Making Our Way toward Teacher Education Programs in the Slavic Languages

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> "As a teacher, Pnin was far from being able to compete with those stupendous Russian ladies, scattered all over academic America, who, without having had any formal training at all, manage somehow, by dint of intuition, loquacity, and a kind of maternal bounce, to infuse a magic knowledge of their difficult and beautiful tongue into a group of innocent-eyed students in an atmosphere of Mother Volga songs, red caviar, and tea...."—V. Nabokov, *Pnin*

Before commenting on the papers in this section, it is instructive to look back at the main concerns that engaged our profession at the beginning of the 1990s. Two leitmotifs that ran throughout the papers presented at the AATSEEL's Vision 2020 Forum in 1991 were the utter inadequacy, from every standpoint, of textbooks for the Slavic languages and the lack of professional (i.e., pedagogical/SLA) training for future teachers in our field (Cuykendall and Parrott 1992: Sect. 3). About the first concern, it is sufficient to say that the 1990s have seen the publication of a flood of new Russian textbooks that in many ways make up for the past years of drought. Although seven years have not effected the same degree of change in professional training, the papers in this volume show that real progress is being made in professionalizing the teaching of Slavic languages and cultures and in preparing future teachers. Let us hope that in the twenty-first century Russian language teachers, whatever their intuition, loquacity and bounce, will go into their classrooms supported primarily by a broad professional education.

In addition to the contributions to this volume, there are several other indicators of growing change in our graduate programs. In the past 10 years a significant number of graduate departments (U of Wisconsin-Madison, U of Texas-Austin, U of Kansas, Indiana U, U of Michigan, Ohio State U) have searched for full-time tenure-track faculty in the area of Slavic language program direction; others (Brown, U of Washington, U of Southern California, U of Illinois-Champaign-Urbana) have searched for program coordinators at the

rank of lecturer. While not all of these positions address the issue of teacher training to the same extent, most graduate programs in Slavic now at least have someone "minding the language program store" (James 1997: 5) (a vital matter in an age of declining enrollments). Other programs (Bryn Mawr, SUNY Stony Brook) have begun to offer graduate degree programs focusing on Second Language Acquisition in the context of Russian and other Slavic Languages. Furthermore, with the introduction of peer review in 1996, presentations in language pedagogy and SLA research have claimed a more prominent place at the annual AATSEEL conferences. These developments, I think, give us cause for optimism about the future of Slavic pedagogy.

Before extending the discussions presented in the papers in this section and making recommendations for the future, we must clarify even more forcefully than Rifkin does the distinction between teacher training and teacher education. We need to recognize that teacher preparation is a vastly more broad and more complicated undertaking than merely instilling a set of classroom behaviors in a new graduate student teaching assistant (Larsen-Freeman 1983, 1990). The ample literature on teacher education in ESL and the more commonly taught languages indicates that the language teacher's roles are being redefined: he/she is a thinker and classroom decision-maker (Freeman 1991; Pica 1994; Richards 1994), a reflective agent of student learning (Kinginger 1995; Tedick and Walker 1994), a resource person and architect in the learner-centered classroom (Lee and VanPatten 1995: 12–16), a promoter of cultural literacy in the target language (Mueller, Goutal, Herot, and Chessid 1992), and an investigator into the ways of teaching and learning second languages (Larsen-Freeman 1990). Recognition of these multiple roles has important implications for those attempting to incorporate a real teacher education track into graduate programs in Slavic around the country, since such education programs will perforce occupy more than an incidental part of a graduate student's time and course work. Furthermore, departments will need to invest more than a single faculty position in the area of language pedagogy if they hope to create the intellectual environment to support a broader teacher education program. These factors, together with the decline in graduate enrollments in Slavic language programs, suggest that widespread initiatives to replace limited teacher training programs with full-scale programs in teacher education may not be forthcoming. Nevertheless, the goal of creating such teacher training programs is worthy and, indeed, vital since, as Byrnes points out, improved teaching may be one way for us to retain students.

The question then becomes: where can departments or new teachers turn to find specialists and mentors for establishing a program in Slavic language teacher education if their own programs cannot support such a seeming "luxury"? The most promising direction for Slavic Departments that want to offer a

broader program of teacher education (whether or not it will lead to a Slavic-based SLA dissertation) is to look for institutional allies and cross-institutional partners. Efforts in this direction require intensive investment to overcome the inertia that keeps faculty members isolated from another by artificially drawn departmental boundaries. Such investment may be quite fruitful, especially now, when many large universities are paying increased attention to the quality of teaching throughout their campuses (Wilson 1998; Cage 1996; Pierce 1998; Gibbs 1995). Whatever the motives for this new emphasis, fledgling teacher education programs in the LCTLs should indeed take advantage of it to expand the educational possibilities for beginning teachers.[1] In addition, by reaching out to other units in our institutions, the LCTLs can learn from both the successes and failures of teacher education programs for the more commonly taught languages. Tedick and Walker (1994) describe the many kinds of institutional pitfalls and program fragmentation that beginning LCTL teacher education programs will want to avoid.

In the search for partners in this kind of cross-institutional program building, Slavic Departments might seek to establish relations with some programs for the more commonly taught languages (perhaps with the language coordinators in French or German, perhaps with the ESL or foreign language specialist in the School of Education, perhaps with an applied linguist from a Linguistics Department). Furthermore, they should not neglect to develop ties to programs for teaching other LCT languages, such as Hebrew, Arabic, Modern Greek and Hindi. In some ways the teaching of the LCT Slavic languages (and to some extent Russian) has much in common with the teaching of these languages: the student population in these courses is drawn to a large degree from heritage speakers. Moreover, Russian and the other Slavic languages share with these other LCTLs similar tasks in teaching beginners the languages' alphabets and sound systems, and in dealing with the low-level processing problems (i.e., misreading graphemes) that learners will continue to face in developing reading and writing skills. Finally, in teaching these target languages, we are presenting cultures that are (at times) highly conscious of the distinctions between native

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[1] The changes in the past few years at my own institution are indicative of a national trend. In response to perceived problems with the quality of undergraduate education, the University established a Center for Teaching Excellence (with resources for both engaged teachers as well as "struggling" teachers), an award program for outstanding teachers (a $5,000 prize given to 20 faculty members yearly), as well as other efforts (new faculty receive personal copies of several books on effective teaching at the college level). For beginning teaching assistants, the University has started institution-wide workshops and strongly encourages the development of ongoing training at the department level.

and non-native traditions, and whose implicit cultural rules often stand in stark relief to the "universals" that American students sometimes assume exist.

To begin building such cross-institutional connections, it might be quite helpful for departments to establish an on-going forum where issues of teaching and learning languages can be discussed. This forum might involve informal discussion times (perhaps brown bag lunches), regular workshops on instructional techniques or theoretical concerns, or even a lecture series on teaching and learning languages. The initiative for these ventures might come from a single department, or they might be organized and publicized through a center or committee for languages (perhaps even by the media lab). These activities will give departments an indication of the potential for building further interdepartmental programs for the education of LCTL teachers.

While so far I have discussed the possibility of departments building programs with colleagues at their home institutions, we should also seriously consider whether Slavic, as a profession, cannot establish some on-going national programs for the education of language teachers. I envision groups of regional institutions working in consortia to create summer teacher education workshops. These workshops could provide their participants with a theoretical introduction to language learning and teaching, practical opportunities to try out and observe teaching methods and activities, an overview of research methodologies in second language acquisition, and an opportunity to continue developing their own language skills. The enrollment for these summer workshops would consist of graduate students and junior faculty in departments of Slavic languages, as well as current and future high school teachers of Slavic languages, and the optimal settings for such programs would be institutions that host a variety of summer courses in the Slavic languages. Such programs would have to be supported (at least initially) by external grants, although it would be important to build in mechanisms for their continued funding. Our field is certainly not without models for such summer teacher education institutes (U of Iowa and the CORLAC programs), although they have not been able to sustain themselves beyond the end of their grant funding. Were a consortium of institutions able to create an on-going summer program, it could lead to a formal certification process for new teachers.

Teacher as Learner

Whether or not institutions can make a commitment to a teacher education track, one of the most important ideas that they can inculcate in their beginning teachers (whether graduate teaching assistants or faculty) is that teaching is all about learning. Rifkin is quite right in suggesting that teachers need to learn to be open to new ways of teaching, and that they need to learn that their students

are different from them. I would like to suggest a few more areas where new (and experienced) teachers can learn.

First, new teachers need to be made conscious of the fact that teaching offers them an opportunity to work on their own language development. The need to provide correct models of language use and corrective feedback to students can help teachers to develop a more reliable internal monitor, which is certainly a key component for achieving higher levels of language proficiency.[2] Teaching can be an opportunity for new teachers to broaden their vocabulary in unfamiliar content and grammatical realms and to become comfortable talking in longer units of speech as they provide their students with language input.

Second, new teachers must learn to observe and analyze classroom dynamics. They need to be sensitive monitors of their own actions and learners' reactions when giving students input and asking them to produce meaningful utterances in the target language. They need to learn to reflect on classroom processes, evaluating which ones produce a desired communicative exchange, which ones foster communication patterns consistent with the target language culture, and which ones allow for the most appropriate kinds of feedback and correction.

Third, they need to acquire the "pedagogical content knowledge" (Freeman 1991; Shulman 1987, 1986) of the language they are teaching. They need to learn what topics to teach, in what sequence, and what learners find difficult at different stages of their programs. Sometimes pedagogical content knowledge may need to be far-reaching, including questions of curriculum design and the sequencing of major aspects of cultural and linguistic content, as Lauersdorf demonstrates for many LCTL Slavic languages. New (and experienced) teachers need to learn about the findings of ongoing research in SLA and applied linguistics and to consider how the awareness of these findings can and needs to be woven into the fabric of their classrooms.

The notion that teaching is all about learning has further implications. Beginning (and experienced) teachers need to learn to balance their own agen-

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[2] This is especially important for beginning teachers of Slavic languages. With years of testing data from Russian, we know that most students completing a BA program in Russian have speaking skills somewhere in the Intermediate range. With a semester or a year of study abroad some students may reach the advanced level of speaking proficiency, although study abroad is no automatic guarantee of this. Thus, we can expect that most students entering US graduate programs in Slavic from their undergraduate study of the language will still be in the intermediate range. When students with these kinds of language skills begin to teach, it is important to give them the kind of program support to improve their own language skills while teaching. The curriculum of graduate programs in Slavic needs to include increased opportunities for new graduate students and new teachers to continue to improve their language skills.

das as teachers with their learners' progress, needs and goals. As Rifkin notes, language teachers need to recognize that their students do not necessarily resemble them, nor do they bear particular resemblance to each other in their goals, priorities, and ways of learning. The ultimate goal of effective language teaching is that students become autonomous participants in the target language speech community. To achieve this result, we need to foster a learner-centered classroom and to inculcate the value of independence and extramural language practice from the very beginning of the learners' language study.

Technology and Language Teacher Education

Byrnes closes her essay by suggesting that teachers of Slavic languages need to be prepared to embrace technology, since distance learning may be one way to save threatened programs. While that is one powerful motivation, there are many other reasons for future language teachers to reach out to technology. The most obvious reason (although the least intellectually justifiable) was stated by Armstrong and Yetter-Vassot: "Instead of teaching foreign languages with the techniques and technology that were successful in the mid-twentieth century, why not take advantage of the powerful and fascinating tools that new technology makes available to us to improve foreign language teaching in the twenty-first century?"(1994: 481). Technology in all its variety is already here, and its simplest manifestations (e.g., electronic mail) have already radically altered communication, both inside and outside the academy. Language teachers quite simply cannot afford to ignore the devices that facilitate what we often claim to be teaching in our classrooms, i.e., communication.

Since the bibliographic essays at the end of this volume survey the available resources for learning Slavic languages, I will comment only on a few technological resources that will be of value to beginning teachers. New teachers should definitely become acquainted with electronic listservs for their language(s) or world area(s). For Slavic teachers, I would recommend subscribing to the SEELANGS list (sponsored by AATSEEL), the LCTL list (for Less Commonly Taught Languages, sponsored by the Center for Advanced Research in Language Acquisition at the University of Minnesota) and the FLTEACH list (for broad discussions of issues of interest to foreign language educators).[3] These electronic communities can help new teachers not to feel isolated, and they are useful places for soliciting advice or getting the answer to a question when there are no other colleagues immediately available for consultation. New teachers should also become acquainted with some major web-

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[3] To subscribe to these listservs, follow the instructions on the following web sites: SEELANGS (<http://members.home.net/lists/seelangs>); LCTL (<http://carla.acad. umn.edu/LCTL>); and FLTEACH (<http://www.cortland.edu/ flteach/flteach.html>).

sites that can keep them up to date with news of the Slavic profession, such as the AATSEEL homepage at: <http://clover.slavic.pitt.edu/~aatseel>. There are a number of databases accessible on the web that list both paper and electronic materials for teaching and testing many commonly and less commonly taught languages (International Association of Learning Laboratories Software Database at <http://dante.dartmouth.edu/fldb>; CARLA's LCTL database at <http://carla.acad.umn.edu/LCTL>; Center for Applied Linguistics at <http:// www.cal.org>). These sites are just a few of the many interesting and helpful electronic resources available on the web for language teachers. We can hope that during the next ten years many more electronic resources, targeted specifically at new teachers of Slavic languages, will come on line to assist in the professional development of teachers in our field. The World Wide Web would be an excellent forum for departments who have taken the plunge to develop full teacher education programs in the LCTLs to disseminate information on the successes (and setbacks) that they have experienced in this move as well as the materials that they have developed for their new program.

Another resource for new teachers that merits attention is Isabel Borras' forthcoming multimedia CD-Rom *Theory, Practice, Materials: Resources for FL Teacher Training*. This program gives the user an introduction to the theory of language teaching with large selections of important SLA texts and articles, samples of lesson plans and the thinking behind them, and video clips of classes actually carrying out the planned activities. Beginning teachers can observe the whole process of planning and teaching a lesson, and although this resource uses Spanish examples, its demonstrations and clips from actual classroom practice can be enormously useful to teachers of other languages.

While technology can make excellent resources available to the beginning teacher, and teacher education programs will probably encourage their participants to learn about specific programs and try them out in their classes, it is very important that an education program not neglect to give teachers paradigms for critically evaluating new technological resources. The attractiveness of a multimedia program's surface appearance can often keep the user from seeing that the "visually sophisticated and appealing screen may... be nothing more than a form of traditional multiple-choice drill" (Chiquito, Meskill Renjilan-Burgy 1997: 50). Kassen and Higgins have noted the importance of developing in teachers "the critical skills to use technology effectively" (1997: 264). These skills must include learning to recognize the fit (or disjunction) between the teacher's pedagogical goals and the technology's usually implicit goals and pedagogical assumptions. Evaluating new technologies makes two intense demands on new teachers: that they explicitly articulate their own pedagogical goals, and that they understand the technology

well enough to recognize whether it matches those objectives. New teachers may feel overwhelmed by these two demands; teacher education programs can at least spend time explicitly discussing pedagogical goals, so that when new teachers come to evaluate technology they can concentrate on analyzing the application's pedagogy.[4] Developing these critical assessment skills is no small matter, since the ultimate success of technology in the language classroom will depend on the appropriate choice of media for the teacher's specific message. While I am not as pessimistic as Schwartz (who postulates that the proliferation of poor Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) materials may cause CALL "to meet the same fate as language laboratories of the 1950s and 60s" (534)), it is important that pedagogically-savvy FL teachers observe and research how technology changes student learning so that they can influence the development of new more pedagogically-sound software. Fortunately, there are now technological resources to help teachers assess the qualities of CALL materials; beginning teachers (and software developers as well) would do well to examine the taxonomy of evaluation criteria developed by the National Foreign Language Resource Center at the University of Hawaii-Manoa (<http://nts.lll.hawaii.edu/ flmedia>).

Conclusion

In these papers and my response to them, there are continual reminders that the teachers of Slavic languages can learn much from the experience of teacher education programs in the more commonly taught languages. While some may bristle, thinking this a recommendation that Slavic "apprentice itself" to these languages, these papers by no means promote a simplistic *sklonenie na naši nravy*, as 18th-century Russian literature called its approach to russianizing foreign works. Slavic can benefit from intelligently adapting the best of teacher education models from the more commonly taught languages. Russian literary history, after all, shows that adaptation can foster remarkably creative native traditions: even the worst of Russia's 18th century literary imitators contributed to the environment that ultimately produced Pushkin.

In the final analysis, the direction of the future professional development of language teachers in Slavic remains open. Will departments spend the necessary time and energy to establish programs for teacher education? Will enrollments remain stable for a sufficiently long period so that programs that have invested in teacher education can see them become well established? Will fac-

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[4] Chaput (1990) argues quite convincingly that any program that trains new instructors needs to begin with an explicit discussion of program and instructional goals. Such a discussion at the beginning of a training or education program is one way to provide beginning teachers with an effective paradigm that can guide their subsequent critical decisions about teaching methods, classroom procedures, texts, and software applications.

ulty and beginning teachers realize the importance of professional education so that it can claim a reasonable place in graduate programs? Are our universities serious enough about quality teaching that the standard system of university rewards (salary raises, tenure, promotion, sabbatical leave) will not exclude faculty who devote their time to teacher education? While answers to these questions may not be swift in coming, let us follow Byrnes, "into the looking glass brightly."

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