedules. As a matter of fact, both courses were one hour and forty-five minutes long and were held at night. Lauren and Susana perceived these two elements as challenging because many of their students were tired, did not pay attention to explanations, and did not participate much in class activities.

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Despite the fact that they were trying their best to motivate their students by being enthusiastic, creative when planning their lessons, and understanding of the potential problems their students might have, Lauren and Susana were not receiving the reactions they expected from their students. These students' attitudes often times demotivated these TAs, leaving them dissatisfied with their performance (Kiziltepe, 2006). Lauren vividly illustrates how she felt and what she did when dealing with these unmotivated students.

> I've tried everything, I still go in every day thinking it's a new class and maybe they'll be better today, so I definitely walk in every day hoping for the best, and still trying to be positive and still trying to be upbeat, but like I said, by the end of the class I'm just like, "you don't want to be here, I don't want to be here either." So I try, I mean, I still play music for them, I've even started giving them breaks… and that doesn't help.
>
> (04/24/2017: 2nd Interview)

Lauren and Susana gathered several ideas from their colleagues, spent a considerable amount of time searching for materials (e.g. videos, music, cartoons, etc.) to relate to their students' interests, and even took extra measures such as ending the class early and forcing students to prepare on their own for an upcoming test [Lauren's case]. However, according to them, such measures were not enough to engage their students as much as they wanted. This finding also suggests that lack of teaching experience might not be a decisive factor when motivating students as both Lauren (novice) and Susana (experienced) struggled engaging these students. Further research is needed though to support such claim.

Perhaps due to these negative experiences, I perceived a change in Lauren's idea of the importance of building rapport with the students. While Lauren felt she still needed to "take an interest" in her students' personal lives, she also mentioned that she had learnt to detach herself

from her students after this negative experience. Thus, it might be safe to say that Lauren's motivation to teach this particular group of students decreased.

> There are just some students who no matter how much you try; no matter what I do as a teacher they are just not gonna care anyway …no matter how you present it to them. And it's definitely taught me that it's not necessarily a reflection of me as a teacher.
>
> (04/24/2017: 2nd Interview)

Claire also lived a similar experience with students who were difficult to engage. Like Susana, Claire blamed the class time and the fact that she "felt pressured to get through everything quickly because we [Claire and her students] had so much material to cover and so little time to do it" (Fall 2017: Classroom Practices Reflection). This finding clearly shows that there is a need to help future TAs find more ways to engage their low-motivated or underprepared students. The implications of the above-mentioned challenges will be further discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This chapter contains a discussion of the outcomes as well as the limitations of the current study. First, it includes a synthesis of the four cases with respect to the ideal teacher self construct (RQ1). Next, it provides an overview of the TAs challenges and limitations they experienced over the course of two years (RQ2). It then includes a reflection on the TAs assessment of the institutional support (RQ3) and some potential recommendations to enhance the development of future language teaching assistants. The chapter concludes with the contributions and limitations of the current study.

The current multiple-case study explored how four teaching assistants' conceptualization of their ideal language teacher selves took shape and evolved throughout their career trajectories. This study started by exploring the initial experiences and graduate and professional contexts in which the TAs interacted at a southeastern university and then transitioned to illustrate how these experiences evolved and eventually influenced their ideal selves and teaching practices. The TAs' voices and experiences were used as lens to examine their instructional practices and the institutional challenges they faced throughout their time as foreign language teaching assistants. Analyzing these elements led to potential recommendations that could help strengthen foreign language TA preparation programs.

Reflecting on the Ideal Teacher Self

The current study attempted to depict different stages of the graduate students' TA development and examined how the participants' interactions, professional development

opportunities, and other factors might have caused change in their ideal selves and in their teaching practices within their current context. The findings of current study supported Hiver's (2013) results in that they documented the dynamicity of the TAs' ideal teacher selves throughout their teaching trajectories at the current institution. Such dynamic process started before they decided to become a TA and continued throughout their teaching trajectory. All 4 participants, for example, agreed on the need to continue updating their practices so that they are able to effectively teach the target language. Their desires to enhance their current selves, repair inadequacies of their selves, and respond to normative obligations (e.g. grammar-based curriculum) were patterns that motivated the TAs to engage in their continuous development. As the TAs from this study accrued teaching experiences, they were able to create elaborate vivid images of their ideal language teacher selves (White & Ding, 2009; Dörnyei & Chan, 2013). After having taught for four semesters, the TAs were able to not only provide a clear description of their future visions of themselves (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014), but were also able to use these visions to formulate mastery and performance-based goals, such us becoming expert teachers (Mark and Claire) or updating one's teaching practices (Lauren and Susana). This is consistent with Dörnyei's (2009) exploration of the ideal self since it can have an immediate effect on learners' behavior (in this particular case, teachers' behavior).

Even though the current study was not an intervention program for the development of the participants' ideal teacher selves (as in Pineda, 2016), it also provided opportunities for language TAs to "favorecer en el futuro profesor de L2 la adquisición de conocimientos sobre sí mismo como docente, y con ello, una mayor capacidad de decisión sobre su carrera" (p. 384). As in Gao and Xu's (2014) study, the reflection on their ideal selves and on all other positive and negative lived experiences allowed TAs like Claire, Lauren, and Susana to identify the

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underlying reasons why they wanted to continue teaching a foreign language. Hence, the findings of this study support Kubanyiova's (2009) idea of the future-oriented aspect of the self, suggesting that reflecting on the ideal self served as a powerful motivator for the TAs to keep updating their pedagogical knowledge and instructional practices in order to reduce the discrepancy between their actual (who they are) and ideal (who they want to become) selves.

Similar to White and Ding's (2009) study, the TAs' ideal teacher selves evolved from prior and current experiences, training opportunities, interactions with peers and supervisors, and practices mediated by the requirements of the department. These findings are also consistent with previous research that encourages the inclusion of multiple reflective practices in TA preparation (Uzum, 2017; Gallego, 2014). As an example, language TAs should be given multiple opportunities to reflect on their motivations, fears, desires, and anxieties -starting from the orientation workshop and ideally during the graduate instructional methods course and any other workshops and supervisor meetings. Some possibilities include writing reflections on their ideal-language teacher selves at different points in time, sharing those reflections with peers and/or supervisors, participating in focus groups in which current needs and challenges are discussed, among other activities that allow them to identify different gaps between their current and ideal selves and potentially seek strategies to fill these gaps.

Another important finding from this study has to do with how essential role models were for participants to envision and develop their own ideal language teacher selves. As documented by all four participants, their role models were crucial for them to become language learners and teachers. Either as behavioral models, sources of inspiration, or representations of the possible (Morgenroth, Ryan, & Peters, 2015), role models were found to be associated with their (re)construction of their future selves. As an example, Mark and Lauren acknowledged that they

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would like to become their own students' learner models (Medgyes, 2001) since they were themselves language learners of the language they are now teaching: Spanish. In this regard, Valmori (2014) discussed that due to an unattainable native speaker model "teachers first need to be confident with their proficiency and then to overcome the fear that the students may not understand everything or want to speak the foreign language with a non-native speaker" (p. 22). Both Mark and Lauren, although a bit concerned when they started to teach, implicitly realized that such native speaker model was inadequate and highlighted how their teaching, confidence, and desire to update their teaching practices had developed over the years. Susana and Claire also shared these three core ideas with regards to teaching. Thus, the current study provides strong evidence to demonstrate that the pedagogical focus and research initiatives should be on documenting efficient and evidence-based teaching rather than on the speaker status of the teacher (Thompson & Cuesta, 2019). Further research that documents both successful and challenging experiences such as the ones from the participants of this study will certainly contribute to the empowerment of non-native speaker teachers.

Reflecting on the TA's Challenges and Limitations

The current study also explored the ways in which the TAs' current beliefs and practices were challenged by institutional constraints and limitations. Although TAs were vocal about multiple difficulties they experienced over the two years, findings show that they all discussed having dealt with three main challenges: a) overcoming anxiety; b) doing what they believe was more effective vs doing what it was required; and c) dealing with "unmotivated" students. Although experience and constant self-reflection played a large role when (re)negotiating and/or overcoming these challenges, the impact of peers and supervisors also seemed to effect all four TAs' experiences.

However, based on the TAs' voices and my class observations, one can conclude that there was a disconnection between what they perceived as positive for language learning and teaching and the TAs' actual teaching performance. Most of the TAs' classes were oriented toward preparing students to be successful in their exams and therefore, lacked opportunities to use the target language in meaningful contexts. What is more, the amount of required content to study and the lack of variation in terms of class activities might have limited the students experiences with the language, even more for the "unmotivated" students. Thus, the current study showed that these challenges need to be addressed not only during the TA orientation and graduate instructional methods course but also throughout their time as TAs.

Moreover, these results support the inclusion of opportunities for TAs to reflect on the ideal language teacher selves (Pineda González, 2014). These opportunities might not help language teachers to resolve potential conflicts; however, they might be helpful to develop their confidence and empower them to reduce the impact of these challenges over time. Thus, engaging in a discussion concerning their ideal language teacher selves might be relevant

> para que éste [L2 teacher] adquiera una mayor consciencia sobre ellos [conflicts] y para que, al narrar su resolución, cristalizada en determinados aspectos del Ideal Language Teacher Self, se inscriba a sí mismo en una historia de confianza que le sirva de marco cognitivo y afectivo óptimo desde el que ir resolviendo con el tiempo el conflicto en la realidad (Pineda, 2014, p. 386).

Hence, the current study identified challenges and limitations that, even though they seem to be common among TAs, need immediate attention. Providing opportunities for future TAs to reflect on such challenges, insecurities, and potential strategies to overcome them "proporciona al futuro profesor de L2 una especie de consuelo" (Pineda, 2014, p. 399). Knowing that we all

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have experienced some of these conflicts and acknowledging that we can all overcome them could give teachers a positive outlook of the profession. As an example, one strategy, following Hiver's (2017) suggestion, could be to "to familiarize themselves [L2 teachers] with learners' motivational profiles prior to and during the course of L2 instruction" (p. 62). Knowing whether the ideal L2 self, anxiety, self-efficacy, and any other individual factors play a role in students' motivations "would give language teachers actionable information that allows them to more appropriately support and interact with learners" (Hiver, 2017, p. 62). In concrete terms, TAs like Laura and Susana, who experienced some disappointment because of not being able to motivate her students, could reflect on their current and ideal practices, and identify potential strategies to respond to day-to-day challenges. Further research and pedagogical interventions and strategies could lead future TAs and language teachers in general to better cope with anxiety, to balance the curriculum requirements with the personal goals and preferences, and to adjust their style to the less-motivated or under-prepared student.

Reflecting on the TAs' Institutional Support

The current study also explored the TAs' perceptions regarding the institutional support or lack thereof over the course of two years. In this section, the TAs voices and opinions with respect to the institutional support they received as well as their suggestions to enhance the professional development of future TAs are discussed. Three key themes were identified from the analysis of the artifacts and interviews. They include: a) peer collaboration; b) mentoring and supervision; and c) TAs' overall recommendations. These themes document the close relationship between the TAs ideal language teacher selves and their learning and teaching environment.

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Peer Collaboration

All four TAs from this study explicitly mentioned having to respond to the obligations and responsibilities within the department. Although that was certainly challenging for them, TAs found support through collaboration with their fellow TAs. Mark and Lauren, for example, highlighted that a few of the TAs from the Spanish section had built a strong sense of community in which they would share materials with each other, prepare joined review sessions between their students, and spent time outside of academia. Also, they would create exams and revise them during the section meetings.

Susana and Claire also mentioned that their colleagues from the French section were not only sharing a variety of materials such as videos, handouts, power point presentations, etc., but also the "tips on how to work with the material" (Susana, 02/01/2017: 1st Interview). They would use email as a medium to share these materials but would talk to each other in person to exchange ideas and feedback or when any doubts about the implementation of the activities or materials arose.

The Spanish and French TA supervisors might have suggested these types of collaboration. However, none of the participants commented on the role of the TA supervisors in encouraging peer collaboration. Also, I must note that this sense of sharing and collaboration among colleagues appeared to be stronger for the French section. Whereas both French TAs talked about sharing materials with the whole French section, both Spanish TAs talked about collaborating with the same three colleagues. This represents my interpretation and it might be due to the low number of French TAs, compared to the high number of Spanish TAs. It might also be due to my experience as an insider in the Spanish section.

Notwithstanding the above clarifications, all four participants manifested that the peer-collaboration contributed to creating a sense of belonging in a community (Nguyen & Loughland, 2018; Harlow & Cobb, 2014). Through working and sharing materials and ideas with peers, the TAs constructed their own understanding of what it meant to be a language instructor at the institution. These interactions appear to have contributed to their professional identity, as they were able to help each other and to respond to their daily tasks as TAs.

Mentoring and Supervision

By hearing their experiences with regards to the professional development opportunities offered by the department, I learned that every language supervisor catered for the needs of their own section TAs. For example, the French section supervisor encouraged the TAs to attend a series of optional workshops (e.g. presenting information in an effective manner, implementing technology into the classroom) that were organized by an internal organization. These workshops aimed at "enhancing teaching and learning at [name of the university]" by assisting faculty members, adjuncts, and graduate teaching assistants. These workshops, according to Susana and Claire, were thought-provoking and they allowed them to learn about techniques and strategies for teaching in general. Although they were not always easily relatable to language teaching, both Susana and Claire were thankful with their supervisor for encouraging them to attend these optional workshops.

Susana and Claire were also pleased with the fact that members of the same organization helped them record their lessons [an artifact that was helpful for Susana and Claire when they started to apply for jobs]. Apart from providing technical support with the videos, the organization representative also provided constructive feedback on the TAs' teaching practices. These additional opportunities not only helped TAs such as Susana and Claire reflect on their

performance in the classroom but also gave them ideas of different activities that could potentially work with their students.

Overall, Mark and Lauren were also pleased with the support they received from both of their supervisors. It is relevant to note though that there was a change of supervisory roles in the Spanish section after their first year of teaching. It was evident to me that Mark and Lauren established a closer relationship with their first supervisor. As a matter of fact, from my discussions with both, I noticed that Lauren seemed to have struggled more than Mark with the change of supervisor. Although Lauren did not have any problem with her supervisor, she did not fully benefit from her support during the second year. In that regard, Lauren mentioned that she would have liked to be observed more during her time at this institution. She was only observed once over the two years. This would have probably given her more constructive criticism with regards to her classroom practices. Although Lauren mentioned that many of her professors, even at her graduate level courses, were willing to help her out with those classrooms observations, it never really happened. Sharing that led her to really focus her reflections on how supportive her fellow TAs were with her.

Findings concerning mentoring and supervision offered at the institution where the study was conducted need to be further evaluated, as they seemed to be inconsistent and/or infrequent. What is clear though is that there is a need to develop a more concrete mentoring program for foreign language TAs at the institution where the study was carried out. Such program could involve peer TAs, supervisors, and section coordinators and might benefit from the findings from this study; particularly those concerning the dynamicity of the TAs' ideal teacher selves and the challenges that might arise over time. Back in 2014, the Report of the MLA Task Force on Doctoral Study in Modern Language and Literature had also stressed the need to strengthen

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teaching preparation and mentoring. However, as documented in the current study, TAs'

challenges and limitations have not been fully addressed by some institutions. Preparation for

teaching should then include relevant course work, practical experience, and individualized,

reliable and attentive mentoring. The task force also recommended pedagogic training that

"introduces students to the diverse missions, histories, and demographics of a wide range of

institutions" (MLA, 2014, p. 2). Although some of these recommendations are rather difficult to

implement in many institutions due to time constraints, extra costs, or feasibility within a

population, it is clear that graduate programs need to be aware of their graduate students'

learning opportunities and career development needs (p. 2). The current study only explored the

needs of four TAs. However, it served as an opportunity not only to recognize TAs' visions

concerning their ideal language teacher selves but also to determine what initiatives could be

taken to improve the overall institutional support for future TAs.

TAs Recommendations

As a way to keep updating the TAs practices, Mark suggested to have an orientation

week every year [similar to the one these four TAs had during their first semester]. Such

orientation would serve as a "refresher" for current TAs and it would also help "build the

connection between the generations of cohorts" (04/24/2017: 2nd Interview), which was clearly

of interest to Mark. Surprisingly, he mentioned during the same interview that although there

was one orientation during his second year, TAs who had already taught for a year were not

required to attend. Perhaps mistakenly, Mark thought that "it was almost expected for us [current

TAs] not to [go] in a way." His idea of not being welcomed might be due to the fact that within

the orientation week, there are several workshops that are designed for the "new TAs" and

therefore might not seem appealing to the TAs who might have already attended such

workshops. Mark's recommendation clearly deserves attention because it calls for a more effective and meaningful planning and execution of these orientation meetings.

The idea of creating more workshops that help TAs design activities for lower level language courses was also mentioned by two of the TAs. Lauren for example said that even though she had gotten "a couple of ideas about how to make things creative and interesting and about different ways to teach things" (04/24/2017: 2nd Interview), she felt that many of those were for more advanced level students, "like conversation students." Since TAs generally teach lower level courses, Lauren would have liked to see some examples of communicative-based activities specifically tailored for beginner Spanish students. This might have helped all four TAs to find a balance between the grammar-based curriculum and their desire to provide opportunities to practice the target language in meaningful contexts. Also, given the importance of teaching grammar in the introductory levels at the current institution, Lauren also wished for more strategies to introduce and practice grammatical structures, such as the subjunctive.

Similarly, Lauren mentioned that during the methods class, it would be interesting for TAs to have more opportunities to design their own activities that illustrate the themes they discussed, instead of being provided with already existing materials.

But maybe it would have been interesting to be like, "Here's a topic, come up with some kind of activity and we can present it to the class." And then the other students provide feedback, as, " I think my students would like this, I think they wouldn't." So that way it's not just like, 'Here's some examples of it.' But us actually having to do it, then that would open the doors for not just that activity, but for other topics, or other activities as well. (04/24/2017: 2nd Interview)

These recommendations are supported by what was found by Angus (2016). In her exploration of professional development opportunities for TAs, she found out that there were some discrepancies between the value TAs placed on certain opportunities and the frequency of their participation. Clearly, the TAs from this study participated in limited professional development opportunities, including a) a graduate instructional methods course; b) orientation; c) non-language teaching-related workshops (mainly for French TAs); and d) observations (recurrent for the French section only). The fact that the TAs seemed to be interested in learning more about language teaching and benefitting from professional development opportunities suggest that language departments need to provide additional and ongoing professional development opportunities for TAs (Gorsuch, 2012; Griffee, 2012). These might be extremely helpful for TAs when dealing with the potential challenges of the language classroom.

Contributions

Building on Kubanyiova's model of possible language teacher selves and Dornyei's L2MSS, this study attempted to bridge the gap between teacher motivation and teacher education research. It was exploratory in nature and showed that the notion of ideal language teacher selves can act as a drive for TAs' reflections and behavior (Hiver, 2013). More specifically, the study showed two different stages of four graduate students' TA development and examined how the participants' interactions with peers and supervisors, limited professional development opportunities, and other factors such as the institutional requirements triggered change in their ideal selves and teaching practices. Thus, the current study adds to the literature on TA development as it explored the ideal language teacher selves' development of TAs who taught languages other than English (French and Spanish). It also expanded the understanding of the

selves of both novice and experienced language teachers. As documented in the literature review, most work had been done on novice teachers.

The study findings also offer both theoretical and practical considerations with regards to language TAs. Future language TAs, for example, may benefit from reflective practices such as the ones concerning the dynamicity of their language teacher selves so that they would become aware of their beliefs, motivations, fears, expectations, and anxieties. Such critical reflections may help them not only to identify existing gaps between their current and ideal selves but also to develop strategies to overcome these gaps and any challenges that might emerge at the institutional level. These reflections might also trigger discussions concerning the participants' future professional career.

Additionally, the current study serves as a call for the development of a stronger support system for TAs, particularly in the Spanish section at the current institution. As echoed by Mercer (2017), a strong relationship with a mentor and supervisor might be central to one's sense of self as a teacher (p. 68). Mentors can "offer mediation that supports mentees in where they want to go with greater self-awareness and a vision to work towards change" (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2017). As an example, a mentor could have helped Mark and Laura to embark on this journey of teaching, especially because they did not have any teaching experience prior becoming TAs. The current institution could then consider adjusting, implementing, and evaluating a comprehensive mentoring program for future language TAs (e.g. Höbusch & Worley, 2012; Kost, 2008). Further research could design, implement, and assess such mentoring program.

Susana's last recommendation, directly addressing the departments of modern languages in general, perfectly summarizes what language departments should take into consideration in the near future. Guidance will be, in Susana's words, the key to support future TAs.

> Honestly, just make sure before hiring any TA, make sure that they could be able to do that job. Because you don't want to put them, release them into the class, just tell them that the book can tell you what to do …The supervisor needs to be there to help guide them, because you don't want to come at the end and say what happened? Why did that happen? You want to guide them and be there during the process to make sure they have good results at the end. (05/03/2017: 2nd Interview)

Even though the first part of Susana's reflection cannot be ensured, her comment is pertinent because it comprises some of the main goals of the current study and, most importantly, it highlights the need to effectively prepare and support foreign language TAs so they can face not only their teaching duties but also any challenge they might encounter during their time as teaching assistants.

The current study also serves as a starting point for the university to evaluate how it is doing and whether changes need to be made in terms of TA professional development (Griffee, 2012). As suggested by Angus (2016), TAs' professional development must be facilitated by faculty and experienced students, incentivized by the whole department, and sometimes even required (p. 833). The TAs from this study were vocal in terms of what they would expect from the institution as far as professional development. Even though the institution was perceived as helpful (Griffee, 2012) for the most part, it was evident that these four TAs' experiences could have been complemented with more opportunities to grow as language educators. Thus, as Byrnes (2001) suggested, preparing graduate students takes a whole department. It is time for

administrators, supervisors, and faculty to develop strong professional relationships (mentorships) in which the needs and goals of TAs are considered and addressed in the professional development opportunities.

Limitations

The most salient shortcoming of this study was the limited scope of the data. Conducting interviews and analyzing TA artifacts does not fully account for the development of the TAs ideal teacher selves. Therefore, it was mandatory to include an in-depth analysis of these data sets and a consideration of multiple participant artifacts. Similarly, the number of class observations from this study did not yield enough information to support all participants' claims concerning their actual performance in the classroom. Further research should then include more classroom observations to illustrate the development of the TAs' teaching practices.

Additionally, the researcher had to be cautious with his interpretations of the data since he was himself a foreign language TA. These potential biases were considered and avoided by including three rounds of member-check and peer debriefing. The concept of transferability from a four participant case study could also be considered as a limitation. However, the claims made here invite fellow researchers, TAs, teachers, and supervisors to make connections between the findings of this study and their own experiences or contexts. Thus, the range of transferability of the cases to the population of cases as a whole, in this particular case, foreign language TAs is a crucial aspect of the study. These cases initiated a discussion on the development of TAs' ideal language teacher selves and on how the institutional dynamics or other factors aided or hindered the participants' motivations, expectations, and desires to teach foreign languages. Research documenting cases like the ones presented here will eventually inform not only the TAs' individual development and practices but also the language TA preparation programs as a whole,

as results might provide specific guidelines that could be implemented across multiple settings. Further research will hopefully expand this preliminary exploration of the complexity and dynamicity of the TAs' ideal teacher selves and of their L2 Teaching Experience.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

December 22, 2016

Jhon Cuesta Medina, M.Ed.
Teaching and Learning
4202 East Fowler Ave.
Tampa, FL 33620

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**

IRB#: Pro00028947

Title: Foreign Language Teaching Assistants' Development: How do their ideal language
        teacher selves unfold over time?

Study Approval Period: 12/22/2016 to 12/22/2017

Dear Mr. Cuesta Medina:

On 12/22/2016, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above
application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):

Protocol Document(s):

Protocol V1 12/21/16

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:

Consent Form.pdf

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the
"Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent document(s) are only valid during the
approval period indicated at the top of the form(s).

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which
includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve
only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review
research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110. The research

proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(5) Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for nonresearch purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis).

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) calendar days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

John A Schinka, Ph.D.

John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board

Appendix B: Consent Form for Participants

UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk

Pro # Pro00028947

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called

- *Foreign Language Teaching Assistants' Development: How do their ideal language teacher selves unfold over time?*

The person who is in charge of this research study is Jhon Cuesta. This person is called the Principal Investigator. He is being guided in this research by Dr. Amy Thompson.

The research will be conducted at the University of South Florida – Tampa campus.

Purpose of the study

The current study aims at understanding the language teaching assistants' development with regards to their ideal language teacher selves, examines the challenges and limitations TAs might face during their teaching trajectories within their current context, and reflects on the institutional support they receive during a two-year term.

Why are you being asked to take part?

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you are a language teaching assistant and you were enrolled in the Graduate Instructional Methods course offered in Fall 2015.

Study Procedures:

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to:

1) Provide access to five assignments that you submitted during Fall 2015: philosophy of teaching, 2 ideal teacher selves reflections, 1 peer-observation reflection, and 1 formal observation reflection

2) Fill out a questionnaire: 10 minutes

3) Revise your philosophy of teaching: 2 hours

4) Revise your ideal teacher selves reflection: 2 hours

5) Provide a reflection on your current classroom practices: 3 hours

6) Participate in two semi-structured interviews: 2 hours (45-60 mins per interview). These interviews will be audio-recorded.

Total Number of Participants

About 8 individuals will take part in this study at USF Tampa.

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You have the alternative to choose not to participate in this research study.

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer; you are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your student status, course grades, recommendations, or access to future courses or training opportunities.

Benefits

You might potentially benefit from the reflection on both, your ideal language teacher self and your current teaching practices. Also, this study might inform the TA preparation program at this university. This study will provide recommendations as to developing a better support system for the TAs at this institution, which in turn might eventually benefit the preparation of future TAs.

Risks or Discomfort

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

Compensation

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

Costs

It will not cost you anything to take part in the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. Anyone who looks at your records must keep them confidential. These individuals include:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator, study coordinator, and all other research staff.

- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study, and individuals who provide oversight to ensure that we are doing the study in the right way.

- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research.

- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, including staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, or experience an unanticipated problem, call Jhon Cuesta at 262 7480416.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638.

Social Behavioral

Version # 1

UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA

Version Date: 12.21.16

Page 3 of 4

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Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

_____   _____
Signature of Person Taking Part in Study   Date

_____
Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

_____   _____
Signature of Person obtaining Informed Consent   Date

_____
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Appendix C: L2 Language History Questionnaire (Version 2.0)

Adapted from: Li, Ping, Sepanski, S. & Zhao, X. (2006). Language history questionnaire: a web-based interface for bilingual research.

 Contact Information:

Name: _____   Email: _____

Today's Date: _____

 Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge.

 PART A

 1. Age (in years):

 2. Gender:

 3. Education (degree obtained or school level attended):

 4(a). Country of origin:

 4(b). Country of Residence:

 5. If 4(a) and 4(b) are the same, how long have you lived in a foreign country where your second language is spoken? If 4(a) and 4(b) are different, how long have you been in the country of your current residence? (in years)

 6. What is your native language? (If you grew up with more than one language, please specify)

 7. Do you speak a second language?

    __YES   my second language is _____.
    __NO   (If you answered NO, you need not to continue this form)

8. If you answered YES to question 7, please specify the age at which you started to learn your second language in the following situations (write age next to any situation that applies).

At home: _____
In school: _____
After arriving in the second language speaking country _____

9. How did you learn your second language up to this point? (check all that apply)

(<u>Mainly</u>   <u>Mostly</u>   <u>Occasionally</u>) through formal classroom instruction.

(<u>Mainly</u>   <u>Mostly</u>   <u>Occasionally</u>) through interacting with people.

A mixture of both, but   (<u>More classroom</u>   <u>More interaction</u>   <u>Equally both</u>).

Other   (**specify:** _____).

10. List all foreign languages you know/have studied in order of most proficient to least proficient. Rate your ability on the following aspects in each language. Please rate according to the following scale (write down the number in the table):

Very poor   Poor   Fair   Functional   Good   Very good   Native-like
1 _____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____ 6_____ 7_____

Language	Reading proficiency	Writing proficiency	Speaking fluency	Listening ability

11. Provide the age at which you were first exposed to each foreign language in terms of speaking, reading, and writing, and the number of years you have spent on learning each language.

Language	Age first exposed to the language			Number of years learning
	Speaking	Reading	Writing	

PART B

13. Estimate, in terms of percentages, how often you use your native language and other languages per day (in all daily activities combined, circle one that applied):

Native language: <25%   25%   50%   75%   100%

Second Language: <25%   25%   50%   75%   100%

Other languages: <25%   25%   50%   75%   100%
(specify the languages: _____)

14. Estimate, in terms of hours per day, how often you are engaged in the following activities with your native and second languages.

Activities	First Language	Second Language	Other Languages (specify _____)
Listen to Radio/ Watching TV:	_____(hrs)	_____(hrs)	_____(hrs)
Reading for fun:	_____(hrs)	_____(hrs)	_____(hrs)
Reading for work:	_____(hrs)	_____(hrs)	_____(hrs)
Reading on the Internet:	_____(hrs)	_____(hrs)	_____(hrs)
Writing emails to friends:	_____(hrs)	_____(hrs)	_____(hrs)
Writing articles/papers:	_____(hrs)	_____(hrs)	_____(hrs)

15. Estimate, in terms of hours per day, how often you speak (or used to speak) your native and second languages with the following people.

	Language	Hours
Father:		_____(hrs)
Mother:	_____	_____(hrs)
	_____	
Grandfather(s):	_____	_____(hrs)
Grandmother(s):	_____	_____(hrs)
Brother(s)/Sister(s):	_____	_____(hrs)
Other family members:	_____	_____(hrs)

16. Estimate, in terms of hours per day, how often you now speak your native and second languages with the following people.

	Language	Hours
Spouse/partner:	_____	_____(hrs)
Friends:	_____	_____(hrs)
Classmates:	_____	_____(hrs)
Co-workers:	_____	_____(hrs)

17. Write down the name of the language in which you received instruction in school, for each schooling level:

Primary/Elementary School: _____
Secondary/Middle School: _____
High School: _____
College/University: _____

18. In which languages do you usually:

Count, add, multiply, and do simple arithmetic? _____
Dream? _____
Express anger or affection? _____

19. When you are speaking, do you ever mix words or sentences from the two or more languages you know? (If no, skip to question 21).

20. List the languages that you mix and rate the frequency of mixing in normal conversation with the following people according to the following scale (write down the number in the table):

Rarely   Occasionally   Sometimes Frequently   Very Frequently
1 _____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____

Relationship	Languages mixed	Frequency of mixing
Spouse/family members		
Friends		
Co-workers		
Classmates		

21. In which language (among your best two languages) do you feel you usually do better? Write the name of the language under each condition.

	At home	**At work**
Reading	_____	_____
Writing	_____	_____
Speaking	_____	_____
Understanding	_____	_____

22. Among the languages you know, which language is the one that you would prefer to use in these situations?

At home	_____
At work	_____
At a party	_____
In general	_____

23. If you have lived or travelled in other countries for more than three months, please indicate the name(s) of the country or countries, your length of stay, and the language(s) you learned or tried to learn.

24. If you have taken a standardized test of proficiency for languages other than your native language (e.g., TOEFL or Test of English as a Foreign Language), please indicate the scores you received for each.

Language	**Scores**	**Name of the Test**
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

25. If there is anything else that you feel is interesting or important about your language background or language use, please comment below.

PART C

(Do you have additional questions that you feel are not included above? If yes, please write down your questions and answers on separate sheets.)

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Appendix D: Prompts for the Assignments: Graduate Instructional Methods Course – Fall 2015.

Assignment 1: Ideal Teacher-Self (Thompson, 2015)

Ideal teacher self: beginning and end of the semester – 20% (2 @ 10% each)

Reflection writing is a very useful method for one's professional development. In this course, you will write two reflections journals on the topic of "My Ideal Teacher Self." The ideal L2 self is a psychological concept (Dörnyei, 2009) which refers to the attributes that a person ideally wants to possess as a language learner (e.g. hopes, wishes or aspiration); thus, your "ideal teacher self" should be what kind of teacher you would like to become in the future. In writing your reflection, please include thoughts about the steps you will need to take to reduce the discrepancy between your current teacher self and your ideal teacher self. This is an example of informal writing, so is stylistically flexible (i.e., you may write it like a journal entry, if you wish).

Each reflection should be between 2-3 pages (between 700-100 words), be left-justified, 12 pt. Times New Roman font. On the top left-hand side of the first page of the paper, you should include your name, course number and title, semester, and name of the professor. Please number your pages. If you chose to use outside sources, please format them in APA. The first reflection (10%) is due on **week 3 September 8** and the second (10%) is due on **week 12 November 10**. In the second reflection, please include any changes in your ideal teacher self based on your experiences in this course. Each reflection is due before the start of class and should be posted on Canvas in a Word document.

The reference that gives the overview of the L2 Motivational Self System (where the idea of the ideal L2 self comes from) is posted on Canvas. Although it is not necessary to read it to complete this assignment, some of you might find it helpful. The reference is as follows:

Dörnyei, Z. (2009). The L2 motivational self system. In Z. Dörnyei and E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 9-42). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Assignment 2: Peer-Observation Reflection (Thompson, 2015)

Peer observation reflection - 10%
This assignment is designed to prepare you to respond to and reflect about the feedback you will constantly get from peers and supervisors. For this assignment, you need to find a colleague who is willing to observe one of your classes (preferably a classmate from this class). Ask him/her to focus on the **type of feedback** you give in the classroom. Once the observation is conducted, schedule a meeting with your colleague to discuss the major aspects gathered from the observation. In your observation and discussion, please utilize the following questions, along with the detailed discussion you will have regarding feedback (i.e., How was feedback to student errors provided?): 1. What were the objectives and how were they achieved? 2. How was student language elicited? 3. How were visual aids utilized? 4. If there were disciplinary issues, how were they dealt with? 5. What are other issues that you noticed and would like to discuss? On **week 8, October 13th**, you will need to submit a 2-3 page reflection on the outcomes of your post-observation meeting. In this reflection, try to consider all the aspects you found especially interesting from your peers' comments and how they might be beneficial to strengthen your teaching skills. Please upload your reflection on Canvas before the class session. A sample observation form is provided on canvas. Although this assignment is due in week 8, I strongly encourage you to start looking for partners and making your plans as soon as possible. It usually takes a while to figure out the convenient time for everyone in any collaborative task.

Recap: A classmate will observe **you** and take notes about **your teaching**. Using these notes and the discussion with your classmate (the observer), you will write a reflection about **your own class.**

Other Notes:
As you are taking notes during the observation, make sure that you write down **specific** examples of student/teacher language that will help you illustrate your points in your classmate's report. Vague reports with few examples of actual language will not receive maximum points. When writing the report, please use the vocabulary and language that we have discussed in class.

Your papers should be between 2-3 pages typed (between 700-100 words), double spaced, left-justified, 12 pt. Times New Roman font. On the top left-hand side of the first page of the paper, you should include your name, course number and title, semester, name of the professor, and class that you observed (level and subject). The paper is in the format of a typical research paper with an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. If you use any outside sources (this is not required) then they should be incorporated in APA format. In the introduction, you should indicate information about the class (level, subject, etc.) and information about the students (number, L1s, etc.). Please submit these electronically via Canvas in a Word file so that we can give you feedback.

Below is a useful reference for conducting classroom observations. I have a copy, as does the library:

Wajnryb, R. (1992). *Classroom Observation Tasks: A Resource Book for Language Teachers and Trainers.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Assignment 3: Philosophy of Teaching (Thompson, 2015)

Teaching philosophy - 10%

A teaching philosophy is a statement of your teaching beliefs and is a document that is often required for job applications. It answers the question, "How does your knowledge about language learning and teaching influence your choices in the classroom?" In answering this question**, you will need to cite specific references from the literature on language learning and teaching drawing upon materials that we read this semester in class or other sources that you find**. If you wish, you may also note how your prior experience as a language teacher or language learner influenced your choices; however, personal experience should not be the only rationale for your teaching philosophy. Note that the style of the teaching philosophy is more formal than the style of the Ideal teacher self assignment.

Your teaching philosophy should be between 2-3 pages (between 700-100 words), be left-justified, 12 pt. Times New Roman font. On the top left-hand side of the first page of the paper, you should include your name, course number and title, semester, and name of the professor. Please number your pages. The sources that you use from class or outside sources (this **IS** required) should be referenced in APA format.

This assignment is due before class on **Week 7, October 6ᵗʰ**. Please submit these electronically via Canvas in a Word file so that we can give you feedback.

There are examples of well-written teaching philosophies posted on Canvas. After you have read the examples and thought about your own philosophy, you are welcome to discuss your ideas during office hours. Unlike most other academic work, first person can be used in the teaching philosophies. However, keep the tone as academic as possible, avoiding stating, "I believe…I believe" over and over. Remember that it is possible to state your opinion using 3ʳᵈ person as well.

Assignment 4: Formal Observation Reflection (Thompson, 2015)

Formal observation reflection - 10%

I will be watching your teaching videos after you turn in your recordings, formal lesson plan, and materials on **week 11, November 3rd**. The idea is to give you as much feedback as possible in order for you to continue to excel in this demanding but fantastic world of teaching languages. As in the previous assignment, you are expected to meet with the observer (me) for about 30 minutes in order to discuss the lesson. As I will have many to watch, I will e-mail you as soon as I am ready to have the meeting, which will take place during office hours in weeks 12 and 13. This reflection includes the outcomes of that post-observation meeting. Please note that this reflection should include some sort of connection among the topics discussed in class and your actual teaching practice. In this reflection, also try to comment on how your teaching practice has changed/evolved since you were first observed at the beginning of this semester. Has it changed at all? Why or why not? What do you still lack? What are your strengths?

This assignment is due on **week 14, November 24th**. Your papers should be between 2-3 pages typed (between 700-100 words), double spaced, left-justified, 12 pt. Times New Roman font. On the top left-hand side of the first page of the paper, you should include your name, course number and title, semester, name of the professor, and your own class information (level and subject). The paper is in the format of a typical research paper with an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. If you use any outside sources (this is not required) then they should be incorporated in APA format. In the introduction, you should indicate information about the class (level, subject, etc.) and information about the students (number, L1s, etc.). Please submit these electronically via Canvas in a Word file so that I can give you feedback.

Appendix E: Philosophy of Teaching – Updated Assignment

Instructions: In this assignment you will continue to reflect upon your language learning and teaching beliefs. Specifically, you will answer the question, "How does your knowledge about language learning and teaching influence your choices in the classroom?" You may refer to or revise the assignment you submitted for the graduate instructional methods course (Fall 2015). However, please make sure to update your account by referring to prior experiences as a language learner and instructor/TA. In answering the question, you will need to include specific references from the literature on language learning and teaching to support your arguments and choices. Please note that your statement should be about 2-3 pages in length and double-spaced.

Appendix F: Ideal Language Teacher Self – Updated Assignment

Instructions: In this assignment you will write a reflection on the topic "My Ideal Language Teacher Self". You might recall this concept since it was part of one of the main assignments for your graduate instructional methods course (Fall 2015). The ideal L2 self is a psychological concept (Dörnyei, 2009) which refers to the attributes that a person ideally wants to possess as a language learner (e.g. hopes, wishes or aspirations); thus, your "ideal teacher self" should be what kind of language teacher you would like to become in the future. In writing your reflection, please include thoughts about the steps you will need to take to reduce the discrepancy between your current teacher self and your ideal teacher self.

Note: Once you have drafted your main ideas for this task, please spend some time reading the document you wrote back in 2015 and include a paragraph in which you describe how your ideal teacher self differs or remains the same compared to your first semester at this university.

For further explanation on this concept, please refer to the reference included below. Also, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Dörnyei, Z. (2009). The L2 motivational self system. In Z. Dörnyei and E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 9-42). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Appendix G: Classroom Practices Reflection

Instructions: In this task, you will be asked to record one of the lessons you teach this semester. Once you film your class, watch the video and write a 2-3 page reflection of your own lesson. In this reflection, try to focus on all the aspects, specific elements, examples, etc. that you found especially interesting from your class. Please make sure to include the following elements in your reflection:

a) A description of the class, its objectives, any aspect(s) you want to highlight or modify in your classroom, strengths and limitations, and your thoughts on how your teaching practice has changed/evolved since your first semester of teaching at this university? Has it changed at all? Why or why not?

b) A discussion, if applicable to this particular lesson, on teacher and student behavior, use of the target language, error correction, feedback, student interaction, materials used, classroom discourse, amount of teacher talk, time management, etc.

Appendix H: TAs Initial Interview Protocol

GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When and why did you choose to become a language teacher/TA? Any role models? Any anti-role models? Briefly describe your teaching experiences.

    a. Did you have any reservations? Please explain.

2. How did you learn what the university/department expected from you as a TA?

3. What did you think it meant to be a language teacher before you started to work as a TA?

    a. Has your understanding of what it means to be a language teacher changed during your time at this institution? Please explain.

    b. How have your prior experiences (teacher education program, other teaching experiences) affected your perceptions of teaching? What specific aspects of the program (courses, practicum, etc.) influenced your perceptions?

    c. Throughout education there are 'turning points' in everyone's careers. Please take a moment to think about all of your education and tell me about some turning points for you.

4. How would you describe the transition you experienced from being a language learner to becoming a language instructor? Was it easy? Why or why not? Did your experiences as a learner help in any way your teaching? Please provide examples.

5. In your opinion, to what extent does being multilingual support language teaching? (This question might not apply to all participants).

6. What does it mean for you to teach a language that is not your native one? (This question might not apply to all participants)

7. How do you describe your ideal teacher self? Note: Provide enough time for participants to read the version of the ideal teacher self reflection that they wrote in the Fall 2015. How does this representation differ from the one you created in the Fall 2015?

8. After spending almost two years at this university, how prepared do you feel to be hired as a full-time language instructor?

    a. Are you confident with your lesson planning skills? Please explain why.

        • How about your ability to motivate students to speak in the target language. Can you give an example?

        • How about your ability to use different approaches and techniques in your lessons?

    b. Are you confident with providing effective feedback to your students? Please explain why and provide an example.

9. What do you think has helped you the most with regards to teaching?

10. What is your strongest point as language instructor? What are you looking forward to improve?

11. What are some challenges you face or have faced in the classroom? How do/did you overcome them? Please explain.

12. How would you describe yourself as a language teacher now? How do you envision yourself in a couple of years? Do you see teaching in your future?

Appendix I: TAs End of the Semester Interview Protocol

GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

As you reflect on your experience during your last semester teaching at this university:

1. What was helpful in your development as TA? Please provide examples (i.e., section meetings, conversations with other TAs, etc.)

2. What components of the TA training/workshop were most helpful for your development as foreign language instructor? What components were not particularly helpful?

3. What components of the methods course you took in your first semester were most helpful for your development as foreign language instructor? What components were not particularly helpful?

4. How have your views about language teaching changed since your first day of teaching? Please explain.

5. How have they remained the same? Please explain.

6. Can you tell me of any specific events that helped to shape you as a language TA this semester?

7. How prepared do you feel to be a language instructor?

8. How would you describe yourself as a language teacher now? Strengths? Aspects to improve?

9. How do you describe your ideal teacher self? Any changes since the last interview (early spring 2017 semester)?

10. How do you evaluate the institutional support from faculty and/or supervisors?

11. As TAs, we often have to face various challenges/issues both inside and outside the classroom. How do/did you overcome them? Please explain – provide examples if possible.

12. What kind of support/workshops would you have liked to have during your time here at this university?

13. What suggestions would you make for the department to enhance the development of a teacher-self among language TAs?

14. Is there anything you would like to add about your own teacher self-development or about teaching at this institution?

Appendix J: Departmental Observation Rubric (Thompson, 2015)

OBSERVATION RUBRIC (WLE form)

Topic	Comment
Course opening and closing	
Target language use/providing input	
Feedback/informal assessment/comprehension check	
Treatment of grammar (teaching it other than teacher-fronted and explicitly)	
Answering clarification questions	
Instructions/wait time	
Use of authentic materials/blackboard/book	
Student output production	
Other	

Summative comments/suggestions for the future.

Appendix K: Piloting Phase - Sample Analysis

        The following sample pilot analysis represents phase 0 of the data analysis. It focused on the first ideal teacher selves' reflection that "Andrea" (pseudonym) wrote during her graduate instructional methods course. It is important to note that Andrea is not one of the participants of the study. Thus, the piloting phase was useful to update the interview protocol. Additionally, the themes that emerged from the pilot analysis were compared with the themes that emerged from the study participants. First, a brief biographical sketch is presented, followed by a discussion of her ideal language teacher self.

Andrea

        Andrea was born in a southeastern country in Europe. She has lived in Germany, France, Spain, and Chile. These experiences allowed her to become fluent in several languages, including German, French, Romanian, Russian, and Spanish. Andrea completed her undergraduate studies in Germany and her graduate studies in both France and the US. Interestingly, none of these experiences had to do with pedagogy or language acquisition. She specialized in international management and has gained extensive experience as program consultant, coordinator, and director of several marketing agencies. After working as a program director in Chile for 4 years, Andrea decided to start a Master of Arts in French. Her interest in and enthusiasm for both French literature and culture made Andrea choose a different job path for the following two years. She had then the opportunity to teach French at the university where she was pursuing her Master program. Although Andrea had never taught French before, she quickly adjusted to the dynamics of the institution and started to reflect on what it is needed to be a language teacher.

The following paragraphs contain a preliminary analysis of the first ideal teacher selves'

reflection created by Andrea during fall 2015. It is an initial attempt to answer the first research

question: What are the initial expectations, hopes, fears, and desires of TAs with regards to the

teaching profession? Through open coding (Merriam, 2009), preliminary conceptual labels and

categories from the text were identified. At this stage, notations next to the data that the

researcher found as potentially relevant for answering the first research question were made.

After actively engaging with these categories and reflecting on their relationship with the

existing literature on ideal language teacher selves, six potential themes were identified. The

initial themes found in this first reflection help noting how Andrea's ideal language teacher self

was represented by her during the first semester. At that particular point in time, Andrea

envisioned herself as a teacher who: 1) provides constant guidance for students; 2) is a source of

inspiration; 3) is able to empower students' vision on language learning; 4) acknowledges

potential challenges in the profession; 5) prepares engaging lessons; 5) takes into consideration

students' affective variables; and 7) is flexible. It is important to note that these themes evolved

once more data was analyzed and more theoretical concepts were incorporated into the

discussion.

Andrea initiates her ideal teacher self reflection with a quote from Antoine de Saint-

Exupéry, which she later connects to her discussion.

EXCERPT 1

>«Quand tu veux construire un bateau, ne commence pas par rassembler du bois, couper

>des planches et distribuer du travail, mais réveille au sein des hommes le désir de la mer

>grande et large.» *("If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect*

wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless

immensity of the sea.")

This quote provides an initial idea of some elements she might consider crucial for

teachers. One of them is that teachers need to provide **constant guidance** for students so they can

endure the long and extenuating road ahead their learning process. Although this element is not

explicitly stated in the quote, Andrea develops this idea further at a later excerpt. It is relevant to

note that this is a preliminary interpretation by the researcher and therefore needs to be

corroborated by Andrea.

> EXCERPT 2
>
> The beauty of teaching is this physical and cognitive space provided by the classroom, where you as a teacher can inspire your students to long for more, to draw a vision in their minds that would guide them towards a greater self. My class is only a vehicle to that and I am but a driver. As long as I am able to see it and convey this inspiring and therefore empowering vision to my students repetitively, the impact, I believe can be unmeasurably great.

Interestingly, Andrea refers to her language class as a "vehicle" to help students develop

a vision to reach a greater self and she sees herself as the "driver" whose influence on the

students could be immense. Although the previous excerpt does not explicitly address the

language classroom, but the classroom as a whole, this excerpt provides multiple concepts that

are worth analyzing. First, the concept of **inspiration** is internalized in Andrea's discourse,

possibly emphasizing the teachers' need to be role models for students on a daily basis and to

help them "long for more" through their learning process. She develops her idea better by stating

at a later excerpt that "we are gregarious creatures and emulate each other", showing that her

ideal teacher is someone who can serve as a role model. Second, Andrea suggests that teachers

are key factors to empower students' *vision*. Andrea believes that "as long as she is "able to see it

and convey it [vision] repetitively", her impact on students' vision can be significant. This

comment aligns with Dörnyei's idea of the powerful impact of an individual's ability to envision herself as a successful learner. In this particular case, Andrea highlights the relevance of vision for both teachers and students and how it can strengthen the motivation to reach their goals. The concept of *vision* appears in Andrea's reflection in multiple occasions throughout her reflection. As a matter of fact, she explicitly mentions that her ideal teacher self is represented by a teacher who is "able to create this vision in students' minds through a dynamic and interactive learning environment". Although this idea remains somewhat abstract and lacks development at times, Andrea implies that students who have a clear vision or clear future representations as language speakers might get better results when learning a language.

Early in her discussion, Andrea also starts to posit several questions that illustrate *potential challenges* that she is experiencing or will experience throughout her teaching trajectory.

EXCERPT 3

The biggest challenge for me is to understand how to relate every single student with this "endless immensity of the sea" vision. How to match their own particular backgrounds with where I want them to go and what I want them to learn, i.e. my teaching goal and methods? How do I continue motivating them through the semester to build this boat by providing more and more interesting stories about the endless immensity of the sea? For me, the sea is a metaphor for language fluency, ability to express your feelings, desires, understanding of art in form of movies, music, architecture and so on within the frame of a particular language I am teaching.
In the previous excerpt, Andrea is asking multiple questions concerning individual differences, teaching goals, methods, motivational strategies, and language proficiency. These questions, although they remain unanswered for Andrea at this moment, show how she is adjusting to and reflecting on her new experience as language teaching assistant. Particularly, she emphasizes the need to motivate students by providing interesting stories (perhaps referring to successful learning experiences) that allow them to navigate through the "endless immensity of

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the sea". Through the metaphor of language as a sea, Andrea attempts to include all the elements

that need to be considered when learning and teaching a language and possibly suggest that these

processes, although long and exhausting at times, are worth in the long run. In fact, such

elements and/or factors are boundless as the sea but are rewarding when an individual is able to

communicate in a target language.

EXCERPT 4

> The challenge for my ideal teacher self is, on the one hand to design an entertaining and
> on the other hand, learning rich environment by optimizing the time invested into the
> classroom preparation. The crucial question is how to do it? Experience that you build
> through years of teaching is of course the key that ultimately reduces the amount of time
> dedicated to prepare a high quality class.

Andrea's ideal teacher self is also characterized as a teacher who is able to "design an

entertaining and rich environment by optimizing the time invested into class preparation." Here

one can notice a major challenge for novice teachers and therefore, one of Andrea's main

concerns: the ability to plan *engaging lessons* without spending endless hours of preparation. In

this regard, Andrea expresses that gaining experience in the teaching field is what will ultimately

reduce the "amount of time dedicated to prepare a high quality class." Thus, Andrea's image of

her preparing an entertaining class and providing an effective learning environment constitute a

powerful motivator for her to keep increasing her teaching experiences.

In her reflection on her ideal language teacher self, Andrea also discusses the importance

of taking into consideration *students' affective variables* and student-teacher relationships.

According to her, "a good teacher is an accessible teacher, which means that a student can come

up and talk to him/her at any time". Although she acknowledges the importance of "teacher-

student boundaries", she believes that a teacher should always be available and have open doors,

which she describes as "unnecessary and counterproductive iron curtain". This idea suggests that

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her ideal teacher self is also a teacher who is always "there" for her students and who takes into

consideration the students' emotions: "if the teacher is inaccessible or distant, the student will

not create a connection and therefore an engagement with him/her and with the language he/she

is teaching." In other words, the students will feel left alone and might not respond positively

towards learning the target language. She goes on by hypothesizing that students will "learn and

become fluent in the target language of an accessible teacher rather than a distant one".

Andrea also states that her ideal teacher self is also driven by the concept of *flexibility*.

As a matter of fact, she characterizes a good teacher as someone who can adjust to the classroom

conditions/challenges and who can take immediate action when things are not working well.

EXCERPT 5

It doesn't matter how much time you spend preparing your class, if the way you want to teach it, doesn't work, change it immediately. Align it to your class' needs, recognize what are the association and appealing patterns of your students and try to adhere the language learning unto them.

The use of the imperative form of the verbs 'change' and 'align' puts emphasis on the

need to respond immediately to the challenges that one can experience in the language

classroom. Andrea's way of speaking about change suggest that she is determined to help

students succeed by adjusting her classroom practices to her students' needs.

EXCERPT 6

An ideal teacher finds something that his/her students strongly relate to and builds their learning experience around it. Learning does not have to equal suffering, learning should equal happiness and it is my task as a teacher to be able to design learning environment for the students so that they get into this "flow" mode of language learning.

The idea of building the students' learning experiences around things that students enjoy

or relate to can be associated with Andrea's desire to be flexible. Andrea concludes her reflection

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by incorporating Csikszentmihalyi's (2009) concept of "flow", which refers to a subjective state of concentration that allows for an intense experiential involvement in and enjoyment of an activity. Andrea connects this concept to her discussion by referring to the creation of an environment in which students feel comfortable and in which learning and happiness are synonyms. Such conclusion is closely related to Andrea's former discussion of her ideal teacher self as someone who creates a dynamic and interactive environment. Andrea's image of her being successful at creating this type of environment will eventually lead her to take the necessary measures to reach her goal.

Andrea's ideal teacher self reflection illustrates several ideas with regards to language teaching. She envisions herself as someone who helps her students to create the vision. By being a source of inspiration, she believes she will help students succeed in their learning process. Furthermore, Andrea recognizes multiple challenges that teachers might face in the profession but she admits to be willing to face these challenges and adjust to any adverse situation she encounters. In fact, she seems to be determined to master the design of an "entertaining and rich environment" in which students feel comfortable, constantly supported, and included. Although it is not clear at this point how such environment looks like for her, it is the fact that she initiated a very stimulating discussion about what it entails to be a language teacher.