Community of Practice (CoP): Exploring a Principled Teacher Training Program in Addressing New Spanish Graduate Teaching Assistants' (TAs) Preparation

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative action research study was to explore improving first semester training practices for graduate teaching assistants (TAs) in the Spanish program at Arizona State University's (ASU) Tempe Campus. Adding to research on TA training in higher education, a communities of practice (CoP) framework was combined with concrete suggestions on cultivating CoPs to implement a two-part CoP principled training program intervention. Specifically, a goal of the intervention was to address the problem of practice of improving first semester TA lesson planning, communicative language teaching, classroom management, and learning management system usage. Data was collected from interviews, surveys, journals, and training activities from five new TAs who teach Spanish. Data analysis included a multi-cycle qualitative coding process to examine participants' novice-expert positionalities and the presence of core features of a CoP. Results suggest that regardless of previous experiences, TAs need time to assimilate to the ASU culture, standards, and community. Furthermore, the CoP principled training program showed instances of the necessary core features of a CoP such as joint enterprise and mutual engagement, but also a need for continued community development to address dysfunctions. Implications for these findings point to possible positive effects of continued training through a CoP framework, and a need for reorganization of training practices to allow TAs to legitimately participate in training activities supported by community coordinators as they adjust to the ASU context before beginning their in-service teaching.

Keywords: Community of Practice, graduate teaching assistant, Higher Education, training, novice-expert

DEDICATION

The achievements of an individual are never truly their own as countless experiences and people influence the end outcome. First, and foremost, I would not be where I am today without the tireless efforts of my mother, who taught me to work hard and push the boundaries of what was possible. We came from humble beginnings, yet she always found a way to support my educational and athletic endeavors. Without her, I would not have had the opportunity to even begin this dissertation, let alone pursue a post-secondary degree. Like my mother, my late grandmother was always there for me, and was a person of unimaginable character. When things were tough, she helped to teach me what it meant to tackle a problem and keep moving forward, all while demonstrating strong values. Without her, I would have never known what it meant to be a good person. Finally, to all my teaching colleagues and graduate teaching assistants, both past and present, but especially those of you who were involved in this action research study. Without you, I would not have learned all that I have, nor seen that there is so much more to learn. Without you, this dissertation would not have been even remotely possible, not because the topic concerns you, but rather because part of the love I have for teaching comes from the potential and greatness I see in each and even one of you. Thank you, to each one of you, for helping me find my place and path in life.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Definition
1. ACTFL	American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages
2. AR	action research
3. ASU	Arizona State University
4. AZLA	Arizona Language Association
5. CAQDAS	computer-assisted qualitative data analysis
6. CLT	communicative language teaching
7. CM	classroom management
8. CoP	community of practice
9. IRB	Institutional Review Board
10. JE	joint enterprise
11. KMb	knowledge mobilization
12. LMS	learning mangagement system
13. LPC	language program coordinator
14. LPD	language program director
15. LPP	legitmate peripheral participation
16. ME	mutual engagement
17. MLFTC	Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College
18. NCATE	National Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages
19. PoP	problem of practice
20. RQ	research question
21. SILC	School of International Letters and Cultures

Abbreviation	Definition
22. SR	shared repetoire
23. TA	graduate teaching assistant

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In today's post-secondary educational landscape, survey data shows approximately 136,820 individuals employed as graduate teaching assistants (TAs) across various fields of study (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). Using graduate students to impart a portion or entirety of a class has become commonplace at the university level, especially in foreign language courses, with over half (57.4%) of first-year courses at doctoral granting institutions being taught by TAs (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Language, 2007). Studies have shown that adequately preparing graduate students to teach is essential to overall language program effectiveness, with important repercussions for teaching large numbers of students, major/minor recruitment, and developing future K-12 and postsecondary teaching professionals (Boman, 2013; Huhn, 2012; Park, 2004). With so many TAs teaching languages in this context with varied levels of preparation and experience, one of the main concerns has been the effectiveness of the training programs utilized (Allen & Negueruela-Azarola, 2010). Specifically, Allen & Negueruela-Azarola (2010) highlight a need to move away from a "one-size-fits-all" professional development model to incorporate models of training that reflect the diversity of individuals working in the TA role (p. 388).

Before considering the training of TAs to prepare them to teach foreign languages, foreign language teacher development, in general, has been a topic of interest since the founding of the *Modern Language Journal*—a journal dedicated to foreign language teaching and learning—in 1916 (Schulz, 2000). Schulz synthesized research from *Modern Language Journal* publications from 1916-2000, and concluded that "our

progress (i.e. any documented, measurable impact on quality, quantity or both) in the area of teacher development has been disappointingly small" (2000, p. 516). Despite the lack of progress and the recurrence of the same questions as at the beginning of the previous century, Schulz (2000) argues there are three areas that future researchers will be able to use to make long-lasting impacts on the development of foreign language teachers: the need for extended study abroad for future teachers, the need for collaborative approaches in teacher development, and the need for researching and defining certification and licensing of foreign language teachers. Furthermore, Schulz (2000) states there is "no question regarding the urgent need for valid, generalizable, and replicable studies on teacher behaviors and teacher effectiveness" (p. 518). The present research study aims to contribute to research on collaborative approaches in teacher development through the implementation of a community of practice (CoP) principled training program that will be introduced later in the chapter.

When discussing language program effectiveness, in general, and secondary teacher certification, Huhn (2012) cites the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages' (ACTFL) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education's (NCATE) Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers (ACTFL, 2002) as a possible framework for establishing effective and contemporary teacher preparation curricula at the post-secondary level. ACTFL's standards, updated in 2013, set a precedent for defining program effectiveness at the secondary level and offer suggestions that include six standards spread across four principles: the learner and learning, content, instructional practice, and professional responsibility (Abbot, 2013). Despite these possibilities, defined national standards do not currently exist at the

postsecondary level for TA training and university faculty in foreign language education (Huhn, 2012, p. 175). While having overly structured training programs for TAs limits training program effectiveness, creating guidelines for effective TA training will aid language programs as they navigate the obstacles to enhancing professional development opportunities (Allen & Negueruela-Azarola, 2010).

Exploring TA training program effectiveness in Canada, Boman (2013) studied 108 TAs in varied fields in a Canadian university over a two-month period and found that generally TAs' self-efficacy and public speaking apprehension benefited from training interventions. As an intervention, Boman (2013) offered several two-and-a-half day training workshops during the two-month period to allow for TA flexibility. The results from pre/post-test assessments and observations, suggested that all TAs, regardless of being Canadian or international, benefited from the treatment period. Boman (2013) concluded that TAs have the potential to impact student learning in profound ways, and that future research is key to contributing to the continual development of TAs as effective teachers.

TAs, in general, have varied tasks and responsibilities depending on their local context that range from assisting a faculty member in their teaching duties to essentially teaching the entire course as the lead instructor. Park (2004) synthesized published research on the important, yet unique role TAs play as both part-time faculty and full-time students in the United States, identifying three main areas of emphasis: practical, personal, and professional development issues. Within the three categories, the author highlights issues of communication, issues of identity, and the ambiguity of the TA role as some of the items found in the literature regarding each of the categories respectively.

Moreover, with regard to professional development, the author posits the need for appropriate training programs, "both to optimize their effectiveness as teachers today and to prepare them to serve effectively as professors tomorrow" (Park, 2004, p. 354). Park (2004) suggests foreign language programs can create effective training of TAs through carefully planned training programs, and supports teaching as a skill learned and continually improved through practice. The findings of Boman (2013), Huhn (2012), and Park (2004) point to a need for further research into the effectiveness of post-secondary teaching preparation programs for graduate students in foreign languages.

With a brief introduction to the larger context of TA training, the following sections of Chapter 1 will detail the situational context of the present action research (AR) study, including an overview of TA responsibilities and expectations in the language teaching program in my context. Furthermore, I will present my role in the research and my positionality statement. Afterwards, I will summarize the previous cycles of research that led to the construction and implementation of the research design and intervention used in the present study. Then, I will state the purpose of the present study and the associated research questions (RQs). Chapter 1 will conclude with a list of definitions of key terms used throughout the study and an overview of the remaining four chapters of this dissertation.

Situational Context

The Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Arizona State University's (ASU) Tempe campus currently offers over 100 different undergraduate Spanish classes each semester, and teaches nearly 8,000 students per academic year. To meet the instructional demands of the course offerings, the department employs the use of approximately 40

TAs, who are each charged with teaching one or two undergraduate Spanish courses a semester, as the instructor of record or lead instructor. For example in spring 2022, TA-taught courses accounted for approximately 67% of on-ground undergraduate Spanish courses, with 88% of lower-division courses—100 and 200 level—having the TA as the instructor of record. While ASU offers courses in other modalities, such as internet courses (iCourses) to allow on-campus students an online option and online courses (oCourses) for fully online students not enrolled at the Tempe campus, the largest concentrations of TA led courses are found in on-ground course offerings slightly exceeding the average number of courses taught by TAs at similar universities (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, 2007).

Depending on their seniority in the program and available research assistantships, TAs typically teach each semester they are enrolled, while simultaneously pursuing a full-time graduate degree. TAs enroll in master's or doctoral programs in Spanish literature or linguistics, generally lasting between two and four years to degree. The academic requirements of their program necessitate approximately 27-36 hours or more of study per week based on a typical graduate course load of three to four courses and the total number of enrolled credits (University College, 2019). Moreover, once accepted into the graduate Spanish program with the TA position, TAs receive free tuition, health insurance during the academic year, and a nine-month stipend to manage their living expenses.

As part of their teaching duties, TAs are expected to prepare detailed lesson plans, teach classes as the instructor of record, use consistent and appropriate teaching methodologies as defined by the Spanish program, respond promptly to messages, grade

consistently and fairly, encourage students to complete final course evaluations, and attend all program meetings and training events. The total amount of work expected to complete these tasks is approximately 10 hours per week per section taught. When combined with their workload as graduate students, TAs can expect to work approximately 56 hours a week or more between the two duties. Additional teaching expectations and responsibilities are detailed in the Spanish TA guidelines and expectations document, which are reviewed by program coordinators and graduate advisors each academic year. Afterwards, the guidelines are distributed to all TAs, who sign before the start of each academic year to acknowledge receipt and understanding of the contents within. Upon entering the Spanish program, TAs complete a series of training experiences beginning with a pre-service orientation, followed by a methodology course and practicum in their first semester, and regular program and level meetings that continue into future semesters, until they have used all their eligible time as a TA or they have graduated.

The standard for fall pre-service TA training is a 5-day orientation course before the start of their first semester, intended to prepare TAs to teach in the program. TAs participate in a number of workshops to acclimate not only to standards in the Spanish program, but the university as a whole. After the start of the fall semester, the next step in the training process is a required core teaching methodology course, lasting 15 weeks, that is taught on a rotating schedule by various coordinators across languages. Topics often include, but are not limited to: learning about proficiency, classroom management, lesson planning, and curriculum development. TAs also simultaneously take a weekly one-hour practicum with their course coordinator, aimed at connecting theory to practice.

Another component of TA training is required attendance of bimonthly course-specific and monthly program meetings during the semester, which are one hour in length and cover course content and general language training, respectively. During the former, TAs work with program coordinators to discuss and resolve level specific content, while during the latter, participants discuss program issues, a member of the coordination team or invitee presents a professional workshop, and general questions are answered.

While the aforementioned training is initially required, subsequent training is also required for online instruction in the iCourse and oCourse environments, due to the vast differences in online language course formats, technologies, and pedagogies (Blake, 2011). This online teacher training consists of a two-week (~5-8 hours per week) university-wide Online Master Class, a three week (3 hours per week) training through the School of International Letters and Cultures (SILC), a one-hour learning management system (Canvas) training, and a one-hour pre-semester meeting with coordinators before they can teach online. Upon completion of these trainings, TAs are evaluated each academic year, using the TA guidelines for the Spanish department. These guidelines culminate with a document that details the annual evaluation of a TA's teaching that is divided into four parts: supervisor observations, student evaluations, meeting the guidelines and expectations, and professional development.

As part of the aforementioned annual evaluation, observation data is typically collected twice per academic year by course coordinators. This process initially led to the definition of the preliminary problem of practice (PoP) identified in this AR study. Through review of observational and archival data from coordinators in the form of anecdotal evidence and student evaluations, data showed some TAs exhibited a lack of

understanding of duties, a lack of connection with the program, and a need to improve in their teaching assignment with regard to the guidelines. Areas of special concern highlighted in course observations were: weakness in lesson planning (LP), improper use of defined communicative language teaching (CLT) methodologies, lack of classroom management (CM) skills, and poor technology skills with regard to use of the learning management system (LMS). Although veteran TAs, or those with more than a year of experience in our context, sometimes exhibited these behaviors, it was the first-year TAs that often demonstrated the majority of inconsistencies. In accordance with the literature (Allen & Negueruela–Azarola, 2010), TAs enter the Spanish program at ASU's Tempe campus with a wide range of teaching experiences, cultural backgrounds, and previous educational influences that combine with the unique context of ASU to create a special dynamic when approaching training strategies for first semester TAs.

Role of the Researcher

I stepped into my current role as Assistant Spanish Language Program Coordinator (LPC) during the spring 2017 semester to assist the Director of Second Language Acquisition with lower-level course supervision. In this role, I receive a course-release (approximately 10 hours per week) from my normal teaching duties. A short summary of some of my responsibilities are assisting in training and supervising graduate teaching assistants to perform their duties, and helping create and maintain lower-division courses with regard to materials and curriculum. Some specific examples of my work within these areas include: initial TA preparation during pre-semester fall orientation, weekly meetings with the Spanish coordination team to discuss training and concerns across the Spanish program, monthly meetings with all Spanish TAs, revision

and creation of materials for use in courses across the curriculum, solving and discussing issues with TAs regarding their teaching experiences on individual bases, and carrying out TA in-class observations. Due to the large number of courses and TAs, and consequently, an even larger number of undergraduate students to indirectly serve, my position is one of constant change and adaptation to the past, current, and perceived needs of both our undergraduate students and TAs, but also the department of Spanish & Portuguese and SILC.

My experience as Assistant LPC was not what led me to explore TA training, but rather my combined experience in coordination, teaching, and being a former TA in this same program. In 2016, I graduated from SILC with a master's in Spanish Applied Linguistics. During my years as a master's graduate student, I worked as a TA under the same conditions as previously outlined. I remember expressing my concerns with certain aspects of the program, and oftentimes feeling helpless as I tried to make change for the better for my colleagues and my students. While many people in the Spanish program at the time helped me in my journey, when help was not provided I turned to those who would help me outside the department, and I slowly learned many of the essential skills that I use today in my role as Assistant LPC. However, as an instructor and Assistant LPC, it is not my sole responsibility to make large-scale changes or address problems found in the greater sphere of influence of the program, such as textbook adoption or length of physical training days in orientation programs. Decisions such as these require greater influence and the involvement of administrators within the Spanish section and SILC.

Positionality

My passion as a teacher along with the positive effect one can have on the student experience in this role have prompted me to engage with my program to improve the overall quality of our second language program, through making improvements to our TA training program. Upon entering my role as Assistant LPC, I began to see some of the same areas of concern I saw as a TA in a new light. In fall 2019, I engaged in informal conversations with current and former colleagues, as well as current TAs to explore data related to the effectiveness of our TA training program. Later, I triangulated that data with archival data from my practice that will be discussed in the cycles of research section of Chapter 1. With this data, I began a series of action research cycles to critically evaluate our educational work setting, justify our teaching and training practices, and ultimately create an intervention to improve TA training outcomes in our department. I chose AR in the present study, because it is used to bring about change in individual contexts, as it is "built on the premise that some type of action will result" from the research (Mertler, 2017, p. 219). Through studying our program, our TAs, and our teaching practices specifically, I will be able to "better understand them and…improve their quality or effectiveness" (Mertler, 2017, p. 4) and thus, make informed decisions about the next steps in the process for improvement. These next steps are also a signature component of AR, in that they are articulated as an action plan meant to detail specific steps that will be taken to continue improvement, which regularly constitutes more AR, especially if a desired result is not obtained (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 601).

As a research-practitioner, I am heavily involved in the TA training process, which can lead to biases based upon my observations and experiences as both a former

TA and current Assistant LPC. In addition, my proximity to the TAs, in terms of power dynamics, such as "supervisor" and "TA" may cause some TAs to react in ways they would not in other contexts. However, I view these connections to be more of a strength than a weakness for several reasons. First, due to my recent experience, I understand first-hand how TAs interact in the program from both an observational and experiential standpoint. While completing my TA duties, I was especially drawn to improving not only my experience, but also those of my peers. Moreover, the different perspectives I have—former TA, instructor, and Assistant LPC—allow me to view the same problem through different lenses. Most importantly, I believe in construction of knowledge, and through the cyclical nature of AR, I was able to triangulate data, not only within cycles, but also across cycles to reach analytically informed decisions, which in effect helped to reduce inherent biases.

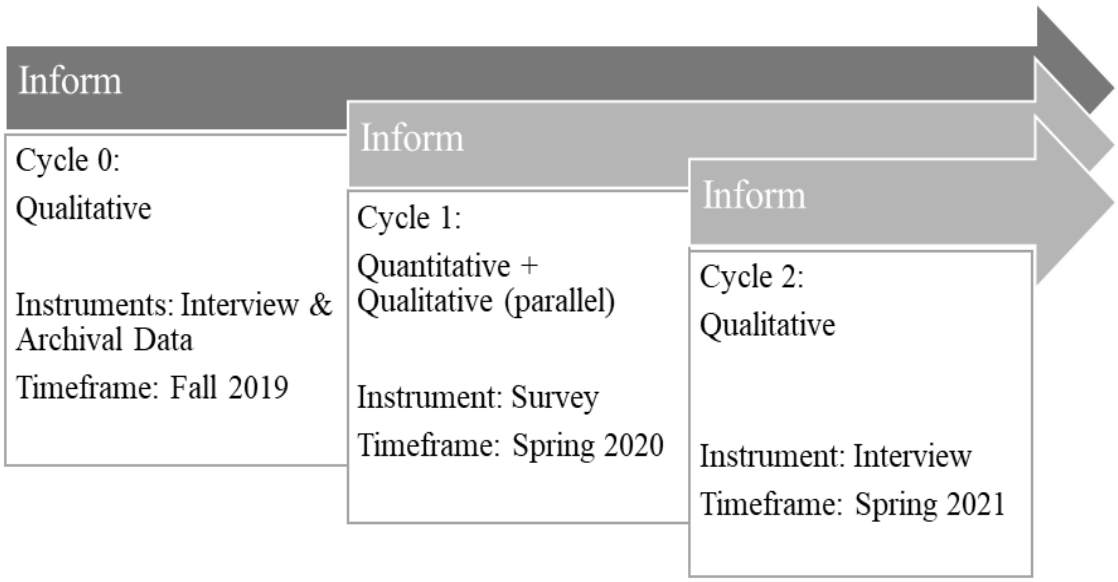
Previous Cycles of Research

Due to the iterative nature of AR, the present study forms one cycle or strand of inquiry. Therefore, it is essential to give a background of how the present study was conceptualized. In AR, a strand is generally considered a "component of a mixed methods study that encompasses the basic process of conducting quantitative or qualitative research: posing a question, collecting and analyzing data, and interpreting results" (Ivankova, 2015, p. 19). The previous cycles of AR used in this study will be briefly mentioned in the sections that follow and formed a multilevel mixed design as "mixing of quantitative and qualitative methods occur[ed] in a parallel or chronological manner across multiple levels of analysis" (Ivankova, 2015, p. 120). To illustrate the previous cycles' design, Figure 1 presents a conceptual model of the strands of the

previous cycles of this study adapted from Ivankova (2015). The strands in Figure 1 allowed for repeated analysis to interpret the quantitative and qualitative results with each strand informing the next. After detailing each cycle, I will present a summary of all cycles and their associated themes.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model of Previous Cycles of Action Research



Note. Adapted from a conceptual model of a multistrand mixed methods action research study design (Ivankova, 2015, p. 146). Created using Microsoft Word Smart-Art.

Cycle 0: Qualitative Strand

Before beginning my research in spring 2018, TAs voiced their concerns with the overall Spanish program through a community document they sent to course coordinators, the Head of the Spanish and Portuguese department, and the Director of

SILC. TAs outlined their orientation experience, program communication, workloads, rampant departmental changes, perceptions of meeting ineffectiveness, confusion of TA roles and responsibilities, lack of clarity with course designations and assignments, TA finances, and a lack of recognition for TA contributions to the program as some areas of concern. Later in fall 2019, TAs completed a graduate student survey report compiled by an outside consultant on workplace culture and climate, organized by the Director of SILC. In the survey, TAs voiced similar concerns shared with the Director: a lack of recognition and useless training. The Spanish department took the aforementioned areas of concern into consideration, but issues relating to our overall Spanish program effectiveness still arose in classroom observations, program meetings and communications, and program events. These issues manifested themselves in the forms of TA attitudes toward program requirements, overall communication with the program, grading timeliness, and fulfillment of expectations listed in the TA guidelines. Observations and guidelines focused on items such as LP effectiveness, meeting attendance, use of CLT methodologies, and proper course preparation in our LMS suggesting a need for improved training practices.

During the fall 2019 semester, I conducted a series of interviews about both TAs' and LPCs' perceptions of TA training in the Spanish program at ASU. In the Spanish program, there are several LPCs, such as the Director of the Spanish Second Language program, the Director of the Heritage Program, upper-division language coordinator, lower-division language coordinator, and the online coordinator. Both TAs and LPCs were used to obtain a wide-reaching view of TA training needs in the department. During this initial cycle of inquiry, the guiding research question was: What are teaching

assistants' and language program coordinators' perceptions of TA training program effectiveness in second language Spanish at Arizona State University?

One current and two former LPCs, as well as three TAs from different years of the program, were recruited using an electronic consent form, and subsequently interviewed. I chose LPCs by convenience sampling, while TAs were selected using maximal variation purposeful sampling to account for the different coordinators TAs had throughout their time in the program. This was important as during the last few years prior to this investigation, TAs had a new coordinator almost every year. Interviews were conducted in the same room, at different times, with a set of protocol questions, and were recorded and transcribed for analysis using a transcription software, otter.ai. Transcripts were coded using process coding, as this was a small-scale project (Saldaña, 2016, p. 111). From these interviews, the main themes that emerged were: poor meeting effectiveness, lack of resources, and poor communication and collaboration. María, a LPC stated with regard to meeting effectiveness:

> Sure. I think there are many attempts to do teacher training. But they haven't been successful so far. Whether it be meetings, that TAs feel that are not useful, and they don't learn anything, or trainings that we have attempted to do, but then they become meetings, you know, like, day to day meetings to talk about business issues, as opposed to training.

TAs, at the same time, expressed lack of time, lack of established training opportunities, and training content as areas that needed improvement. Cristina, a third year TA, mentioned a similar sentiment with regard to meeting effectiveness:

> I never really had any teaching language training directly. We had our training covered certain issues in the classroom. We've had meetings about administrative things and sometimes they'll be a presentation about one good tool to use in the classroom. But, I don't feel like I've got any language teaching specifically.

Cycle 1: Quantitative/Qualitative Strand

In the spring 2020 semester, I used the interview data from the previous semester to research training practices with the objective of exploring which training opportunities were the least effective and most easily influenced in my role as Assistant LPC. The guiding research question for this cycle was: What are TA and faculty perceptions of professional development opportunities in Spanish TA training programs? Using a different survey containing qualitative and quantitative questions for both TAs and faculty adapted from Angus (2016), I surveyed the graduate student population as well as the faculty population regarding their perceptions of various training practices in our program. Items on the survey ranged from biographical data and background to academic work history and professional development related content. I administered the survey via Google Forms and left it open for two weeks. Two versions of the survey—one for TAs and one for faculty—was sent to all current TAs and faculty.

One section of the survey asked TAs to rank the helpfulness of 18 professional development activities at ASU with items including teaching methodology courses, workshops, pre-service orientation listservs, etc. The survey used a five point Likert: *not at all helpful*, *somewhat helpful*, *neutral*, *very helpful*, and *extremely helpful*. Of the surveys completed by TAs (7), 42% of TAs felt pre-service orientation was not effective, with 28% stating it was not helpful at all. While two other components of professional development showed similar values—workshops organized by the book publisher and listservs about language teaching and learning—only pre-service orientation received the most "not at all helpful" scores of the 18 items in the section. Of the faculty (7) who completed the survey, 57% felt their personal pre-service orientation was not effective,

with 42% stating it was only somewhat helpful. Faculty also mentioned observations by and for peers as being equally as ineffective. When discussing to whom they go when they need advice on teaching, 86% of TAs and 57% of faculty mentioned "colleagues" or "peers" as the people who they consulted with first and was the highest of five choices between faculty/colleague, language program director, Director of graduate studies, Director of undergraduate studies, and other. While sample sizes were too small to reach generalizable conclusions, both TAs and faculty indicated their pre-service orientation experiences were some of the most ineffective training exercises and their interactions with colleagues were their first contact when experiencing situations that impede their teaching effectiveness.

Cycle 2: Qualitative Strand

The following year in the spring 2021 semester, I recruited TAs to explore the factors that contributed to their perception of our teacher training opportunities and specifically our pre-service orientation program. This cycle of research occurred later than the previous two cycles, due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March of 2020. During this second cycle of AR, the guiding research question was: What factors contribute to TA perceptions of professional development opportunities in the Spanish TA training program at Arizona State University? I recruited 11 current TAs at the time by convenience sampling. Interviews were conducted via Zoom with a set of protocol questions and were recorded and transcribed for analysis using a transcription software, otter.ai. Transcriptions were coded and analyzed using In Vivo coding procedures, as it is quite applicable to AR and is likely to find meaning from participant experiences (Saldaña, 2016, p. 106). TAs recruited for this interview were different from those who

participated in the initial interviews in cycle 0. Therefore, some questions from the initial interview protocol were preserved for meta-analysis purposes.

From these interviews, four major themes emerged: (1) pre-service orientation is not practical, (2) pre-service orientation needs to be more participatory, (3) previous teaching experience plays a role in the new TA experience, and (4) colleagues and other TAs are often seen as an important area of support. Regarding pre-service orientation practicality, Silvia, a second year TA highlighted the importance of connecting to what needs to be done in the local environment:

> I already knew how to create a lesson plan; the things that were going to work or that were not going to work. So for me, that was more like, okay, we're like having fun sharing ideas. But then when it came to, like, knowing the ASU system, I felt a little bit overwhelmed. And I think that we needed like a little bit more time, but at the same time, we have a really long orientation. So, I don't know, I think, like, maybe dedicated later and more time into the things that we were going to do. As a TA for ASU.

The second theme suggested pre-service orientation needs to be more participatory. Amber, a first year TA stated "I wanted to spend time doing like, more hands on, like, prepare my class things." The third theme, level of teacher experience upon entry plays a role in new TA experience, was expressed from both the point of view of non-experienced and experienced TAs entering the program. On the one hand, Eva, a fourth year TA, recalled their experience in orientation as "it was a very difficult time because in my program, we were eight TAs and I was the only one without a master's degree or without any experience teaching Spanish." On the other hand, Irma, another fourth year TA, came into the program with experience and shared "I think given that my experiences as in pedagogy, I think like anything that had to do with basic concepts of second language acquisition was very repetitive."

The final theme that emerged was colleagues or other TAs were often seen as an important area of support. Chelsea, a first year TA, stated with regard to who they go to for support, “I actually do have a group message with my, with other TAs teaching the 201 level.” Casandra, another first year TA also stated that they goes to their colleagues who are TAs for support as “my first option...because I know that my superiors have a lot of work. And sometimes it’s just a little thing I don’t know how to do.” This cycle offered a much larger qualitative sample size and highlighted emerging themes of practicality in training, hands-on approach importance, teacher experience vs. non-experience, and colleagues as areas of support.

Summary of Previous Cycles

The previous section briefly detailed the cycles of action research carried out for the purpose of this current cycle of AR. Table 1 summarizes the strand types, guiding research questions, data types collected, and emergent themes of the previous cycles. All cycles of research were carried out under the direction of faculty in Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) and were Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved. While limitations were not discussed for each cycle, the aggregate of the first three cycles presented two main limitations. First, the survey at times had questions that may have not been appropriate for my context. Second, member checking was not conducted after cycle 1 to understand the complexity of responses, due to the onset of the COVID-19, which produced interruptions in the data collection process.

Table 1

Summary of Previous Cycles of Action Research

Cycle and Strand Type	Guiding Research Questions	Data Instrument	Emergent Themes
0 Qualitative	What are teaching assistants' and language program coordinators' perceptions of graduate assistant (TA) training program effectiveness in second language Spanish at Arizona State University?	Interviews Archival Data	Training effectiveness needs improvement with regard to visibility, content, and outcomes.
1 Quantitative/ Qualitative (parallel)	What are graduate teaching assistants' (TAs') and faculty's perceptions of professional development opportunities in Spanish TA training programs?	Survey	Pre-service orientation is one of the most ineffective experiences Colleagues are an important first contact when experience problems with teaching effectiveness
2 Qualitative	What factors contribute to graduate assistant (TA) perceptions of professional development opportunities in the Spanish TA training program at Arizona State University?	Interviews	A practical pre-service orientation focus is needed Activities should be participatory in pre-service orientation Teacher experience vs. non-teacher experience may affect orientation experience in different ways Colleagues serve as important areas of support

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

With the myriad of problems discussed in this chapter, it is difficult to determine what areas of a teaching language program require change. After analyzing the previous cycles of AR individually and as a meta-analysis, I investigated the stated PoP within my program of how to improve practicality and participation in pre-service and continual

training to improve first semester teaching by first year Spanish graduate teaching assistants at Arizona State University's Tempe Campus. Specifically, areas of focus as determined by course coordinators and student evaluations concentrated on the skills TAs need most in their first weeks of instruction: how to perform lesson planning, utilize communicative language teaching methods, develop classroom management skills, and engage with the learning management system. Furthermore, this study explores how previous teaching experiences shape teaching in the ASU context, as TAs begin to orient themselves as experts. In line with Schulz (2000), this research contributes to the literature on developing collaborative approaches in teacher training while addressing the aforementioned points of emphasis in the first semester of TA teaching through the implementation guidelines for cultivating a community of practice (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002).

When Lave and Wenger (1991) first introduced communities of practice, they posited that "learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers 'novices' to move toward full participation 'experts' in the sociocultural practices of a community" (p. 29). As learners participate in the various communities, they are likely to both learn from and rely on other learners in the community as they orient themselves as novices and/or experts in each community. Later, Wenger (1998) expanded upon the social theory of learning with an explanation of how learning is at the intersection of meaning, practice, community, and identity. To help establish a successful CoP, Wenger, et al. (2002) presented seven design principles: design for evolution, open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives, invite different levels of participation, develop both public and private

community spaces, focus on value, combine familiarity and excitement, and create a rhythm for the community. More on CoPs will be discussed in the theoretical framework of Chapter 2 of this AR study. However, CoP is used as both a means of analysis of how TAs learn and orient themselves as novices or experts through the relationships they build, as well as a concrete framework for the creation of a CoP principled training program.

The present AR study helps to contribute to the literature on graduate TA training program improvement in second and foreign languages, and may offer insights into unique approaches to training in contexts with limited time and resources. Moreover, the distinctive nature of a locally based AR project, such as this, is designed to improve educational outcomes and affect change in teacher training program in my context. Therefore, based on the national, situated, and personal contexts of TA training programs, the purpose of this AR study is: to inquire into the training opportunities of new Spanish TAs through the lens of communities of practice in post-secondary Spanish language instruction at Arizona State University, and to implement a new CoP principled program training structure to see how it shapes TA teaching practices in the first semester of instruction.

To address the purpose of the study, the following are my research questions:
RQ1: How does participants' positionality—as novice or expert—evolve during their first 15-week semester with regard to lesson planning (LP), communicative language teaching (CLT), classroom management (CM), and learning management system (LMS) usage?
RQ2: How do previous teaching experiences shape new Spanish graduate teaching assistants' (TA) construction of their novice-expert identities?

RQ3: How do core features of a community of practice (CoP) facilitate or hinder the shaping of graduate teaching assistants (TA) training practices in a CoP principled training program?

Definition of Terms

In the following section, I have defined a few key terms used in various areas of the study to aid in orienting the reader to the associated context of the terms' usage.

Classroom Management (CM)

> In language teaching, the ways in which student behaviour, movement, interaction, etc., during a class is organized and controlled by the teacher (or sometimes the learners themselves) to enable teaching to take place most effectively. Classroom management includes procedures for grouping students for different activities, use of LESSON PLANS [capitalization in original text], handling of equipment, aids, etc. and the direction and management of student behavior and activity (Richards & Schmidt, 2013, p. 74).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

"An APPROACH [capitalization in original text] to foreign or second language teaching which emphasizes the goal of language learning is COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE [capitalization in original text] and seeks to make meaningful communication and language use a focus of all classroom activities" (Richards & Schmidt, 2013, p. 90).

Community of Practice (CoP)

Within the present research, a CoP is defined as both a social theory of learning and a physical community. First, as a social theory of learning, Wenger (1998) defines a CoP as learning through social participation where "participation here refers not just to local events of engagement in activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the *practices* of social communities and

constructing *identities* in relation to these communities" (p. 4). Second, as a physical community, Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) define CoPs as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 4).

Flipped Classroom

> In a flipped classroom, the information transmission component of a traditional face-to-face lecture (hereafter referred to as the 'traditional lecture') is moved out of class time. In its place are active, collaborative tasks. Students prepare for class by engaging with resources that cover what would have been in a traditional lecture. After class they follow up and consolidate their knowledge (Abeysekera, 2015, p. 2).

Learning Management System (LMS)

"A learning management system (LMS) is comprehensive, integrated software that supports the development, delivery, assessment, and administration of courses in face-to-face, hybrid, and online learning environments" (Arizona State University Technology Office, 2022, para. 2).

Lesson Planning (LP)

> A description or outline of (a) the goals or OBJECTIVES [capitalization in original text] a teacher has set for a lesson (b) the activities and procedures the teacher will use to achieve them, the time to be allocated to each activity, and the order to be follow, and (c) the materials and resources which will be used during the lesson (Richards & Schmidt, 2013, p. 302).

New Spanish Graduate Teaching Assistant

I define this term as any teaching assistant who enters their first year of study, and thus first semester of teaching at Arizona State University regardless of their experience teaching in other contexts.

Overview of Chapters

This work contains five chapters outlining the present study. Chapter 1 presented the problem of practice at a national and local level, while summarizing previous cycles of research used in this action research, the statement of purpose, and research questions. It also defined useful terms for the reader. Chapter 2 will explore communities of practice, identity, and other related literature such as TA training and TA pre-service orientations. Chapter 3 will focus on the research design for this study, reintroduce the research questions, and detail the CoP principled training program intervention that will be used in this AR study. Furthermore, the study design including the context, participants, data sources, and data collection process will be explored in detail. Chapter 4 will report on the results of the efforts of the data collection process. Finally, Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of the results through integration of theory and return to the review of relevant literature. It will also present limitations in addition to an action plan, as a result of this research and final thoughts on the present study.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RELATED LITERATURE

The first chapter provided larger and local contexts for a problem of practice related to training for graduate teaching assistants (TAs) in the ASU Spanish program. The present chapter includes a review of the theoretical framework of communities of practice (CoP), CoPs in educational settings, research on identity construction, as well as related literature on TA training effectiveness. The first section will detail CoP as a social theory of learning that forms the theoretical framework of this study to analyze how TAs learn (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The second section will explore the principles of cultivating communities of practice as a means for the practical implementation of a physical CoP like the one used as the intervention in the present study (Wenger et al., 2002). Afterwards, CoPs in educational settings will be reviewed in the third section. The fourth section will present literature on identity construction in teacher education, and novice-expert identity orientations. The fifth section will detail related literature, exploring themes uncovered in the literature such as post-secondary program effectiveness, TA professional development, and perceptions of TA training. The final section will summarize the current chapter.

Communities of Practice

Communities of practice (CoPs) are defined within this research as both a theory of learning and a physical community. Lave and Wenger (1991) describe learning as legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), in which learners must engage in meaningful ways in order to acquire new concepts. CoP further describes the physical community, which pertains to the structural components of the practicing community. These three

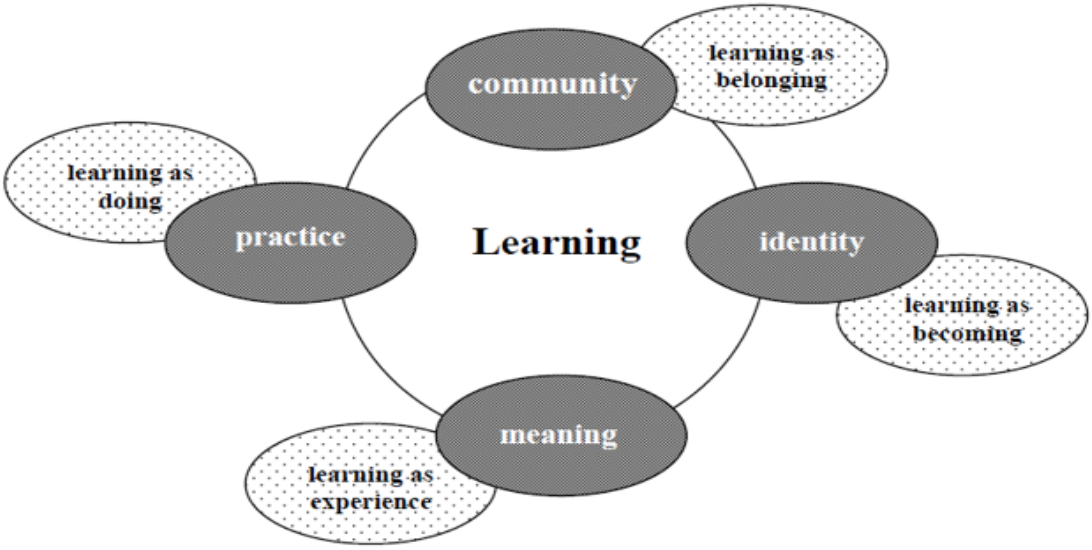
components are domain, practice, and community, which will be outlined in a later section.

A Social Theory of Learning

Using CoP as a social theory of learning assists in understanding how learners acquire knowledge, which influences how they learn, and in the case of the present research, how TAs are trained. Wenger (1998) later posits four components of a social theory of learning: meaning, practice, community, and identity, which are illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2

A Social Theory of Learning



Note. Adapted from Wenger (1998, p. 5).

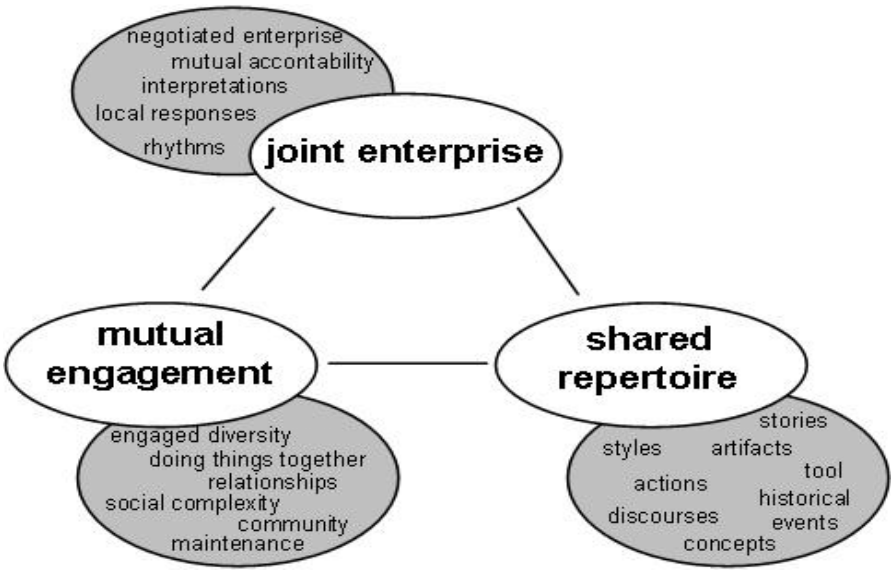
Lave and Wenger (1991) postulate that learning occurs through LPP in which learners participate in communities of practitioners, and move from "newcomers" (novices) to "oldtimers" (experts) through their participation in that community and not as a means of pure observation (p. 29). Wenger (1998) emphasizes learning as a product

of social interaction with no intention to replace other learning theories, but rather address learning in a different way. The application of LPP, in practice, means that individuals learn not just as participants, but also as non-participants, through the integrated whole of being in and around community interactions. Wenger (1998) grounds the theory on four premises: we are social beings, knowledge relates to valued enterprises, knowing involves participation, and meaning is what learning is to produce, relating to the four components of Figure 2 of meaning, practice, community, and identity. Wenger (1998) highlights the importance of learning through social participation where participation involves the process of actively engaging in the practices of that community, while at the same time negotiating identity in relation to the same community. It is essential that these processes of meaningful participation in communities take place in intersecting ways, and not as singular non-interactive components.

Meaning, practice, community, and identity specifically refer to the ways in which community members relate to the purpose of the community, their methods to interact within and around the community, their relationships within and around the community, and their self-view in relation to the community and its activities, respectively. Wenger (1998) relates practice and community through mutual engagement (ME) (e.g. relationships), a joint enterprise (JE) (e.g. goals), and a shared repertoire (SR) (e.g. tools), but does not limit them to pure relationship formation, goal setting, or tool usage. Figure 3 illustrates these connections.

Figure 3

Dimensions of Practice as the Property of Community



Note. Adapted from Wenger (1998, p. 72).

Furthermore, a community member's identity and motivation change as they move from novice to expert in their practice, yet at the same time, these categories of novice and expert are not always static categories (Wenger, 1998). Lave and Wenger (1991) also emphasize that LPP is not a pedagogical strategy or technique, but rather a way of understanding how learning takes place. Wenger (1998) theorizes, "the learning that is most personally transformative turns out to be the learning that involves membership in these communities of practice" (p. 6). Lave and Wenger (1991) further define a CoP as "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge" (p. 98). Wenger et al. (2002) expand on this definition to include people who "share a concern, a set of problems or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting

on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). As learners move towards full participation in a CoP through time involved, responsibilities, and negotiation of difficult tasks, they in turn develop a sense of expertise within the community.

The concept of CoPs is somewhat exponential in nature. We belong to many communities of practice at the same time and within our various aspects of life with no clear-cut membership protocol (Wenger, 1998). CoPs can take many forms with regard to their size, longevity, location, make-up, spontaneity or institutionalization (Wenger et al., 2002, pp. 24-27). Wenger (1998) states, "communities of practice are an integral part of our daily lives. They are so informal and so pervasive that they rarely come into explicit focus, but for the same reasons they are also quite familiar" (p. 7). It is important to note, these communities of practice do not have explicit boundaries and one community can and does affect the learning of another community as one group's competence involves the competence of another, thus returning to the premise of participation in Wenger's (1998) theory.

Physical Communities of Practice

Physical CoPs contain three structural elements: domain, community, and practice (Wenger et al., 2002). Domain gives value and defines common purpose to its members. Community is a group of people who "interact, learn together, build relationships and in the process develop a sense of belonging and mutual commitment" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 34). Practice refers to a socially defined specific set of artifacts such as approaches, manuals, standards, and communication strategies that a community uses. Wenger et al. (2002) highlight the importance of developing domain, community, and practice simultaneously. Through defining these three structural elements, the CoP itself as a

social structure becomes distinct from other types of social structures and pinpoints where community members can focus their energies to form a balanced community (Wenger et al., 2002, pp. 40-41).

When returning to the problem of practice (PoP) of this action research (AR) study, the CoP framework applies in two ways. First, through the lens of CoP as a social theory of learning, the present research views learning through the necessary components of meaning, community, practice, and identity that intersect for knowledge acquisition to occur. This theoretical viewpoint provides direction in the interpretation of results and connects assertions made to established theory. Second, through cultivation of these components through an established physical CoP, learning may occur that contributes directly to TAs' improvement in teaching with regard to lesson planning (LP), communicative language teaching (CLT), classroom management (CM), and learning management system (LMS) usage. Moreover, the implementation of a physical CoP centered around creating domain, community, and practice work to improve practicality, participation, and understanding of previous experiences in relation to the new community. The section that follows explains the practical implementation of a CoP.

Principles for Cultivating Communities of Practice

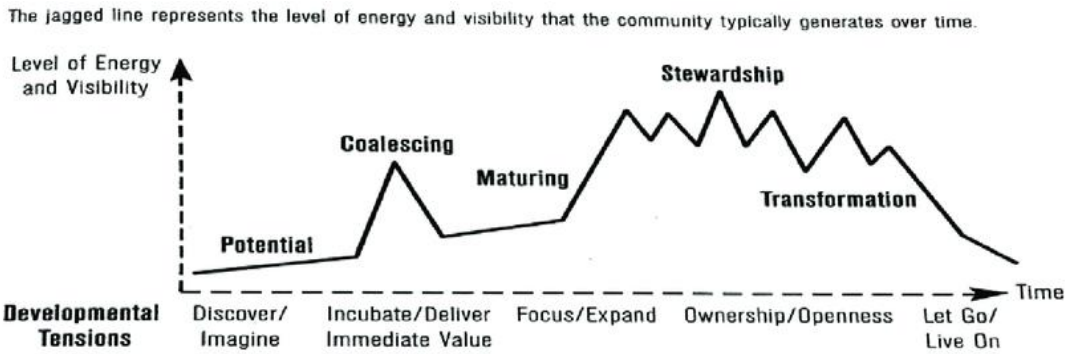
A CoP is not like other structures in which you can traditionally design for their creation and therefore needs flexibility in its creation. However, Wenger et al. (2002) state, "even though communities are voluntary and organic, good community design can invite, even evoke aliveness" (p. 50). "Aliveness" as they describe, is a community's ability to elicit excitement, value, and member engagement. To engage in the type of community design necessary to foster a CoP, the authors derive seven principles: (1)

design for evolution, (2) open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives, (3) invite different levels of participation, (4) develop both private and public community spaces, (5) focus on value, (6) combine familiarity and excitement, and (7) create a rhythm. Wenger et al. (2002) highlight that a "goal of community design is to bring out the community's own direction, character, and energy" (p. 51). For example, when exploring one of the principles—designing for evolution—Wenger et al. (2002) recount how when a sample organization initiated several CoPs in their research department, they found out that most people were already a member of several interconnected networks. The principle of designing for evolution related more to nurturing those relationships and pushing them in certain directions for change. Each of these principles, in and of themselves, are not concrete steps in the community planning process, but rather ideas that permeate in the life cycle of a CoP.

Wenger et al. (2002) describe the natural cycle of a CoP through five stages: potential, coalescing, maturing, stewardship, and transformation. See Figure 4 for a representation of the stages.

Figure 4

Stages of Community Development



Note. Adapted from Wenger et al. (2002, p. 69).

Wenger et al. (2002) present the first two stages—potential and coalescing—as the early stages of community development. The potential stage concerns itself with establishing domain, initial networking and identifying what knowledge is important. The coalescing stage continues to define the domain, build relationships, and explore knowledge sharing among community members. Upon completion of the early stages, the community enters the maturation stages of maturing, stewardship, and transformation respectively. The third stage—maturing—focuses on defining domain in relation to other domains, managing community boundaries, and finding gaps in knowledge. The fourth stage—stewardship—explores relevancy in the domain, and maintaining community and communication. The final stage—transformation—is the cycle of the community in which communities die or fuse into other communities. Within each stage of community development, Wenger et al. (2002) present competing developmental tensions that can inhibit growth and subsequent movement to the next stage. For example, in the second stage of community development—coalescing—the tension exists between the need to develop strong relationships among members of the community and deliver immediate value to the community.

The principles for cultivating a CoP should permeate throughout the development of the community. However, traditional designs are not as effective in planning, as "the goal of community design is to bring out the community's own internal direction, character and energy" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 51). The authors go on to note the importance of finding ways to promote evolution rather than creating a detailed plan for design (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 73). However, they reinforce "nothing says communities of practice must be purely spontaneous" (p. 63). Therefore, they offer within each stage a

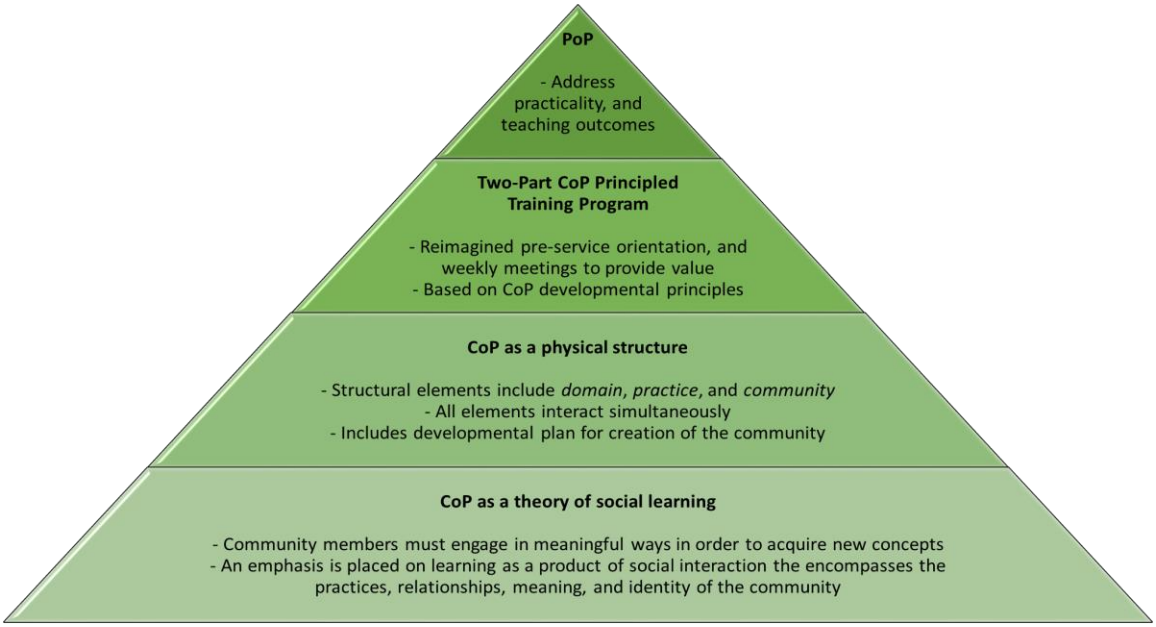
set of actionable items to help build community. For example, in the coalescing stage, they suggest making an action plan for showing why membership is valuable, clearly launching the community, initiating community events, building connections between community members, finding what knowledge is important to the community, documenting the process judiciously, and identifying opportunities to provide value. Throughout each stage, the overall seven principles connect with the recommended concrete actions of each stage, forming a conceptual framework of CoP development and a practical means for implementation.

With regard to the PoP, CoP is applied as a theoretical framework for understanding how TAs construct knowledge in their community, combined with the physical CoP aimed at creating domain, practice, and community to foster the aforementioned construction of knowledge. To implement the theory and physical community I designed a two-part CoP principled training program that emphasized practical application, and community participation. Figure 5 shows the theoretical framework of this AR study, in the form of a triangle with different shades. I chose this shape as each lower level interacts with the higher level at all times, and as the triangle reaches its apex, the darkened color signifies the incorporation of each lower level. To explicate the theoretical framework triangle further, the CoP theory is first applied as a means of understanding how community members learn. Second, the physical community is presented with its main structural pieces, and principles for creation. For the purpose of this AR study, I only considered the first two stages of community development—potential and coalescing—given the timeframe of the study. Third, the two-part CoP principled intervention is briefly introduced with its respective

components—a reimagined pre-service orientation program and weekly meetings designed around community development and learning—that will be detailed in Chapter 3. Finally, the problem of practice is placed at the top of the pyramid to underscore its interrelationship with previous levels.

Figure 5

Theoretical Framework



Note. Created using Microsoft Word Smart-Art.

Communities of Practice in Teacher Professional Development

CoPs have been a source of professional development for many in-service teachers in secondary contexts (Aldana & Martinez, 2018; Bouwer et al. 2012). Aldana and Martinez (2018) longitudinally observed administrators, teachers, and staff, in four high schools in Southern California, USA, over a period of three years to determine the effects of implementing a bilingual math and science curriculum. As a result of the new curriculum, Aldana and Martinez (2018) argue that a CoP developed among participants.

Researchers met with participants several times a year as a group of all four schools together, and twice a month in individual school sites. Aldana and Martinez (2018) concluded that sharing experience provided all participants with a better understanding of the challenges facing bilingual curricula development, and as novice teachers shifted to experts, the CoP played a critical role in their learning. Furthermore, the authors reported that the CoP continued, even after their involvement with the schools. Aldana and Martinez's (2018) work underscores the effect of CoPs on creating opportunities for professional development and provides an example of how TAs may benefit from their involvement in such communities.

Bouwer, Brekelmans, Nieuwenhuis, and Simons (2012) explored the extent to which CoPs occur in the secondary school workplace in the Netherlands with 72 teachers in secondary schools constituting seven teacher teams. Using mixed-methods, they investigated CoP development through mutual engagement, shared repertoire, and joint enterprise and reported that teacher teams in their study demonstrated naturally occurring modest degrees of the three aforementioned areas of CoP development. They also suggested that composition of experience, education, and workplace levels may play a role in community development. The naturally occurring CoP within Bouwer et al. (2012) fits with Aldana and Martinez's (2018), and Wenger's (1998) assertion that CoPs are everywhere. However, Bouwer et al. (2012) highlight the importance of conducting future research that focuses on the development of CoPs in the school workplace to understand how CoPs develop through teacher teams and the effect of team diversity on such development.

Admiraal, Lockhorst, and van der Pol (2012) aimed to develop a descriptive model of teacher communities in secondary schools, again in the Netherlands. Basing their idea of teacher communities on CoPs (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998; Wenger et al., 2002), they conducted interviews with experts, organized focus groups with researchers, conducted a Delphi study, discussed results at a roundtable with international experts in Europe, and discussed the model at an international conference. Admiraal et al. (2012) focused their work around Wenger's (1998) core features of community: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. The results yielded a general measurement model for each of the three aforementioned categories as well as 19 indicators—nine for group identity or mutual engagement, four for shared domain or joint enterprise, and six for shared repertoire—for each core category. They also developed some markers of intensity for each indicator rated as limited, moderate, and strong. Admiraal et al. (2012) concluded that their descriptive model could be used as an analytical tool to study the design of communities, but additional studies are need to validate the model.

Continuing education programs in other contexts for in-service teachers have also applied CoPs as a means of training. For example, van As (2018) sought to determine to what extent a CoP was successful in developing a teacher's professional knowledge in a South African continuing education program. As very few teachers had the appropriate subject knowledge, van As (2018) followed a CoP implemented by a local education entity to improve teachers' ability to teach civil technology. Using qualitative data in the form of observations, field notes, and open-ended questionnaires, van As (2018) observed five of the mandated CoP workshops to determine teacher perspectives. Results indicated

that teachers welcomed the CoP, and acquired valuable knowledge related to their practice, just as counselors welcomed feedback from one another according to Aldana and Martinez (2018).

When shifting from in-service to pre-service teachers, CoPs have also been applied to various learning contexts (Cho, 2016; Iyer & Resse, 2013; Jimenez-Silva & Olsen, 2012). Iyer and Reese (2013) sought to understand why pre-service teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds experienced identity loss through a CoP framework. Using semi-structured interviews, they interacted with 28 pre-service teachers at a university in Australia. From a community perspective, Iyer and Reese (2013) indicated that participant learning was dependent on their social or cultural position within the community and identity loss occurred from a lack of established connections due to these social/cultural differences. However, participants noted that when a connection was established within the community, they began to believe in their membership of the same community. While demonstrating a lack of core components of a CoP in some instances, Iyer and Reese (2013) suggested developing healthy CoPs with purposeful interactions would benefit new teachers.

Jimenez-Silva and Olsen (2012) explored insights and perceptions of CoPs in education with regard to teachers of English language learners. Organized through a teacher-learner community in a semester-long course, the authors explored whether participation in this community led to pre-service teachers' application of CoP theory to future practice. Using mixed-methods, Jimenez-Silva and Olsen (2012) collected data from between 13 and 33 participants, depending on the data type. The analytic results suggested that pre-service teachers found the interactions of the learning community to be

a strong source of support and influence, although the authors noted that more research is needed to determine effectiveness of a CoP in their context.

Similarly, Cho (2016) supported community activity as an integral component of pre-service teacher training, and aimed to understand identity construction in online contexts. Using CoP as a theoretical framework of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), Cho (2016) explored five pre-service bilingual teachers' interactions in online discussion forums with a focus on their "orientations to 'community-building' categories" (p. 79). Cho (2016) concluded that participants displayed involvement with mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire, and that online CoPs create environments where collaborative learning can occur.

A salient feature of the relevant CoP literature so far is that CoPs appear to benefit learners—to varying degrees—in a wide ranges of educational studies and contexts, despite the different foci of each study (Cho, 2016; Jimenez-Silva & Olsen, 2012; van As 2018; see also Aldana & Martinez, 2018; Bouwer et al., 2012). In other words, regardless of the results, the concept of a CoP emerges as a tool for teacher education in both pre-service and in-service contexts much like the context of TAs in the current AR study. TAs enter the pre-service phase of training and spend very little time before immediately being thrust into in-service work within one week. This combines with their continued involvement with in-service training, and graduate student academic life. Another commonality is the call for research on the developmental process and application of CoPs in educational contexts such as the ASU context (Cho, 2016; Bouwer et al. 2012). Therefore, documenting the presence of core components of the CoP used in this study as Admiraal et al. (2012) suggest, help to validate the design model created from their

research. Combining the concept of cultivating a CoP as an effective training model with describing core features may increase training effectiveness as the community continues to grow.

Terry, Nguyen, Peck, Smith and Phan (2020) also identified three major themes in their research on CoP development: enablers, barriers, and success in action, through the implementation of a CoP in pre-servicing nursing education contexts. Specifically, the barriers of feelings of alienation, being marginalized, and feeling frustrated pose problems for community development. Schlager and Fusco (2006) elaborate that CoPs differ from other organizational groups and can exhibit symptoms of dysfunction. Wenger et al. (2002) expand on the dysfunction of CoPs, noting that:

> It is important not to romanticize communities of practice or expect them to solve all problems without creating any. They are not a silver bullet. In fact, because communities have always existed in organizations, they are more than likely to be part of the problem they are expected to solve (pp. 139-140).

Despite dysfunction, CoPs can grow over time, and accomplish the common goals of the community in question under the right leadership (Schlager & Fusco, 2006; Wenger et al., 2002). It is important to continually evaluate and refine community structures as the strategic value of CoPs are "worth the effort" such as creating value for its members, where value refers to making a concept, situation, or idea worth more to the user (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 159). Wenger et al. (2002) highlight other downsides of CoPs such as temptation of ownership in the domain, too much of a good thing in the community, and the liabilities of competence in practice. Within each of these categories, the authors elaborate on possible dysfunctions that often arise. Therefore, community coordinators and organizers must be vigilant in identifying dysfunction.

Identity Construction in Teacher Education: Novices and Experts

Herman (2011) states that "identity formation has to do with the complex manner in which human beings establish a unique view of self" (para. 1). Furthermore, identity refers to more than a simple individual-social division, but rather, it is the recognition of human lived experiences in social, cultural, and historical contexts (Wenger, 1998, p. 145). According to Wenger (1998), identity is in a state of constant flux and it is something that we constantly negotiate during our lifetimes. Wenger (1998) argues that identity is: fundamentally temporary, ongoing, complex, and defined by the intersection of multiple trajectories that he defines as "not a path that can be foreseen or charted by a continuous motion," but rather trajectories have "a coherence through time that connects that past, the present, and the future" (p. 154). These explanations portray identity and identity construction as fluid, yet at the same time connected to participation, meaning, and community. Wenger (1998) connects identity to the constructs of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire used in explaining the relationship of practice to community, and suggests we experience ourselves as an extension of what we can and cannot understand, recognize, appropriate, and use. Therefore, depending on the complex interrelationship of community, practice, and identity, learners can identify themselves as "newcomers" (novices) or "oldtimers" (experts) in unique moments, and not always as someone new to community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Becoming an expert implies full participation as a multifaceted member of a community through which learning can occur (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Observing TAs orientation to this novice-expert paradigm in specific moments sheds light, to some degree, on the acquisition of skills needed to perform their duties as practicing teachers.

Fuller and Unwin (2004) conducted a study analyzing different learning environments for over 1100 employees, spread across four companies, in England and Wales, with the aim of challenging the traditional novice to expert journey to full participation facilitated by said experts. Over the course of three years, the researchers collected various forms of data such as interviews, learning logs, surveys, and observations and found that new workers spent significant amounts of time helping colleagues. These interactions, however, displayed areas of expertise from previous experience that did not align with the conventional image of a novice or someone new (Fuller & Unwin, 2004). Specifically, younger workers' professional identities evolved during the course of their participation in the work environment. The results of Fuller and Unwin's (2004) work suggest that the learners align themselves as experts in some situations depending on a number of factors, such as previous educational and life experience, regardless of their time working in their work environment. This supports Wenger (1998) in viewing construction of the novice-expert self as happening constantly and in relationship to other community factors such as participation.

TAs in this study, however, entered the Spanish program in my context as part of a completely new cohort of learners. While there was some connection to the veteran TAs, they spent a lot of time in their new cohort. Cuddapah and Clayton (2011) explored a similar situation of a group of new secondary teachers in an urban school district. Using observational data Cuddapah and Clayton (2011) analyzed data using Wenger's (1998) components of community, practice, and meaning as seen in Figure 2 in Chapter 1. Results suggested new teachers conversations centered around practice through resource sharing, affirming, and problem solving; meaning making through teaching context,

personal purpose, kids, and discipline; and identity through self-in relation to students, teacher roles, becoming a teacher, self-assessment, and revealing a conflicted self (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011, p. 72). Moreover, despite being new teachers, the totality of their experiences allowed them to learn in conjunction with each other. Again, the results of this study show support for implementation of a CoP in teacher education, and specifically in contexts such as the new Spanish graduate TAs in my context.

TA Training in Higher Education

The nature of this AR study initially led to a review of related literature on the topic of TA training program effectiveness. Examples of keywords used in research were "graduate student training," "effectiveness," and "Spanish." A majority of research articles found came from Arizona State University's Library One Search, which is a comprehensive search engine with access to a myriad of books, articles, and other related media. Across the different resources, three key themes emerged regarding program effectiveness: general post-secondary program effectiveness, TA professional development, and perceptions of TA training. The following sections synthesize related literature into the aforementioned themes.

Post-secondary Program Effectiveness

Graduate teaching assistants (TAs) have long been a model for imparting classes in post-secondary education in the United States (Park, 2004). Historically, although primary and secondary language educators have seen more research on their program effectiveness (Schulz, 2000), post-secondary programs also require evaluation of their effectiveness. Huhn (2012) explored both dynamics—secondary and post-secondary—via a meta-analysis of research related to foreign language teacher preparation and program

effectiveness. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Huhn (2012) cites the ACTFL and NCATE Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers as a possible framework for establishing effective foreign language training programs, but acknowledges the emphasis placed on K-12 educational contexts. For example, the ACTFL proficiency guidelines—descriptors of what individuals can do with language—state the proficiency guidelines "underlie the development of the ACTFL Performance Guidelines for *K-12 learners* [emphasis added]," with no mention of the post-secondary context (Swender, Conrad, & Vicars, 2012). ACTFL's standards, updated in 2013, span across four principles; the learner and learning, content, instructional practice, and professional development. These principles then contain six standards: language proficiency, understanding of content areas, language acquisition theories, planning practices, assessment, and professional development (Abbot, 2013). ACTFL and NCATE use the aforementioned standards to determine program effectiveness, specifically for the preparation of primary and secondary foreign language educators.

Huhn (2012) compared each of these standards with the literature related to post-secondary program effectiveness, however, the author notes,

> The ACTFL/NCATE Standards have been found to form the foundation for effective and innovative models of K-12 foreign language teacher education. While there are potential connections between the criteria developed from the ACTFL/NCATE Standards and university-level instruction, there is *no formal entity equivalent to NCATE that review education programs for teaching assistants or university faculty* [emphasis added] (p. 175).

Huhn (2012) also notes that traditionally, different groups of language faculty—particularly literature and linguistics—do not view the responsibilities of TAs favorably or in the same light, with a divide both amongst and between the literature and linguistics

faculty. This happens especially at large universities, when TA responsibilities are seen as "secondary to other obligations" (Huhn, 2012, p. 175), highlighting the importance of attending to TA training considering the amount of classes TAs teach. Huhn (2012) suggests that program standards related to preparation of primary and secondary teachers may be used to create standards for post-secondary programs with the hopes of creating effective and innovative programs at that level. With a lack of research on post-secondary program effectiveness, Huhn (2012) urges that varied research designs on current post-secondary programs will create support for the creation of needed postsecondary program evaluation models, echoing the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages (2007) call to strengthen training and teacher effectiveness at the post-secondary level.

Professional Development

When specifying program effectiveness, professional development of all teaching faculty is an area that can contribute to overall program effectiveness (Abbot, 2013; Huhn, 2012) where effectiveness is defined as meeting the standards goals of ACTFL/NCATE. In the post-secondary model, TAs also benefit from professional development (Angus, 2016; Huhn, 2012). Park (2004) synthesized research on the use of TAs in North American universities finding practical, personal, and professional development issues related to TAs and their training. Park (2004) notes there is a "need for appropriate [TA] professional development, both to optimize their effectiveness as teachers today and to prepare them to serve effectively as professors tomorrow" (p. 354). Many programs are based on an apprenticeship model—where TAs serve as assistants to professors learning not just how to teach, but how to be an academic—which may only be appropriate if TAs wish to continue in academia (Park, 2004). This creates a division

in the time TAs have to invest in their teaching as their time is split between being a student and future researcher, and being a teacher. Thus, a major problem arises from this special position that TAs occupy as both a student and teacher, with no role weighing more than the next, and some TAs not wanting to pursue an academic or teaching career. Furthermore, TAs may have tough decisions to make about which role takes priority in their lives: graduate teaching assistant or graduate student.

TAs also may exhibit "resisting" behaviors towards pedagogical development. For example, Brown (2013) explored a group of 40 TAs in a four-year longitudinal action research study and found that four types of resisters were present: rhetorical, pedagogical, epistemological, and oppositional. Of the four resister types, Brown explains that each have their own unique challenges. First, rhetorical resisters do not believe in active learning techniques such as communicative language teaching. Second, pedagogical resisters challenge new teaching theories and techniques that conflict with their previous knowledge and beliefs. Third, epistemological resisters hold different beliefs about knowledge formation and the ways in which people learn that are different from the ideologies of their training program. Fourth, oppositional resisters inherently oppose authority, regardless of format or beliefs. Brown suggested taking into account resister behavior as a means to improve the teaching of TAs to be effective educators. Moreover, Brown offered additional points of improving program development by incorporating different contextual factors, expanding mentoring opportunities, increasing lines of communication, and offering more opportunities to teach. These factors may help to lead to more balanced and effective approaches to TA development for their current duties and beyond.

Perceptions of TA Training

A common theme of TA training shows a disconnect between the perceptions Language Program Directors (LPD) and Coordinators have and those of TAs with regard to teaching program effectiveness and training importance (Angus, 2016; Gómez Soler y Tecedor, 2018). Angus (2016) surveyed 94 participants in foreign language departments in the United States regarding biographical data, education, work, and professional development perceptions. Angus notes that "despite perceiving that their current and future success was dependent on their level of knowledge, skill, attitudes, and awareness, TAs reported 'never' or 'rarely' participating in 39.6% of professional development opportunities" (p. 828). Specifically, TAs cited time constraints as reasoning why they did not participate in professional development and attribute a lack of encouragement or department agency as other reasons for non-participation. Even with low participation levels in training events, TAs felt they were adequately prepared to teach in their current position, despite the skills needed in future faculty teaching positions.

Gómez Soler and Tecedor (2018) also explored TA and Language Program Director perceptions via a nationwide survey that included 140 graduate students regarding the goals of lower-level courses, cultural competence—incorporating cultural content, and technology—incorporating technology tools in class. They found that learning to communicate and acquiring skills were most important to both TAs and LPDs, however there was a disconnect between the importance placed on these skills with LPD viewing them as more important, while TAs viewed them as less important. Furthermore, TAs continued to view cultural and technological related skills with less regard in comparison to the LPDs. This view of technology in the foreign language

classroom has been echoed in other studies that have contributed to misconceptions of online education training (Drewelow, 2013). In conclusion, TA perceptions as a general note are not reaching LPD expectations, just as the perceptions of training effectiveness differ in the Spanish program in my context.

Given the unique positions TA hold nationally and in the ASU context combined with a lack of emphasis in training and development, points to a demonstrated need for research on not only how to train TAs, but how to make these training programs as effective as possible. The flexible nature of CoPs lends itself to creating appropriate and varied training programs as Park (2004) and Huhn (2012) suggest. The investigation of effective models of training can also lead to the creation of local or national models of TA development, with future models acting as a guide rather than a rigid framework to help prepare TAs for their in-service duties. At the same time, keeping in mind the variance in TA preparation and their own perceived identity, expertise, and needs, can contribute to understanding of how these factors affect training processes in the ASU context, while at the same time validating previous experiences of new TAs.

Summary of Chapter 2

The contents of this chapter reviewed primary and secondary literature sources to connect the PoP of TA training in my context to the theoretical framework of CoP (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger 1998). First, I made connections between CoP theory and the two-part intervention in the present AR study that will be detailed in the following chapter. Furthermore, I explored the application of communities of practice in education and teaching, and the role of identity within an educational community concept. Finally, I presented related concepts in the literature such as postsecondary program effectiveness,

TA professional development, and TA perceptions of professional development and their relation to TA training. The following chapter will present the methodology related to this AR study.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Chapter 3 will discuss several areas related to the methodology involved in this action research (AR) study. First, the problem of practice (PoP), purpose statement, and research questions (RQs) presented in Chapter 1 will be reviewed. Second, the present study's research design will be discussed including rationale for choice. Third, the settings and participants will be examined including characteristics of the participants and other relevant demographic information. Fourth, the role of the researcher will be revisited with regard to my role in the data collection process. Fifth, the new community of practice (CoP) principled training intervention will be presented in detail. Sixth, data collection instruments will be introduced with a description of data analysis procedures. Finally, the trustworthiness of the study will be discussed in relation to rigor and validity, as well as the completed timeline involved in the research process, and a summary of the current chapter.

Initially, departmental observations of graduate teaching assistants (TAs), anecdotal evidence, and student evaluations revealed TAs often exhibit: lack of understanding of duties, lack of connection with the Spanish and Portuguese program, and underperformance in their teaching assignment. Concretely, TAs, in general, demonstrated weakness in lesson planning (LP), improper use of defined communicative language teaching (CLT) methodology, lack of classroom management (CM) skills, and poor learning management system (LMS) usage. Of the aforementioned sources, the departmental observation form contains five components of the evaluation of their teaching: LP, CLT techniques, error correction and class climate, and LMS usage, which

correspond to the four areas of concern identified in the PoP. Furthermore, through various cycles of AR, I identified lack of practicality and hands-on participation in the fall pre-service orientation program designed to prepare first semester Spanish TAs for undergraduate teaching, as well as the need to integrate previous teaching experience into the training program in order to orient new TAs better as functioning members of the teaching community. As a means of addressing the PoP, I incorporated CoP as both a theoretical lens, and a concrete framework. Therefore, the purpose of this AR study was to inquire into improving first semester training opportunities through CoP in post-secondary Spanish language instruction at Arizona State University, and to implement a new training program structure principled on Wenger et al.'s (2002) principles for cultivating a CoP to shape TA teaching practices in the first semester of instruction with regard to LP, CLT, CM, and LMS usage.

To address the purpose of the present AR study, I present the RQs again:

RQ1: How does participants' positionality—as novice or expert—evolve during their first 15-week semester with regard to lesson planning (LP), communicative language teaching (CLT), classroom management (CM), and learning management system (LMS) usage?

RQ2: How do previous teaching experiences shape new Spanish graduate teaching assistants' (TA) construction of their novice-expert identities?

RQ3: How do core features of a community of practice (CoP) facilitate or hinder the shaping of graduate teaching assistants' (TA) training practices in a CoP principled training program?

Research Design

This study utilized an action research design, primarily as a means to bring about improvement with regard to the identified PoP of TA training in my local context (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Ivankova, 2015; Mertler, 2017). At its core, the goal of AR is to conduct systematic inquiry in a practitioner's place of practice to generate changes they feel are important (Ivankova, 2015, p. 29). Moreover, AR is characterized by a "cyclical process of planning, acting, developing, and reflecting" (Mertler, 2017, p. 18). As outlined in Figure 1 of Chapter 1, the present AR study is the result of several previous cycles of research, which included both qualitative and quantitative data.

While AR typically contains mixed methodologies—the mixing of quantitative and qualitative data—as an identifying piece of the research design (Ivankova, 2015), the present AR study as a cycle of research adopted a basic qualitative action research design. The key difference in this qualitative action research design as compared to other qualitative designs, such as case studies, is that the implementation of solutions occurred simultaneously as part of the AR process with the development of the intervention that will be detailed later in this chapter (Nieswiadomy, 2008, p. 179). Although qualitative in nature, the present study incorporated several data points that will be discussed in the sections that follow to triangulate data and bring more credibility to research findings (Ivankova, 2015). It was critical to adopt an AR design, as the intention of the research was to use findings to "customize a teacher's professional development, allowing for a much more meaningful approach to professional growth" (Mertler, 2017, p. 22). In the case of my context, through developing new graduate teaching assistants as effective teachers, we may also improve other associated areas of interest to the Spanish program

not necessarily investigated in the present study, such as major/minor growth, and student retention in undergraduate course offerings.

Setting and Participants

The setting of this cycle of AR occurred in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Arizona State University's Tempe campus. Initial pre-service training took place prior to the beginning of the fall 2021 semester, and concluded two days before the fall 2021 semester. Afterwards, additional training experiences in the form of required level-specific meetings (e.g., Spanish 100-level courses) took place almost weekly for 13 weeks during the fall 2021 semester. Two weeks of meetings did not occur due to the proximity of planned holiday events or school closures. I collected data before pre-service orientation in the form of interviews, during pre-service orientation in the form of exit tickets, during the entire fall 2021 semester in the form of journals, and at the beginning of the spring 2022 semester in the form of final interviews. As a byproduct of the training experience, I created meeting agendas for all 13 level meetings using the Meeting Wise template (Boudett & City, 2014), and participants added their notes of what transpired during the meetings to the agendas as archival data. Training for pre-service orientation occurred face-to-face during six days, while Covid-19 protocols did not affect data collection, and the only modification to the training was the wearing of masks per university policy.

Participants in this AR study included all new entering TAs in the fall 2021 semester, who agreed to participate in this cycle of research. Again, new is defined as any TA who is completing their first year of study, and thus first semester of teaching at ASU, regardless of their experience teaching in other contexts. I chose all participants

due to convenience sampling (Ivankova, 2015) and their involvement with the program. Participants received an email invitation for recruitment, and subsequently completed an online consent form for interviews (see Appendix A), and a survey (see Appendix B) using Google Forms. Originally, nine TAs in their first year of their master's or PhD studies agreed to participate. However, due to the procedures involved in this study, I obtained two consent forms from participants; one at the beginning of the study that allowed for interviews and survey data, and one at the end of the study that allowed collection of data such as pre-service orientation exit tickets and journals, archival data, and final interviews. The decision to employ a double consent form process was to allow participants to focus on their experiences during the semester, and not on the study. This process led to mortality in the sample (Allen, 2017) and ultimately five participants completed the entirety of the study.

I assigned the remaining participants pseudonyms to protect their identity during reporting and reviewed data to purge any identifiable information in coding or presented quotes. Moreover, I employed limited and composite descriptions of the participants to ensure confidentiality (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020, p. 22). Of the five participants, two, Patricia and Carla, self-identified as female. While the other three, Oscar, David, and Isaac, self-identified as male. The average age of all participants was 25.6 years old with the youngest reporting to be 22 years old and the oldest 32 years of age. Four participants reported completion of their master's degree before ASU, while one participant was entering the program after their Bachelors. Three participants reported completion of previous teacher training of varying lengths before beginning training at ASU, while two had no reported previous training experience. Also, all but

one participant (n=4) reported one to three years of previous teaching experience, while the other participant reported less than one year of teaching experience.

With regard to rating themselves as teachers before beginning training at ASU, four participants self-reported as "good," while only one self-reported as "very good" on a six-point Likert scale of: *poor*, *below average*, *average*, *good*, *very good*, and *excellent*. Furthermore, the participants self-reported various levels of preparedness before beginning their teaching training at ASU with three TAs reporting as "prepared," one as "very prepared," and the other as "somewhat prepared" on a six-point Likert scale of: *extremely prepared*, *very prepared*, *prepared*, *somewhat prepared*, *not very prepared*, and *not prepared at all*. Finally, three participants reported English as their native language, with one reporting Spanish, and the other as bilingual, with Spanish, English, and some Japanese. Table 2 summarizes the participant data, however, some data in the table was omitted to protect the participants due to the research being conducted at the same site as the context—ASU's Department of Spanish & Portuguese—and the proximity of each participant to the AR process and/or other TAs, Faculty, Staff, and students in the same program.

Table 2

Summary of Participants

Name	Gender	Completed Teacher Training before ASU (of varying lengths)	Previous Teaching Experience	Self-reported Pre-training Teacher Rating (six-point scale)
Patricia	Female	Yes	1-3 years	Very good
Carla	Female	No	1-3 years	Good
Oscar	Male	No	1-3 years	Good
David	Male	Yes	less than 1 year	Good
Isaac	Male	Yes	1-3 years	Good

The Role of the Researcher in Data Collection

I, the researcher, took part as a participant-observer in this process. On the one hand, I had a role in training the TAs through my job as Assistant LPC and community coordinator in the CoP. I observed the TAs both in my portions of the training activities, as well as in training with other coordinators, course observations, and interacting with TAs in the CoP framework. Furthermore, I led portions of the orientation process, solved problems encountered by TAs in the daily course of teaching, and performed administrative duties such as reviewing courses or contacting TAs regarding their roles and responsibilities. On the other hand, as a researcher, I was responsible for collecting data including: consent forms, pre-intervention surveys, exit tickets, conducting interviews, compiling journal entries, and detailing field notes. Moreover, I analyzed and discussed the data regarding the literature and proposed research methods that will be detailed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Intervention: Two-Part CoP Principled Training Program

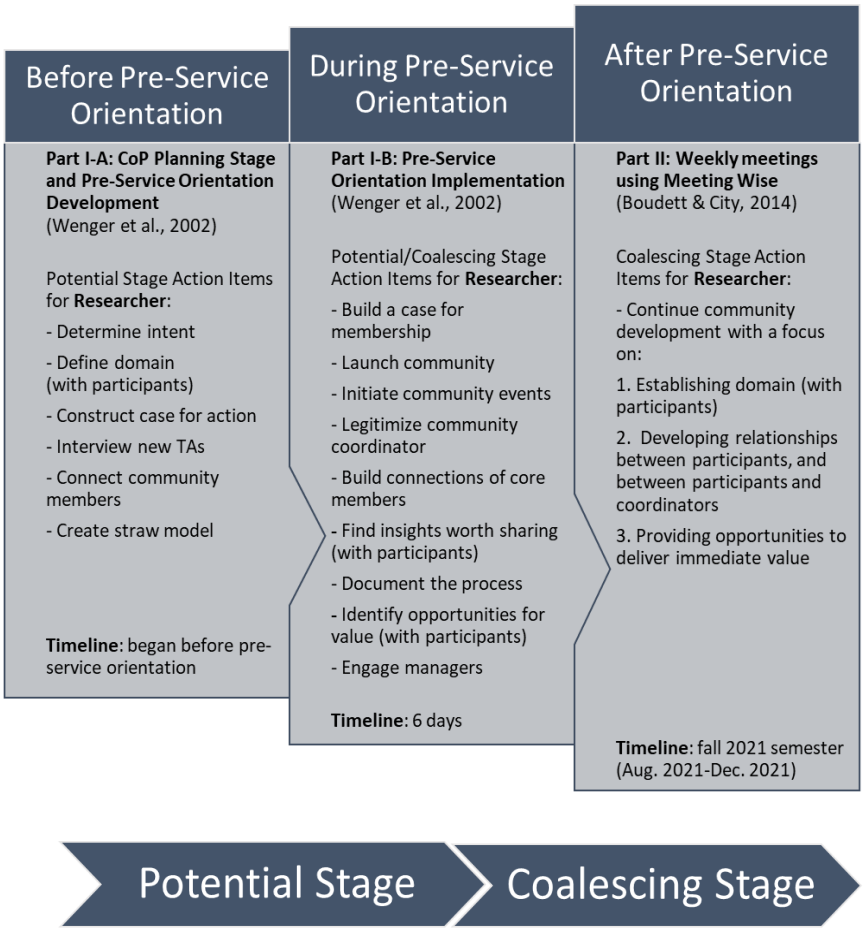
The intervention introduced in the present study relies on the CoP theoretical framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and the concrete suggestions of Wenger et al. (2002) concerning the practical implementation of a CoP. When returning to the PoP, an area of concern expressed by previous TAs was the practicality and hands-on application of the pre-service orientation, as well as the useful acknowledgement of their previous experiences in training. Course observations performed by LPCs and student evaluation data also revealed a need to improve the teacher performance of first semester TAs in LP, CLT, CM, and LMS usage. To address this PoP, I implemented a two-part intervention in the form of a CoP principled pre-service orientation, separated into part I-A and part I-B, as well as weekly meetings guided by the Meeting Wise checklist and agenda templates (Boudett & City, 2014) that formed part II of the intervention. Revisiting Figure 3 in Chapter 1, the first two stages of community development—potential and coalescing—according to Wenger at al. (2002) form the early stages of community development. Given the timeframe of this study of one 15-week academic semester, I chose only the first two stages as a point of emphasis in this study.

The CoP principled pre-service orientation served to address community development in the potential and beginnings of the coalescing stages, while the Meeting Wise-driven weekly meetings served to continue building community in the coalescing stage. Content of the pre-service orientation revolved around delivering immediate value in lesson planning, communicative language teaching, classroom management, and learning management system usage. The curriculum was flexible but had as its main

objective four goals related to the aforementioned points: (1) create lesson plans for the first two days of class, (2) discover techniques for classroom management, (3) implement communicative language teaching practices in the classroom, and (4) integrate technology and the LMS in class. After pre-service orientation, the main objectives were: (1) continue to establish the domain or purpose of the community, (2) grow the community through relationship formation, (3) continue to provide immediate value, and (4) be responsive to the needs of the TAs as the semester progressed. In the sections that follow, I will explore in detail each of the parts of the intervention; the CoP principled pre-service orientation, separated into parts I-A and I-B, and the Meeting Wise-inspired weekly meetings in part II. Furthermore, I will elaborate on specific steps for each design point related to the first two stages of community development. In Figure 6, I present a conceptual model of the CoP principled training program for before, during, and after the pre-service orientation period used in planning and implementation of the intervention of this AR study as well as associated design points.

Figure 6

Conceptual Model of Two-Part CoP Principled Training Program



Note. Created using Microsoft Word Smart-Art.

CoP Principled Pre-Service Orientation, Part I-A

As stated previously, the choice for the intervention during pre-service orientation was a need to address practicality and participation in the pre-service orientation as well as to set the stage for TA acquisition of skills related to lesson planning, communicative language teaching, classroom management, and learning management system usage. The CoP principled pre-service orientation included a reconceptualization of the previous delivery method of the traditional pre-service orientation training in ASU's Tempe

Campus Spanish program. As discussed in Chapter 1, the standard for pre-service TA training was a 5-day orientation course before the start of their first semester and a methodology course with a practicum during their first fall semester. The traditional 5-day pre-service orientation program consisted of department-mandated workshops such as meetings with graduate coordinators, SILC support staff, and other ASU departments such as fire safety and the graduate college. The Spanish department had approximately 20 hours of synchronous—together at the same physical time—with the TAs and employed a flipped classroom methodology. During their asynchronous—not happening at the same physical time—sessions TAs completed tasks related to both theory and practice on a variety of topics such as CLT, flipped classroom instruction, grading, and online technology. In the synchronous sessions, LPCs discussed the information from the previous day and engaged in activities to deepen their knowledge of the material. While these activities, in some ways, mimicked the same types of activities as a CoP, the focus was not on creating a community with established domain, community, and practice through the lens of the CoP theoretical framework.

In line with Lave and Wenger (1991), Wenger (1998), and Wenger at al. (2002), I based this part of the intervention on the theory of learning through legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) and the principles of a CoP. Following Wenger et al.'s (2002) stages of community development, this part of the intervention aimed to introduce the new TAs as members of a CoP. In the first stage of community development—potential—the pre-service orientation focused on the triggers that are necessary for initiating the CoP. While, to some degree, a model can be formed before the community begins, it is important to "be detailed enough to initiate community activity, but not so detailed that it

leaves little room for improvisation and new ideas" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 80). Moreover, despite having a concrete plan for implementation, it is important to note that developmental models only provide some direction. Wenger et al. (2002) state that community development "cannot be taken too literally. These stages, and their sequence are merely typical, and there can be wide variations in the ways communities experience them" (pp. 69-70). Therefore, while most developmental points associated themselves with each respective stage, some points took place at different stages in the research. Wenger et al. (2002) list the following six elements as necessary pieces of a plan in this first stage: determine intent, define domain, build a case for action, identify potential coordinators, interview new TAs, and connect community members, which aligned with Part 1-A of the training model of this study (See Figure 6). After each element, a short text will explain the specific action that I utilized and when it occurred.

Determine the Primary Intent of the Community. This community focused on best-practices as they are used for "developing, validating, and disseminating specific practices" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 76). Wenger et al. (2002) note that communities can serve more than one purpose, but generally conform to one structure suited for the intent of the community (p. 73). As a goal, TAs began to familiarize themselves with the expectations and goals of the Spanish teaching program as well as the core responsibilities of their position and where the documentation of best practices were stored. This stage occurred during all parts of the intervention.

Define the Domain and Identify Engaging Issues. The definition of domain must happen in conjugation with the community. However, in the case for action detailed afterwards, I discussed issues such as teacher education, student outcomes, and overall

community with TAs in all facets of the study. As part of continued meetings and development, we explored the idea of our purpose several times throughout the pre-service orientation, as well as the entire first semester.

Build a Case for Action. This initial activity occurred before pre-service orientation, during the interview portion, when I discussed the purpose of the community and asked for TA reasoning for joining the community. Furthermore, during the first day of orientation, the Director of Spanish Second Language Acquisition and I explained that our main purpose was to prepare TAs with the most essential information for their job in addition to building community and collaboration. To accomplish this, I carried out several types of activities. An example of one activity was a "snowball" activity that was used as an icebreaker activity on day one of pre-service orientation. In the activity, TAs wrote three interesting facts on a piece of paper and threw the papers around as if they were snowballs. Afterwards, they retrieved an unknown paper and interacted with other TAs to find out whose paper they had. Later, they pointed to the person they found with one hand, and to the person who found them with the other hand to illustrate how they are interconnected and can rely on each other. Overall, the purpose of this activity was to present community development as an underlying principle of their experience at ASU.

Identify Potential Coordinators and Thought Leaders. The community coordinator is an important role who "helps the community focus on its domain, maintain relationships, and develop its practice" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 80). As an assistant LPC, I assumed this role to build the practice, and assess the health of the community. It is important that a community coordinator have time, networking skills, technical knowledge, and an ability to focus on both private and public spaces (Wenger et al.,

2002). As such, I was given additional time to work with TAs via a second course release of 10 hours, and I drew from my technological knowledge as an instructional support consultant in SILC's Learning Support Services department. In addition to my role as community coordinator, the Director of Spanish Second Language Acquisition also played a role as a community coordinator and a source of support for new TAs.

Interview Potential Members. Interviews took place before pre-service orientation began to shed light on what knowledge and skills TAs already possessed, to introduce the potential value of the CoP, and to begin to link members. Details on the initial interview instruments will be included in the following sections.

Connect Community Members. As information became relevant, I linked community members to other newcomers through public and private spaces. Initially, the main component of connecting community members came from inviting veteran TAs to come to various sessions of the pre-service orientation. Later, I utilized information from pre-intervention surveys regarding personal and professional hobbies, and informal conversations throughout the year to reach out to other interested students both within the new Spanish TA cohort, and between the new and veteran cohorts. Furthermore, using the same information, I helped organize two public events not related to teaching with the goal of bringing cohort members together. However, these public events were not organized until November and December, respectively, of the fall 2021 semester.

Create a Preliminary Design for the Community. Before beginning this cycle of research, I created a plan using the aforementioned points and the conceptual model, as seen in Figure 6, detailing notes on each of the developmental areas. The information in

this section serves as the straw-model for the intervention's implementation in the research and details how that model changed during the implementation process.

CoP Principled Pre-Service Orientation, Part I-B

In the second stage of coalescing, I focused community development on building awareness of community needs, demonstrating value, and building community. The primary challenge of the coalescing stage was to allow community members to develop relationships, while at the same time demonstrating the immediate value of the community (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 83). Wenger et al. (2002) also list the following nine elements as necessary pieces of a plan in this second stage: build a case for membership, launch the community, initiate community events and spaces, legitimize community coordinator, build connections between core group members, find insights and practices worth sharing, document judiciously, identify opportunities to provide value, and engage managers, which aligned with Part I-B of the training model. It is important to mention again that while this model presents concrete stages, some elements that follow also occurred in Part II of the training model, which will be detailed in the next section. After each element, a short text will explain the specific action that I utilized and when it occurred.

Build a Case for Membership. By means of inviting highly motivated, involved veteran TAs to share personal anecdotes in the early part of this stage, events focused on building intrinsic value of membership in the community. This idea was further developed during Part II in which TAs assumed roles during meetings such as meeting facilitator, note-keeper, and timekeeper, with the intention of increasing satisfaction with the community through participation.

Launch the Community. The initial pre-service orientation served as the event launching the community. The new six-day orientation event had a formal structure and involved not only new Spanish TAs, but veteran TAs as well. Veteran TAs with community building qualities, excellent teaching reviews, and a shared sense of purpose took part in the orientation sessions with new Spanish TAs.

Initiate Community Events and Spaces. While starting in Part I-B, the majority of initiating community events took place in Part-II. During pre-service orientation, TAs not only attended public training events, but also participated in various lunches with both new and veteran TAs. I also set up weekly meetings with specific agendas and Slack messaging—a digital collaboration hub—for public spaces. Office spaces formed private group spaces, despite having an open-floor plan. I attempted to speak with new TAs as often as I could in these informal settings to find out what needs they had.

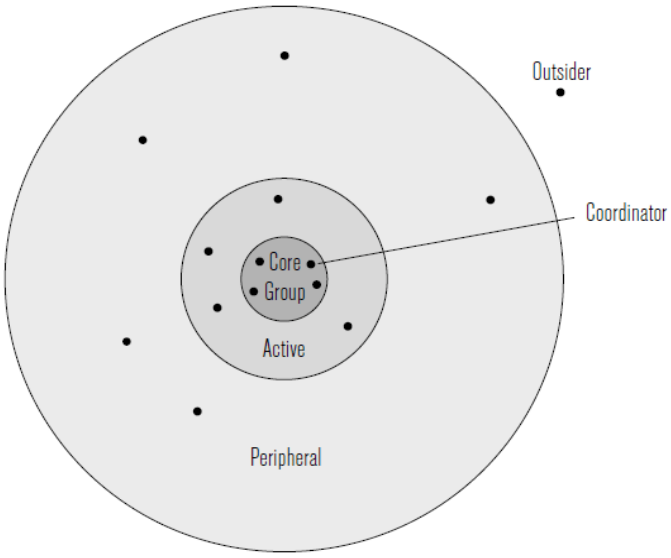
Legitimize Community Coordinator. As the research-practitioner, I assumed the role of community coordinator. To legitimize my role, I relied on my knowledge of TA experience, my knowledge of technology, my role as assistant LPC, and the support of the Director of Spanish Second Language Acquisition. Furthermore, for the majority of level meetings that occurred in Part II, I assumed the facilitator role of the meetings and communicated the meeting agendas to all participants in a timely fashion.

Build Connections Between Core Group Members. For the purposes of this study, I identified all nine TAs as potential core members. However, this does not mean, in fact, that they were "core members," as their participation within the activities over the course of time may have revealed a much different structure. Some members may still have been in the peripheral areas of participation, and depending on their expertise, may

have gravitated to a different participation level in a fluid way. While in this stage, TAs in the peripheral area may have been learning or negotiating their identity as long as they were participating to some degree. The purpose of focusing on all nine TAs as the core group was to create networks among them and between the new TAs and the veteran TAs. Figure 7 presents the degrees of community participation.

Figure 7

Degrees of Community Participation



Note. Adapted from (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 57).

Find the Ideas, Insights, and Practices that are Worth Sharing. The main focus of the sessions in the pre-service orientation involved solving relevant problems within the TAs' community. While this began in Parts I-A and I-B, TAs and I developed a majority of these ideas, insights, and practices during Part II in the weekly level meetings. Following Wenger et al. (2002), I incorporated time during meetings for TAs to share what was happening in their classes and how we could solve those issues. The

purpose of this technique was also to invite those with previous experience to share their experiences with peers. Furthermore, twice during the semester, I employed a plus/minus protocol after the meeting to indicate what worked well in the meetings and what possibly needed changed for future meetings using Google Forms to inform topics worth sharing.

Document Judiciously. As community coordinator, I initially sent all orientation materials to new TAs after orientation via a Canvas site—the LMS used in my context—that contained slide show presentations, handouts, first day of class general resources, and other associated materials. I also documented all meetings with initial agenda creation, and worked with the community to create notes for each meeting. I then shared the agendas via Slack for all participants to view. Finally, I uploaded my classroom lesson plans to a shared Google folder and encouraged other TAs to do the same. These steps occurred beginning in Part I-B, and moved into Part II.

Identify Opportunities to Provide Value. As previously mentioned, TAs often shared what worked well for them and what did not work well for them during weekly meetings. As part of this process, the agendas and weekly meeting topics changed frequently. Wenger et al. (2002) suggest it is critical for community coordinators to identify opportunities to provide value in this early stage of community development (p. 88). As an example, TAs expressed the burdens of balancing academic and teaching responsibilities with personal care. Through conversation and following through on their requests, I organized two outside presenters to come to our meeting times to discuss ways of navigating academic, teaching, and personal lives while being in graduate school.

Engage managers. Finally, I worked with other LPCs, including the Director of Spanish Second Language Acquisition to plan and coordinate different events for the TAs. This collaboration with my colleagues helped to legitimize the process of community creation, and facilitated the growth of the community by providing opportunities for community development. This item was continually present during the training process.

Meeting Wise inspired Weekly Meetings, Part II

Part II of the CoP Principled training program focused on continued growth through the coalescing stage of community development. In this stage, in alignment with Part II of the conceptual model of the training program (see Figure 6), the meetings aimed to: continue to establish domain in conjunction with the participants, develop relationships between participants, and between participants and coordinators, and to provide opportunities to deliver immediate value. To achieve the stated goals, I introduced concepts from Boudett and City's (2014) book: *Meeting Wise: Making the Most of Collaborative Time for Educators,* including an adaptation of their Meeting Wise agenda template, which cannot be included for copyright purposes. Using Boudett and City's (2014) work provided a concrete way to apply Wenger's (1998) CoP theory through building awareness of community needs, demonstrating value, and building community. The Meeting Wise agenda includes important information such as meeting logistics—date, time, and place—meeting objectives, what to prepare for the meeting, schedule, timing, and review procedures of the meeting quality.

When applying the Meeting Wise agenda, Boudett and City (2014) also offered a Meeting Wise checklist to aid in preparing each meeting. The checklist offers 12 points

spread across four main areas of consideration: purpose, process, preparation, and pacing. I used the checklist every other meeting to adjust and align the meetings to be more effective, with Boudett and City (2014) defining an effective meeting as something that "helps a group of people make progress on objectives that are in explicit service of the broader goal of *improving the core work of the educational enterprise: learning and teaching*" (p. 16). Furthermore, the authors mentioned foundational steps, such as setting group norms, acknowledging workstyle preferences, developing agenda templates, keeping track of work, timely sending of agendas to participants, arranging logistics, and mentally preparing for the meeting. (Boudett & City, 2014).

With regard to the aforementioned foundational steps, I first created group norms in the first few sessions with the participation of all TAs who contributed individually to creating a collective set of group norms. Afterwards, those group norms appeared on every meeting agenda as an appendix. Next, during initial interviews, I asked all TAs about their working styles using a compass point protocol (School Reform Initiative, n.d.), which is a four-point tool used to help people understand how individual preferences can affect group collaboration. Over the course of the fall 2021 semester, I digitized all notes, kept them organized, and consistently sent all meeting agendas 5-7 days in advance of the meeting via Slack. As part of the agenda making process, I requested permissions to meet physically in a meeting room in the building where our offices are located, provided appropriate materials and directions for meeting preparation ahead of time, and followed suggestions by Boudett and City (2014) regarding mental preparation before facilitating meetings that centered primarily on activating background knowledge about participants to help facilitate the meeting.

Table 3 summarizes differences between the previous training schedule and the CoP principled training structure.

Table 3

Summary of Training Structure Differences

Previous Training Structure	CoP Principled Training Structure
Pre-Service Orientation principled on knowledge transfer through instructor led sessions aimed at giving a general global view of all graduate teaching assistant (TA) responsibilities.	Pre-Service Orientation principled on knowledge transfer on "best-practices" through community participation.
Five-day pre-service orientation schedule and biweekly meetings.	Six-day orientation schedule with a "before" pre-service orientation component. Also, weekly meetings using Meeting Wise (Boudett & City, 2014) to help cultivate community and provide immediate value.
Scarce involvement of veteran TAs	High degree of involvement of core members of veteran TAs who demonstrate intrinsic motivation and a shared domain.
Mixture of theory and practice based on language program coordinator (LPCs) views and experiences.	Focus on providing immediate value and building value through practical topics encountered in the first days of class and first semester centered on lesson planning (LP), communicative language teaching (CLT), classroom management (CM), and learning management system (LMS) usage during orientation)
Traditionally planned and rigid orientation structure. Flipped methodology.	Community plan design with defined action plan items that allow for community growth. Loose training structure to allow for exploration of needs. Online components given as needed.
No established meeting purpose or norms	Creation of meeting purpose and norms with TA participation
Low peer-to-peer connections and interactions.	High degree of peer networking, both within new TA groups, and between new TA and veteran TA groups.

Instruments

Data Collection Inventory

During the present study, I collected various types of qualitative data using an assortment of instruments. While I used a survey to collect quantitative data before pre-service orientation began, its inclusion as a data type is limited to the use of descriptive statistics. Table 4 summarizes the phases of data collection (before: Part I-A, during: Part I-B, and after: Part II pre-service orientation), the instrument used, and the data type collected.

Table 4

Data Collection Inventory Summary

Phase	Instrument	Type of Data
Before Pre-Service Orientation (Part I-A)	Background survey	Quantitative/ Qualitative
	Pre-intervention interview	Qualitative
During Pre-Service Orientation (Part I-B)	TA exit tickets	Qualitative
After Pre-service Orientation (Part II)	Journal entries	Qualitative
	Post-intervention interview	Qualitative
	Archival Data	Qualitative/ Quantitative
During All Phases	Field notes	Qualitative (researcher produced)

Description of Instruments

Background Survey. Before the beginning of the pre-service orientation program, I sent a consent form combined with the background survey (see Appendix B). The survey contained three sections: teaching/education background, teacher identity,

and demographics. In the teaching/education background section, I presented questions related to background information, such as years of teaching experience, teaching background, and training background. In the teacher identity section, I asked participants to: self-rate on a six-point Likert scale how they saw themselves as teachers, expand on their previous responses, discuss how they reflect on their teaching, detail if they had a teaching philosophy, and rate their feelings of preparedness on a six-point Likert before beginning training. In the final demographics section, I posed questions about gender, age, nationality, and native or non-native Spanish use.

Pre- and Post-intervention interviews. Rationale for employing interview data was as a means of interpreting the meaning behind the descriptions of the participants (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 6). Pre-intervention interviews fulfilled a developmental point of the potential stage of interviewing and connecting potential members. They also provided an opportunity to know more about previous TA experiences, and build a case for involvement. Post-intervention interviews asked questions aimed at understanding TAs engagement in the community, as well as their practices throughout the semester. I conducted semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 15-30 minutes, both before pre-service orientation, and at the beginning of TAs' second semester (see Appendices D and E). To conduct the interviews, I used semi-structured interview protocols, recorded interviews via Zoom, and transcribed them using otter.ai, an automatic transcription software. Once transcribed, I reviewed each transcript twice for accuracy, made appropriate adjustments to the transcriptions, removed names, and then saved the transcriptions as word files with the accompanying video on my password-protected and

encrypted ASU drive. Afterwards, I deleted all transcriptions from otter.ai, and removed the original audio and video files from my laptop.

TA Exit Tickets. During the pre-service orientation, TAs completed daily exit tickets after required training sessions. Exit tickets contained questions related to the quality of the session, as well as relating previous experiences to the day's activities. Exit tickets were designed to connect to the day's topics and elicit information about the resources TAs would use to better their understanding of the day's subject. Moreover, exit tickets served as a means of helping community coordinators understand where to place emphasis in community development. In total, TAs completed four exit tickets during the course of the pre-service orientation. Examples are found in Appendix F.

Journals. Approximately every two weeks during the course of the semester, TAs completed a one-page journal as part of their teaching methodology course in order to document their teaching experiences. In total, TAs completed seven of these journals. As part of this AR study, I included four specific prompts to ask TAs to share challenges faced to elicit information of how they reacted and addressed the challenges. This helped to highlight the qualitative differences between "novice" and "expert," and how they reacted to the challenges. Other areas of the prompt concerned resources used to address those challenges to prompt what human and physical resources TAs used to address, and ideas for future improvement with regard to LP, CLT, CM, and LMS usage. I used prompts 1, 3, 6, and 7 of the seven available prompts for this study. Prompts 2, 4, and 5 were used as distractors. A list of the specific prompts used is found in Appendix G.

Field Notes. Over the course of before, during, and after the pre-service orientation, I took notes of my interactions with the TAs and other stakeholders regarding

TA training, program effectiveness, training delivery, etc. I maintained the field notes as a log on my secure ASU Google drive and totaled 25 separate entries from the beginning of the fall 2021 semester until the end of the fall 2021 semester. An example entry was, "only 5 out of 9 TAs completed the survey. (Even with a reminder). Perhaps those 5 form a part of the Core group? There are of course many reasons as to why it would be like this" where I noted my thoughts on what was happening after pre-service orientation. Another example of an entry was where a TA might have said something specific to me: "I spoke with [a TA] today and they mentioned that some people feel saturated with information, that they come and they feel like their experience has already given them everything they need to know."

Archival Data. Other types of data were included for reference, such as formal observations of TA classes, surveys taken at the end of orientation, and end of semester feedback sessions with new TAs, in which we discussed positive aspects and areas for improvement with respect to various components of the TA Experience. First, TA observations occur once a semester for all TAs. A form that is filled out by the LPC who observes the class accompanies these observations. Over the course of a given academic year, one of four LPCs in the Spanish program can take part in these observations. One area these observations takes note of is the "overall strengths and weaknesses" of the TA involved in the observation, as well as notes for specific areas in which to improve, based on a matrix with 32 different points for classroom teaching related to LP, CLT, CM, and LMS usage. Within those points, each area is rated as "*very good*," "*good*," and "*needs improvement*." The observations are also accompanied by a self-evaluation, which the TA fills out before meeting with the course coordinator. The observations in this study

were used as a point of triangulation between the other qualitative data points, given that they contain the four areas related to the problem of practice of this study. However, given that there is some subjectivity in the evaluation form due to having different evaluators, they were not used as a central data point. Finally, I also used other data collected in the form of informal end of pre-service orientation surveys, and end of semester focus groups as a means of comparison between coded data.

Research Question and Instrument Relationship

Table 5 displays how instruments helped to answer each of the posed RQs.

Table 5

Research Question and Instrument Connection

Research Questions	Main Instruments Used
RQ1: How does participants' positionality—as novice or expert—evolve during their first 15-week semester with regard to lesson planning (LP), communicative language teaching (CLT), classroom management (CM), and learning management system (LMS) usage?	Pre-intervention Interview Exit tickets Journal entries Post-intervention interview Field notes
RQ2: How do previous teaching experiences shape new Spanish graduate teaching assistants' (TA) construction of their novice-expert identities?	Pre-intervention survey Pre-intervention interview Exit tickets Journal entries Post-intervention interview Field notes
RQ3: How do core features of a community of practice (CoP) facilitate or hinder the shaping of graduate teaching assistants' (TA) training practices in a CoP principled training program?	Post-intervention interview Journal entries Field notes Archival data

Data Procedures and Analysis

Data analysis lasted the duration of the study and contained almost exclusively qualitative data sets. I carried out all research under the direction of faculty and received subsequent IRB approval for this study (see Appendix H). Although I used some quantitative data instruments, the analysis of those data sets was limited to descriptive analyses. To analyze the five main qualitative instruments of the study: pre- and post-intervention interviews, exit tickets, journals, and field notes; I employed a first and second cycle of coding, as suggested by Saldaña (2016). I chose this coding methodology as a code is an idea created by a researcher that "attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, assertion or proposition development, theory building, and other analytic processes¨ (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). While the author supports the use of coding as a means of qualitative data inquiry, they caution that no one coding methodology is inherently better, nor is it the only way to analyze qualitative data (Saldana, 2016). Nevertheless, I chose the listed coding methods that follow as a lens through which to view and analyze the qualitative data in this study, and to reflect on the inherent meaning of each data point.

For first cycle coding, I utilized "In Vivo coding" as I did for previous cycles for its applicability to action research, appropriateness for a variety of qualitative research designs, and usefulness for beginning qualitative researchers (Saldaña, 2016, p. 106). In Vivo codes use the voice of the participant and typically produce one code per line of data, although in some instances, a few sentences generate one code. These codes are also represented using quotations to show the voice of the participant. For example, "I don't have experience." Returning to the five main qualitative instruments, I uploaded word

documents of all materials to HyperRESEARCH (HyperRESARCH 4.5.3, 2021)—a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS)—to assist in storing, organizing, managing, and annotating the data sources. To aid in organizing the data, I also chose to create eight different "studies" or bins of information within HyperRESEARCH, one for each of the instruments: exit tickets, field notes, final interviews, initial interviews, and the four journal entries. Specifically, for the journal entries, I created a separate bin for prompts 1, 3, 6, and 7. In total, data analysis produced 746 In Vivo codes. (exit tickets-27; field notes-46; final interviews-247, initial interviews-175; journal prompt 1-58, journal prompt 3-58; journal prompt 6-81; journal prompt 7-54). Each In Vivo code was unique, and therefore, represented an instance of data. Finally, several codes also received memos and annotations for later analysis during the first and second cycles.

Second cycle coding included an intermediary step of code mapping concurrently with the second cycle. I employed code mapping to organize the In Vivo codes into initial categories without decreasing the total number of codes, and to document the process of reaching final themes and assertions (Saldaña, 2016). Concurrently, I utilized focus coding to categorize data further, as focus coding works well with many types of qualitative research designs, pairs well with In Vivo coding procedures employed in first cycle coding, and serves as a means of developing major categories from data (Saldaña, 2016, p. 240).

Throughout the focused coding process, I organized the codes in excel sheets to compare codes for each respective RQ. For example, of the available 746 In Vivo codes, RQ1 generated 130 related codes, RQ2 generated 44 related codes, and RQ3 generated

94 related codes. Further discussion of the creation of themes, categories, and their meaning will be explored in Chapters 4 and 5. While some critiques exist of coding qualitative data in the aforementioned manner, Saldaña (2016) emphasizes that explaining the coding process allows other researchers to reach similar conclusions in their own ways. In addition, Saldaña (2016) notes that coding requires the researcher to reflect critically on each data point and also that coding is useful for analyzing large amounts of data as found in this study.

Trustworthiness

To aid in validating the trustworthiness, results, and rigor of this AR study with regard to qualitative components, the following table adapted from Tracey (2010) indicates several criteria such as topic worthiness, rich rigor, sincerity, creditability, resonance, contribution, ethics, and study coherence. Furthermore, it offers posed questions and specific strategies carried out in the present AR study to support each criteria. The following paragraph will highlight some of the areas of the eight aforementioned criteria found in Table 6.

First, regarding study worthiness, my research connects the experiences of TAs at ASU to the larger national context and addresses a lacuna in the research. Second, within my investigation, I incorporated rich rigor through spending significant time with participants and data through the AR process. Moreover, I triangulated instruments and relied on established theory to guide my research. Third, to focus on honesty and sincerity, I recognized researcher biases and explored limitations of the present study. Fourth, to ensure credibility, I provided transparency in my methods and included thick descriptions of my research process as well as explanations of a multi-cycle coding

process used in data analysis (Saldaña, 2016). Fifth, my study displayed resonance through the utilization of AR, which at its core is utilized to affect change in a specific context. Sixth, the contributions of my research relate research findings of this study to relevant literature and provide a localized context to compare with other generalizable studies. Seventh, through admitting shortcomings and protecting participants' data and anonymity, I address ethical issues in research. Finally, through definition of clear research questions and documenting the research process, I demonstrated meaningful coherence in this work.

Table 6

Research Trustworthiness

Criteria	Question	Strategies Employed in this Action Research (AR) Study
Worthy Topic	Is my study addressing a worthy topic?	Connects to experiences of graduate teaching assistants at ASU Explores relevant current and seminal literature on graduate teaching assistant (TA) training, communities of practice (CoP) and identity Addresses a lacuna in the research
Rich Rigor	Will my study follow principles of rigor and variety?	Spends significant time with participants. Connects intent to theoretical constructs. Relies on some previous used data instruments. Utilizes iterative data analysis through AR. Incorporates triangulation of data analysis through various instruments.
Sincerity	How will I highlight honesty and transparency throughout my study?	Recognizes researcher bias as a researcher/practitioner. Explores limitations of the study. Explores future avenues of research including a clear action plan. Provides insight into ways to improve the study.
Creditability	How can I ensure creditability and trust from others?	Offers a thick description of study. Employs recognized AR methods. Includes two peer reviews of work. Provides transparency of data and methods used in collection and analysis. Includes first and second cycle coding of qualitative data.
Resonance	How will my study reverberate and affect others?	AR at its core is meant to effect change in a specific setting. Includes a dissemination plan as part of the action plan.
Significant Contribution	How can I leave a significant contribution to the field through my study?	Incorporates previous research findings and relevant literature. Provides a specific context to compare with other generalizable studies.
Ethics	How will I incorporate issues of right versus wrong in my study?	Admits shortcomings, biases and beliefs. Protects participants from harm through data protection, anonymity, and pseudonym use.
Meaningful Coherence	How will I create a coherent study throughout the entire process?	Purposeful samples of participants. Presents interconnectivity between all chapters. Defines clear research questions supported by literature and intervention. Addresses data analysis through the lens of theory. Documents the entire research process.

Completed Research Timeline

To illustrate the scope of the entire AR process, I include the entire research timeline in Table 7 that includes brief information about the previous cycles of research outlined in Chapter 1, as well as the data collection process for the present cycle.

Table 7

Research Timeline

Cycle	Date	Activities
Cycle 0	fall 2019 semester	Graduate teaching Assistant (TA) and language program coordinator (LPC) interviews on perceptions of TA training in the Spanish program at ASU.
Cycle 1	spring 2020 semester* (interrupted due to Covid-19)	Survey sent to TAs and LPCs on their perceptions of various training practices.
Cycle 2	spring 2021 semester	Interviews with TAs concerning the factors that contributed to their perceptions of training opportunities.
Cycle 3 (present AR study)	fall 2021-spring 2022 semester	Completed research activities.
	early August 2021	Sent out pre-survey and consent form. Completed pre-intervention interviews.
	mid-August 2021	Began field notes. Carried-out pre-service orientation. Collected TA exit tickets.
	during the fall 2021 semester	TAs completed journal entries. Led weekly meetings using Meeting Wise (Boudett & City, 2014). Spanish Coordinator team completed formal observations.
	early January 2022	Completed post-intervention interview. Began data analysis process.
	January-March 2022	Data analysis, write-up, and peer review.
	April 2022	Dissertation defense and implementation of research dissemination plan.

Summary of Chapter 3

Chapter 3 presented the methodology utilized in this AR study. First, I reiterated RQs used, and detailed the rationale for implementing a basic qualitative AR design. Second, I explored participant recruitment and data, as well as reasoning for the exclusion of some participant data in various formats of the present study. Next, I detailed the two-part CoP principled (Wenger et al., 2002) training program, and explained the implementation of the pre-service orientation (Parts I-A and I-B), and weekly meetings (Part II) using Meeting Wise (Boudett & City, 2014). Then, I detailed the instruments employed in the data collection process, their relation to the different phases of data collection, and their connection to the stated RQs. Moreover, I presented specific data analysis procedures, and a table adapted from Tracey (2010) to aid in validation of the trustworthiness, results, and rigor of this study. Finally, I provided a research timeline to illuminate the scope of the entire research process from the beginnings of cycle 0 to the more detailed steps of the current cycle of research.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The previous chapter detailed the methodology utilized in this action research (AR) study, including data collection procedures and analysis techniques. The present chapter will elaborate on the results of that analysis. First, I will present the associated themes, categories, and assertions for all three research questions (RQs) gathered from the qualitative data, as well as related sources. For each RQ, I will also expand upon the coding procedures from Chapter 3 and provide examples of coded data. Finally, while in the present chapter I will elaborate on the results by contextualizing the theme and assertion with sample participant data, I will discuss and interpret findings in Chapter 5.

Using the data analysis procedures outlined in Chapter 3, eight major themes emerged from the first and second cycles of coding. First, relating to RQ1, three themes emerged: adjusting to the ASU community, difficulties in implementing communicative language teaching (CLT), and difficulties managing the classroom (CM). Second, relating to RQ2, three themes emerged: inexperienced TAs transfer leadership qualities, positive perceptions of training, and negative perceptions of continued training. Third, relating to RQ3, two themes emerged: positive effects of community and factors hindering community of practice (CoP) development. Connected to each theme are categories that formed from organizing codes in the second cycle of data analysis. Also for each theme, I present an assertion, where assertion refers to "a statement that proposes a summative, interpretive observation of the local contexts of study" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 15). Table 8 reports on the themes, assertions, and categories that resulted from data analysis. Following the table, I will expound on each RQ, theme, and assertion.

Table 8

Themes, Categories, Assertions, and Related Sources

RQ1: How does participants' positionality—as novice or expert—evolve during their first 15-week semester with regard to lesson planning (LP), communicative language teaching (CLT), classroom management (CM), and learning management system (LMS) usage?		
Themes and Categories	Assertions	Sources
1. *Adjusting to the ASU community*. 1.1. Novices progressing somewhat linearly. 1.2. Non-novices experiencing inverted bell-curve. 1.3. Positioning as "emerging expert."	1. Regardless of previous experience or positionality, graduate teaching assistants (TAs) experience an adjustment period to the new community in the ASU context.	Interviews, exit tickets, and journals
2. *Difficulties in implementing CLT.* 2.1. Creating CLT activities is challenging.	2. CLT is a complex process that requires creating meaningful activities that focus on meaning and form.	
3. *Difficulties managing the classroom.* 3.1. Managing the classroom involves complex situations. 3.2. Feelings of imposter syndrome.	3. CM involves a myriad of possible situations that can be affected by external factors.	
RQ2: How do previous teaching experiences shape new Spanish graduate teaching assistants' (TA) construction and of their novice-expert identities?		
Themes and Categories	Assertions	Sources
4. *Inexperienced TAs transfer leadership qualities.* 4.1. Applying leadership experience. 4.2. Applying tutoring experience.	4. Inexperienced TAs relate leadership and proxy-teaching positions to teaching in the university context, giving them confidence to begin their teaching experience despite a lack of direct university teaching experience.	Interviews, background survey, exit tickets, journals, and field notes
5. *Positive perceptions of training*. 5.1. Needing experience to become an excellent teacher. 5.2. Always having something new to learn.	5. Regardless of previous experience, TAs feel continued development and experience are necessary to move toward legitimate peripheral participation.	
6. *Negative perceptions of continued training*. 6.1. Previous teaching experience leading to perception of training as unnecessary.	6. Continued or repetitive training is perceived as unnecessary signaling a need for adding value to training.	
RQ3: How do core features of a community of practice (CoP) facilitate or hinder the shaping of graduate teaching assistant (TA) training practices' in a CoP principled training program?		
Themes and Categories	Assertions	Sources
7. *Positive effects of community* 7.1 Perceiving colleagues as a support system 7.2.Connecting with others in social settings 7.3 Sharing both material and intellectual knowledge	7. The presence of core components of CoP development lead to positive effects in the training process.	Exit tickets, journals, field notes, final interviews, and archival data
8. *Factors hindering CoP development* 8.1. Lacking a shared domain 8.2. Lacking mutual engagement	8. Dysfunction arises from missing and off-track CoP elements of domain and community.	

Research Question 1

The first RQ sought to investigate the journey of the graduate teaching assistant (TA) as they experienced training, with regard to their positionality as novices or experts. RQ1 states, "How does participants' positionality—as novice or expert—evolve during their first 15-week semester with regard to lesson planning (LP), communicative language teaching (CLT), classroom management (CM), and learning management system (LMS) usage?" Before discussing the themes associated with this question, it is beneficial to illustrate further the data analysis procedures involved. As outlined in Chapter 3, In Vivo coding generated 746 codes among interviews, exit tickets, journal prompts, and field notes. During second cycle coding, I applied 130 of those codes to RQ1, for their relation to experience as novices or experts, and each of the four areas of teaching outlined in the PoP as focused codes: LP, CLT, CM and LMS usage. For the purposes of this study, I applied related technology codes to the LMS category, and general teaching as a code that encompassed LP, CLT, CM, and LMS usage.

For each In Vivo code, I assigned a positionality of "novice," "emerging expert," or "expert" based on the associated participant statement. For example, "novice" reflects simple speech or lack of experience, "emerging expert" shows growth or doubt about a topic, and "expert" clearly communicates confidence, a great deal of knowledge, or a complexity of understanding of a topic. Table 9 depicts examples of initial In Vivo codes, their assigned relation to teaching practices, perceived positionality, and their respective quotes to illustrate this process. It also exemplifies how the three categories of "novice," "emerging expert," and "expert" differ. While this table is not exhaustive, its purpose is to give the reader an idea of how I completed the coding process in cycles 1 and 2.

Table 9

Coding Examples for RQ 1

Positionality	In Vivo code	Relation	Participant Quote
Novice	"a bit like imposter syndrome"	General Teaching	"So in the eyes of my students, my, I guess, credibility is something that I'm like, been fixating on a little bit like kind of imposter syndrome."
	"haven't had issues with classroom management"	CM	"Actually I have been very lucky and haven't had many issues. So I don't know exactly. I haven't been presented with anything very complicated."
	"don't have experience teaching"	General Teaching	"I don't have experience teaching Spanish, I have experienced teaching some other things like tutoring and stuff. But yeah, that's basically it."
Emerging Expert	"had to create a syllabus and lesson plan for my master's program"	LP	"I have experience with the creation of class objectives because I had to create a syllabus and lesson plan for a master's course, but I need more practice."
	"I was able to create lesson plans that were well-timed"	LP	"Coming into the program with no teaching experience, I wasn't sure how exactly to divide time between slides so that I didn't finish too early but that I also covered all the material that I wanted to. Watching [a coordinator's] class helped me, and after talking to other TAs with more experience, I was able to create lesson plans that were well-timed."
Expert	"calmly make a phone call"	LMS	I decided to calmly make a phone call to classroom support line and let them know what was going on. In the meantime, while I waited for them to arrive, I downloaded my Canvas presentation as a PDF and uploaded it to Canvas so my students could access my presentation on their phones or laptops and follow along that way. It worked surprisingly well!"
	"I taught Spanish 101 and 102, just the same textbook"	LP	"Yes, because [at] the previous university, I taught Spanish 101 and 102, just the same textbook, Portales. So it was a very easy transition."

Adjusting to the ASU Community

Assertion 1 states that regardless of previous experience or positionality, TAs experience an adjustment period to the new community in the ASU context. The following theme-related components were found to substantiate the theme and assertion: (a) novices progressing somewhat linearly; (b) non-novices experiences inverted bell-

curve; and (c) positioning as "emerging expert." To reach this assertion, I compiled a list of all 130 In Vivo codes and their associated positionalities, as depicted in the example in Table 9. From there, I organized instruments used in chronological order to elucidate the evolution of positionality during the 15-week semester. Using each instance of positionality associated with the codes, I compiled a table to illustrate the total number of instances of positionality, regardless of relation to LP, CLT, CM, or LMS usage. This data, found in Table 10, also contains accompanying percentages of instances of each of the three positionalities for each instrument. For example, for initial interviews, there were 18 instances of "novice" positionality (56.25% of total instances in initial interviews), 10 instances of "emerging expert" positionality (31.25%), and 4 instances of "expert" positionality (12.50%).

Table 10

General Positionality Evolution

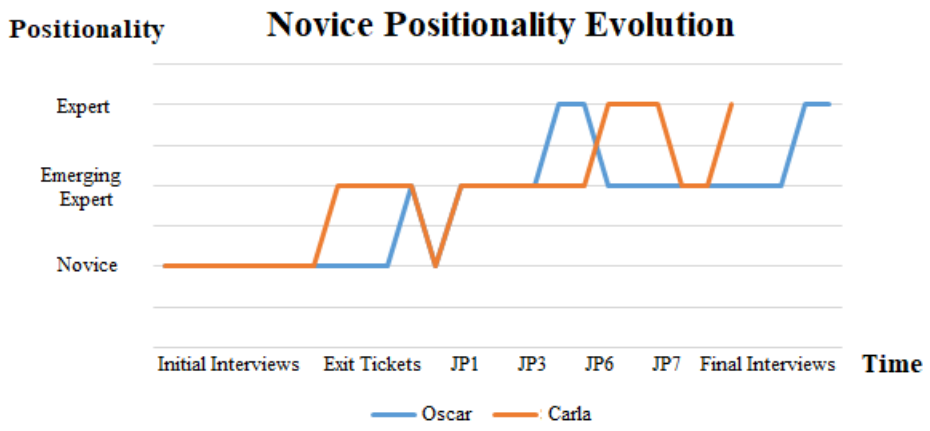
Instrument	Instances of Positionality			
	Novice	Emerging Expert	Expert	TOTAL
Initial Interviews (Before pre-service, fall 2021)	18 (56.25%)	10 (31.25%)	4 (12.50%)	32
Exit Tickets (During pre-service, fall 2021)	4 (33.33%)	4 (33.33%)	4 (33.33%)	12
JP1 (Week 2, fall 2021)	7 (41.12%)	10 (58.82%)	0 (0.00%)	17
JP3 (Week 4, fall 2021)	3 (23.08%)	10 (76.92%)	0 (0.00%)	13
JP6 (Week 12, fall 2021)	4 (28.57%)	10 (71.43%)	0 (0.00%)	14
JP7 (Week 13, fall 2021)	1 (7.69%)	0 (0.00%)	12 (92.31%)	13
Final Interviews (Beginning of spring 2022)	0 (0.00%)	20 (68.97%)	9 (31.03%)	29
Totals	37 (28.46%)	64 (49.23%)	29 (22.31%)	130

When analyzing Table 10, there are three main points. First, “novice” positionality decreases over time, from 18 instances overall in initial interviews to zero instances during the final interviews. Second, at the beginning of the semester, there are instances of “expert” positionality, though during the semester, positionality changes and more “emerging expert” categories appear, while at the same time “expert” positionalities disappear. At the end of the semester, “expert” positionalities begin to reappear. Third, of the three positionalities, “emerging expert” appears the most as a category between “novice” and “expert,” in which the language of the participant in the instruments represents doubt or growth.

While analyzing participants individually, the two TAs who self-identified as not having teaching experience in the university context progressed somewhat linearly. In other words, at the beginning of the semester, there were many instances of “novice” positionality. However, as the semester progressed, those “novice” instances were replaced with increasingly more instances of “emerging expert” and “expert” positionalities. For the purposes of reporting, I refer to these participants as “novices” for their initial positionality. Figure 8 represents this trend. The y-axis represents the three positionalities of “novice,” “emerging expert,” and “expert,” while the x-axis represents time from initial interviews to final interviews. For example, both participants show steady movement toward the “expert” positionality.

Figure 8

Novice Positionality Evolution

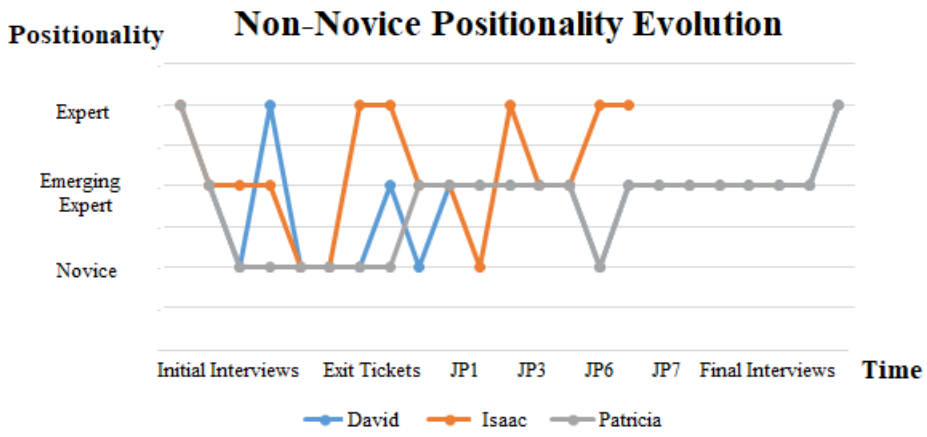


Note: Oscar and Carla have different numbers of instances of positionality. The x-axis represents time in the sense of moving from the first instrument to the last instrument chronologically and not as specific points in time. Each participant, however, has positionality grouped together by instrument.

On the other hand, TAs who self-identified as having experience in teaching in the university context began the semester demonstrating "emerging expert" and "expert" positionalities, but then they moved from "expert" to "emerging expert" or even "novice" in some cases once the semester began. At the end of the semester, these TAs again began to show "emerging expert" and "expert" positionalities. For the purposes of reporting, I refer to these participants as "non-novices" for their initial positionality as "emerging expert" or "expert." Figure 9 represents this trend. The y-axis represents the three positionalities of "novice," "emerging expert," and "expert," while the x-axis represents time from initial interviews to final interviews. For example, Patricia represents the most inverted bell-curve, but David and Isaac also show instances of the dips created from moving from "expert" or "emerging expert" to "novice," and back.

Figure 9

Non-Novice Positionality Evolution



Note: David, Isaac, and Patricia have different numbers of instances of positionality. The x-axis represents time in the sense of moving from the first instrument to the last instrument chronologically and not as specific points in time. Each participant, however, has positionality grouped together by instrument.

TAs also mentioned that learning about the ASU context was important. From my field notes, I recorded in passing with a TA that it would be beneficial to focus specifically on things that "ASU had". They also mentioned that people have experience and some of them might not necessarily feel that they are getting everything they need. Isaac mentioned with regard to adapting to ASU: "I think for me, it's just getting the full image of the ASU campus culture as [sic] student, and professional wise. For me, a month and a half wasn't enough to get to, know how the students like programs." Patricia echoed the importance of understanding the ASU context when approaching what they needed to learn: "So I'm not sure I guess, kind of like things that I learned at [a university] but now adapting it to Arizona State, right? So, I guess just like seeing the differences." David also mentioned they felt they were able to implement their

knowledge, but there is an adjustment to the ASU context: “I just had to get used more to like changing from a term to a semester, and just different things that the program does.” These comments help to illustrate the adjustment period that TAs may experience.

Difficulties in implementing CLT

Assertion 2 states that CLT is a complex process that requires creating meaningful activities that focus on meaning and form. The following theme-related component was found to substantiate the theme and assertion: creating CLT activities is challenging. Within the general evolution of participants’ positionalities, I explored the evolution of their positionalities in relation to LP, CLT, CM, and CLT. Of these four areas, CLT had the highest percentage of “novices” instances at 35% (n=6) of all instances of CLT across all three positionalities. In other words, of all the codes related to CLT, I identified 35% (n=6) of codes as “novice.” Furthermore, of the four areas, CLT had the least amount of expert positionality instances (n=3). TAs expressed difficulty in creating CLT activities with Oscar mentioning early on, “I am realizing that it’s relatively easy to run out of engaging communicative activities without boring the students from repetition.” Later in the semester, they reiterated that it is “challenging coming up with communicative activities that the students find interesting and engaging.” Patricia also commented on the difficulty of creating communicative activities that connect with the context and assessments of the class:

> I struggle[d] with this situation [creating communicative activities], because I realized that we have to cover various topics and teach them how, and what is going to be on the test. So, I feel that it is very difficult, after several days with the topics, to create activities that connect with a general context.

Toward the end of the semester, Oscar again commented on the complexity of creating CLT activities in relation to the material: “the first thing I would like to say is that I am SO GLAD [capitalization in original text] that [a chapter of the book] is over! It was truly a struggle to plan communicative activities that used such a wide range of verbs.” Isaac agreed with Oscar and even emphasized a need to focus on the grammar:

> [a chapter of the book] without a doubt, has put my students to the test, and of course me, given that the grammatical part has been difficult for their level. So, it is essential that we carefully emphasize the verbs that have root changes.

TAs expressed doubt often and consistently with regard to CLT throughout the semester—even into week 12 of the semester—with regard to the complexity of the process.

Difficulties Managing the Classroom

Assertion 3 states that CM involves a myriad of possible situations that can be affected by external factors. The following theme-related components were found to substantiate the theme and assertion: (a) managing the classroom involves complex situations, and (b) feelings of imposter syndrome. Like CLT, CM had the second highest percentage of “novice” instances at 33% (n=12) of all instances of CM across all three positionalities. Again, this meant that 33% of all codes related to CM were “novice.” In comparison, LP and LMS usage only had a “novice” instance percentage rates of 19% (n=8) and 22% (n=4) across all three instances. CM also had the second lowest number of expert positionality instances (n=4). TAs expressed that CM involved complex situations. Patricia mentioned with regard to a difficult situation with student involvement in class: “upon reflecting about the situation, I do not find a solution that I would like to implement (so far).” David commented early on with regard to the rules of the university

and masks (due to the Covid-19 pandemic): “I’m wondering what’s going to happen with masks, if you’re nervous or with the ASU policy. So that’s something to know, more concerning about the balance.” Isaac also commented on how politics and complex situations can affect their ability to manage the classroom:

> I’m confident to teach the class and the teaching materials. But then, I don’t know what to expect with my students. Right? So, then I have to learn how to navigate into [*sic*] the classroom with the environment. Especially with it comes to elections or how to dissolve their, their, conflict. Right?”

Oscar and Carla both expressed a feeling of imposter syndrome with regard to their roles in managing the classroom. Oscar stated, “I’m probably not older than many of my students…so in the eyes of my students, my, I guess, credibility is something that I’ve, like, been fixating on a little bit kind of like imposter syndrome.” Carla echoed this feeling with regard to speaking in class, “I mean, I feel like sometimes I have a bit of like imposter syndrome, and like struggling with like, confidence whenever I’m speaking.” Carla also commented on not feeling confident in the classroom:

> Because, you know, I am very young, I kind of look like I’m still an undergrad. So, I think, it’s important to , you know, I mean, I want people to respect me, but I also don’t want them to think that, you know, I’m so strict and like, they can’t talk to me about thing or, you know, I don’t want to be a pushover, but I also don’t want to be too strict. So trying to find a balance there.

Both Oscar and Carla illustrated the difficulties of managing the classroom from a position of confidence.

Research Question 2

While RQ1 sought to investigate the journey of the TA as they experienced their training, RQ2 explored what previous experiences affected that journey. It was important to understand, to a greater degree, how previous teaching experience plays a role in their

training experience. RQ2 states, “How do previous teaching experiences shape new Spanish graduate teaching assistants’ (TA) construction of their novice-expert identities?” Like RQ1 in the previous section of this chapter, before beginning to discuss the themes associated with RQ2, it is beneficial to illustrate further the data analysis procedures involved. During second cycle coding, I applied 44 of the 746 In Vivo codes to RQ2 for their relation to previous experience, and assigned “novice,” “emerging expert,” or “expert,” positionalities similar to the examples provided in Table 9 for RQ1. I also utilized background survey data and field notes to obtain more information about each participant’s self-reported teaching background and related experiences.

A summary of participants, reported in Table 2 in Chapter 3, includes names, genders, completed teacher training before arriving at ASU, previous teaching experience in terms of years, and self-reported pre-training teaching ratings on a six-point Likert scale. The setting and participants section of Chapter 3 also indicates average age (25.6 years old), previous educational level attained by participants, self-perception of preparedness to teach, and native language. As indicated in Chapter 3, I presented participant data in this manner to protect participants due to their proximity to other TAs in the program and their involvement in the AR process. Two TAs—Carla and Oscar—indicated they had not completed teacher training before coming to ASU and also indicated they had no previous university teaching experience, while three TAs—Patricia, David, and Isaac—indicated they had previous training experience and prior university teaching experience. Four TAs self-reported as “good” teachers before training began, while one TA self-reported as “very good.” All data was analyzed in the second cycle using focused coding (Saldaña, 2016), through which three themes emerged:

inexperienced TAs transfer leadership qualities, positive perceptions of training, and negative perceptions of training.

Inexperienced TAs Transfer Leadership Qualities

Assertion 4 states that inexperienced TAs—or those TAs without prior university teaching experience—relate leadership and proxy-teaching positions to teaching in the university context, giving them confidence to begin their teaching experience despite a lack of direct university teaching experience. The following theme-related components were found to substantiate the theme and assertion: (a) applying leadership experience, and (b) applying tutoring experience. Both Carla and Oscar self-rated as having between one and three years of teaching experience. However, Carla stated, "I don't have experience teaching Spanish, I have experienced teaching some other things like tutoring." Carla also self-rated as a "good" teacher on a six-point Likert scale of: *poor*, *below average*, average, *good*, *very good*, and *excellent*. Carla connected their experience as a tutor through helping students achieve better scores and applied it to the university context: "I was able to help students with their assignments and help them achieve higher scores on their tests and quizzes; however, I do not have a lot of experience and feel that there is more room for improvement."

Oscar also self-rated as having one-three years of previous teaching experience and connected their experience as a leader to the new university context: "I mean, whether it matters in the professional world at all, throughout high school…I always had leadership positions." They continued that people:

> "would be telling me like, 'oh, thank you for the impact you had. You made me feel accepted and excited to be here.' So, I felt like I was doing something right in that aspect. And so, I definitely, I would say 'good', because a lot of people don't get to have that sort of experience before jumping into their career. But, like I said, in terms of, especially Spanish instruction, I have no reason to say I'm more than good at this.

Oscar made a deep connection with their previous leadership experience to place them in position to begin university teaching, and related the leadership of a teacher to that of their previous experience.

Positive Perceptions of Training

Assertion 5 states that regardless of previous experience, TAs feel continued development and experience are necessary to move toward legitimate peripheral participation. The following theme-related components were found to substantiate the theme and assertion: (a) needing experience to become an excellent teacher and (b) always having something new to learn. Patricia stated at the beginning of the semester that through reflection:

> It allows us teachers to point out things that may not be working so well (whether it be for the student or the instructor), and, in turn, allow us to make changes that may have a better outcome than before.

Carla commented similarly, "I think it is important to reflect on what goes well and also what needs improvement so that we can become better teachers and provide the best environment for the students." Isaac also emphasized the importance of growth: "I think there is always room to grow and learn new methods of teaching." These TAs highlight their feelings of the benefits of reflection in the process of becoming a teacher within the training process.

Needing experience to become an excellent teacher also appeared often in the data. Oscar noted:

> Being the best of the best, in my opinion, requires experience. While I undoubtedly push myself to be the best teacher that I can be, one thing that can only come with time is experience. In my opinion, excellent teachers are excellent not only because of their preparedness and dedication, but because they have experienced such a wide variety of unexpected student situations, and figured out how to get through them all. If teachers can be compared to engines that pull a class forward through motivation and facilitation, I think experience over time would be the oil that makes everything run more smoothly.

Carla also commented on what rating oneself as a teacher means: "I think that jump between 'good' and 'very good' takes lot of effort and experience." They continued:

> While I acknowledge that experience does not always correlate with how good a teacher is, I do think that it plays somewhat of a role. Experience gives instructors more confidence and improves their ability to handle a variety of difficult situations.

David expanded on their self-rating by explaining how a lack of experience played a role in their decision: "I feel, like, confident, to be elevated about average, but the lack of experience was why I didn't put anything higher." Each of these TAs referred to experience as being a key component to becoming legitimate teachers.

Expressing the idea of always having something new to learn was also consistent in the data. Patricia noted, "personally, I don't think I will ever rate myself 'excellent' as there is always something that one can improve on." Isaac repeated a similar sentiment: "I think there is always room to grow and learn new methods of teaching."
David added, "there are always new things that a teacher can try in a class." The previous statement eludes to an understanding that continual growth is a part of becoming a teacher.

Negative Perceptions of Continued Training

Assertion 6 states that continued or repetitive training is perceived as unnecessary signaling a need for adding value to training. The following theme-related component was found to substantiate the theme and assertion: previous teaching experience leading to perceptions of training as unnecessary. While there was prevalent data to illustrate the perceived positive effects of training, negative perceptions of continued training also appeared. After pre-service orientation, five out of nine TAs completed a survey (which may be different than the fieve TAs who ultimately completed this AR study due to participant anonymity). Using the post pre-service survey as archival data, three of the participants that completed the survey indicated that the information was either known or well known, with one TA adding that there was a lot of repetitive information representing a lack of perceived value. During the semester, I noted in my field notes that a TA mentioned, "some people feel saturated with information that they come and they feel like their experience has already given them everything they need to know." The conversation with this particular TA centered on training in general, and not any particular training session. Isaac also emphasized the repetitive nature of training and a need to change them when discussing ways to improve training practices in my context:

> I think to just remove things that are repetitive. Like, with not, I'm not going to have the methodology classes, the class anymore. But, I think a lot of, a lot of what we learn in the orientation. It's brought to our methodology, methodologies class.

At a later point in the semester, I again noted in my field notes that a TA recommended differentiating materials between inexperienced teachers—those with no university teaching experience—and experienced teachers—those with experience teaching

university classes. These examples illustrate how TAs can perceive little value in current training practices, regardless of perceived or actual training need.

Research Question 3

The third RQ investigated the core features of a descriptive model associated with creating a CoP—that Admiraal et al. (2012) referred to as a *teacher community*—and the presence of those features within the CoP principled training program intervention used in this AR study. The purpose of RQ3 was to determine what features were present, and to explore the perceived effects, without measuring the overall efficacy of each core feature. RQ3 states, "How do core features of a community of practice (CoP) facilitate or hinder the shaping of graduate teaching assistants' (TA) training practices in a CoP principled training program?" Before beginning to discuss the themes associated with this question, it is beneficial to illustrate further the data analysis procedures involved as done with both RQ1 and RQ2. During second cycle coding, I applied 94 of 746 In Vivo codes to RQ3 for their relation to the core features of community of practice.

For each In Vivo code, I assigned one of three core features to each code: mutual engagement (ME), joint enterprise (JE), or shared repertoire (SR). While Admiraal et al. (2012) depict group identity, shared domain, and shared interactional repertoire as their core features in their descriptive model, they also indicated that their definition of those features confirms with Wenger's (1998) ideas of ME, JE, and SR. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, I utilized ME, JE, and SR, as the core features in this study. Admiraal et al. (2012) also presented 19 indicators that accompanied each core feature. While I used these indicators as a secondary source of analysis, I focused on the core features for each code as Admiraal et al. (2012) suggest, "the level of analysis (but not

the level of coding) should be the three core features instead of the separate indicators. The later might be used in order to interpret the core features" (p. 353). Table 11 depicts examples of initial In Vivo codes, their core category, their assigned indicator, and their respective quotes to illustrate this process. While this table is not exhaustive, its purpose is to give the reader an idea of how I completed the coding process as done with RQ1 and RQ2.

Table 11

Coding Examples for RQ 3

Core Category	In Vivo code	Indicator	Participant Quote
Mutual Engagement (ME)	"know I am supported and in good hands"	Emotional Safety	"Now I feel prepared because I know I am supported and I am in good hands"
	"With the older TAs through events"	Social Ties	"And then with the older TAs through like events, the department has like the Christmas event and the salsa, and also just seeing them in the break room. Like eating and we get to know each other through there."
Joint Enterprise (JE)	"being new together gave us all something in common"	Common Ground	"I think being new altogether gave us something in common immediately, right off the bat. And made it easy for us to socialize together and talk about things so.
	"lending my lesson plans"	Shared Knowledge	"Sending my lesson plans, lending my activities in case somebody didn't have time or something like that."
Shared Repertoire (SR)	"have been able to work with colleagues and get ideas"	Intellectual Building	"Throughout the semester, I have been able to work with colleagues and get ideas for how they teach in their classroom which helps in my own."
	"through the act of sharing"	Intellectual Building	"Essentially gaining experience through the act of sharing."

Positive Effects of Community

Assertion 7 states that the presence of components of CoP development lead to positive effects in the training process. The following theme-related components were

found to substantiate the theme and assertion: (a) perceiving colleagues as a support system, (b) connecting with others in social settings, and (c) sharing both material and intellectual knowledge. One of the first generated categories in the data analysis process was TAs perceiving colleagues as a support system relating to ME. Early in the semester, Oscar commented that they can "get into contact with colleagues on Slack" if they needed any help. Isaac also immediately pointed out during pre-service orientation that he was going to meet with other TAs to practice lesson planning. Besides other TAs, David, for example, relied on the support of a coordinator: "I went to [a coordinator's] office and [they] helped me to talk about, and check on a situation with a student."

Participants also made connections in social settings, another feature of ME. Patricia commented on how these connections are beneficial: "yeah, definitely beneficial, because you know, someone has similar experiences with you, they can help guide you or just getting the opinions of your colleagues." TAs also attended social events organized by the department. At one social dancing event, I jotted down in my field notes that 10 TAs and several coordinators attended. Isaac commented on how these types of events brought balance and peace to their life: "the salsa event on Tuesday fascinated me. I believe these events offer us an opportunity to let our academic and teaching activities rest a bit, and therefore, pay attention to the little things that give us peace." Patricia also felt these events were opportunities to make connections across cohorts: "and then with the older TAs, through like events, the department has like the Christmas event, and the salsa, and also just seeing them in the breakroom. Like we get to know each other through there." David even mentioned that getting together outside of the university for

drinks or other leisure activities was beneficial in getting to know other TAs, both new and veteran.

Sharing both material and intellectual knowledge was a prevalent category related to JE. Many TAs participated in knowledge sharing. Patricia, early in the semester, relied on previous materials from TAs already involved in the program, "A resource that I will utilize to achieve this goal is to use the resources of past TAs." David spoke about the utility of knowledge sharing:

> Either during the meetings or outside the meetings, either creating, like, PowerPoints, share PowerPoints with each other. Especially, I think some TAs were doing more like game activates, they were sharing, like what they were doing. Just as a fun way to add other types of activities to the classroom.

Carla also felt the meetings used in the intervention, specifically, were beneficial to knowledge acquisition and even expressed the same dynamic as David of both in school and out of school meetings:

> Okay. Well, I did think that the meetings are helpful, the weekly meetings because I was able to get, especially whenever we got to work on, like, ideas for the classroom together, or grading together, I feel like that helped me a lot to kind of get those other ideas. So I would like to continue having those kinds of meetings, possibly like, you know, in school, but also outside of school

As previously explained, while reviewing the archival data from the meeting agendas, TAs produced interactional norms as a cohort to create a standard for meeting interactions, a feature of SR. These norms, once created, formed a part of the evolving agenda. They also took turns volunteering for essential roles such note-taker and timekeeper, which were assigned during meetings and represented another feature of SR. Patricia extended those meetings to other opportunities to meet and work together in the Spanish department, relating back to JE:

> I like that we do like department. The meetings that we have, that is like the, the ones that are monthly that we do, and we have different workshops. So I think that's really cool, to keep them going. Um, and the sharing of like PowerPoints and documents, I think that's really great.

Oscar attributed the various trainings and courses they were involved in as being fundamental to increasing their knowledge of teaching:

> I now have a much, MUCH [capitalization in original text] deeper understanding of different pedagogical approaches to language learning than I did in August of 2021. Between [the] teaching Methodologies course, the orientation, our TA meetings, and [a] course that I'm taking this semester, I feel like I have way more tools to gauge the value of my lesson plans and ensure that they are rooted in sound theories and approaches.

While the actual effect of these activities is unknown, the manner in which the participants describe the events appear to have positive effects on the TA experience.

Factors Hindering CoP Development

Assertion 8 states that dysfunction arises from missing and off-track community elements of domain and community. The following theme-related components were found to substantiate the theme and assertion: (a) lacking a shared domain and (b) lacking mutual engagement. While perceived positive effects were noted, factors that hindered the CoP development were also present. Again, domain "creates common ground and a sense of common identity. A well-defined domain legitimizes the community by affirming its purpose and value to members and other stakeholders" (Wenger et al., 2002).

When exploring the shared domain, I questioned TAs about the purpose of meeting with their colleagues. David thought the purpose was to "check that we were on the same page, and with some help, if we had questions," while Oscar felt the purpose of the meeting was to be a "collective brain." They elaborate:

> There are countless things throughout the semester that I don't think of that get brought up and our meetings, and I'm glad they do. But, I'm sure that I brought up something that somebody else didn't think of. And so, in that way, our meetings kind of function as a space for us to use all of our brains to come together, and then take away a more informed approach to our teaching.

Carla on the other hand, approached the purpose of meeting as having both an academic and personal purposes:

> Well, I think there's several purposes. I think, in an academic sense, it allowed us to kind of like, share ideas with each other and kind of set like a standard grading scale type of thing. And then on a personal level, I think it's nice to create that kind of bonding, especially whenever you're doing some more things like we're all students, and we're all teaching this kind of intro level courses. So I think like it solidified us, I guess, academically, but also socially, as well to be able to help each other out.

Patricia also had a slightly different idea that the purpose was to "kind of go over like important, like, upcoming works, assignments, like things we need to grade or stuff we need to do specifically for the course." Finally, Isaac felt that despite having a purpose, the meeting times were not valuable: "I think to share ideas, and to help one another, but at some point, we only talk about it in the meeting, outside of the meeting, worthless." The quotes show participants in this sense do not have the same understanding of what the purpose of meeting is, regardless of the defined purpose.

Lacking mutual engagement also appeared. In the previous section, I explored mutual engagement as a positive feature, but it was also a factor that hindered the development of the CoP. During the semester, I attempted to connect both new and veteran TAs. As part of this process, I asked all veteran TAs to share their interests to match up with the interests of the new TAs shared with me in initial interviewing. At first, this process was informal; but later in the semester, I sent formal emails to all groups interested in similar concepts. For example, an email to all people interested in

hiking, another for those interested in video games, an email for those interested in dancing, etc. From the TAs interviewed in this research, none of them decided to use this approach. Some of the reasons given were for example from Oscar: “I think I have established groups already. So, I've found that sometimes it's easier to keep my social groups separate. And no [sic] blend my worlds, necessarily, so keep my work, friends, work friends.” Patricia felt the timing of the message was not opportune: “No, I didn't because, well, yeah, I didn't because I received the e-mail sort of later too at the end of the semester. So I was kind of like busy.” David added that they did not meet up because they already had “a lot of people with similar interests.” Carla also mentioned they only spoke with the new cohort of TAs and did not make connections with the veteran TAs.

Within ME, Isaac expressed a lack of communication and engagement within the group: “so like outside [the meetings]? No, it was just no communication whatsoever unless you would send something through Slack.” Isaac also mentioned, “we used to have like a WhatsApp group message. And people ended up taking out of like, they dropped the group and we only ended up with three people I think. And I was like ‘Okay’, so there is no more communication.” Oscar had a similar experience: “we had a group chat for while the first half, but for some reason people, some people left. So I would say, as in terms of a resource, that was limited.” I noted in my field notes, that another TA felt that many of their colleagues were disengaged during classes and meetings. They said, “many people are not on task. They are scrolling through Facebook or Instagram.” TAs raised instances in which these experiences could be identified as a lack of core components for creating community, which may interfere with the aforementioned positive effects to create dysfunction.

Summary of Chapter 4

Chapter 4 presented eight major themes and assertions interpreted from the data analysis process across all three RQs. I introduced three themes and assertions for RQ1, three themes and assertions for RQ 2, and two themes and assertions for RQ3. As part of the themes for each research question, I also elaborated on associated categories that lead to the formation of the themes. Within each RQ, I expanded upon the coding procedures from Chapter 3 and provided examples of coded data. Furthermore, I illustrated the assertions with relevant participant data.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Before beginning to discuss and interpret the results, I would like to give a brief synopsis of the previous chapters. Chapter 1 presented the problem of practice (PoP) of improving graduate teaching assistant (TA) training for first semester Spanish TAs in my context, explored previous cycles of research of this action research (AR) study, presented a statement of purpose, and introduced three research questions (RQs). Chapter 2 explored related literature to communities of practice (CoPs) and identity, and presented the theoretical framework of CoP for this AR study. Chapter 3 detailed the qualitative research design, presented the two-part CoP principled training program intervention, and explained the data collection and analysis procedures used. Finally, Chapter 4 reported on the results of the efforts of the data collection process, and elucidated eight themes and assertions that emerged from the data.

The present chapter will present a summary of the findings of this AR study, and will connect research findings to previous investigations and the CoP theoretical framework. Afterwards, I will briefly discuss implications of how this study's findings integrate with my context and weave into the larger context of TA training. I will also identify limitations of my research. Then, I will present a three-part action plan containing: a dissemination plan for the results of this study for local and national contexts, suggestions for future cycles of this research, and a reflection on the lessons learned from the research process. Lastly, I will summarize the importance of this AR study's finding and provide a final thought.

To help to clarify connections in the summary, I will first reiterate the purpose of this study, which is to inquire into the training opportunities of new Spanish TAs through the lens of communities of practice in post-secondary Spanish language instruction at Arizona State University. Moreover, its purpose was to implement a new CoP principled program training structure to see how it shapes TA teaching practices in the first semester of instruction. Finally, I present the RQs used in this study to address the aforementioned purpose:

RQ1: How does participants' positionality—as novice or expert—evolve during their first 15-week semester with regard to lesson planning (LP), communicative language teaching (CLT), classroom management (CM), and learning management system (LMS) usage?

RQ2: How do previous experiences shape new Spanish graduate teaching assistants' (TA) construction of their novice-expert identities?

RQ3: How do core features of a community of practice (CoP) facilitate or hinder the shaping of graduate teaching assistants' (TA) training practices in a CoP principled training program?

Summary of Findings

Research Question 1

The first RQ sought to investigate the journey of the TA as they experienced their training, with regard to their positionality as novices or experts in relation to LP, CLT, CM, and LMS usage. Three themes emerged from the data: adjusting to the ASU community, difficulties in implementing CLT, and difficulties managing the classroom. From these themes, I made three assertions respectively:

(1) Regardless of previous experience or positionality, TAs experience an adjustment period to the new community in the ASU context,

(2) CLT is a complex process that requires creating meaningful activities that focus on meaning and form, and

(3) CM involves a myriad of possible situations that can be affected by external factors.

Research Question 2

The second RQ explored what previous experiences affected the journey of TAs as they positioned themselves as "novices" or "experts" during the training. Connecting the present AR study to previous cycles, I wanted to understand how previous teaching experience plays a role in their training experience. For the data analysis process, three more themes emerged: inexperienced TAs transfer leadership qualities, positive perceptions of training, and negative perceptions of continued training. From these themes, I made three more assertions, respectively:

(4) Inexperienced TAs relate leadership and proxy-teaching positions to teaching in the university context, giving them confidence to begin their teaching experience, despite a lack of direct university teaching experience

(5) Regardless of previous experience, TAs feel continued development and experience are necessary to move toward legitimate peripheral participation.

(6) Continued or repetitive training is perceived as unnecessary, signaling a need for adding value to training.

Research Question 3

The third RQ investigated the core features of a descriptive model associated with creating a community of practice, and the presence of those features within the CoP

principled training program. The purpose of RQ 3 was to observe merely what features were present, and to explore the perceived effects, without measuring the overall efficacy of each core feature. From the data analysis process, two final themes emerged: positive effects of community, and factors hindering CoP development. From these themes, I made two final assertions respectively:

(7) The presence of core components of CoP development lead to positive effects in the training process.

(8) Dysfunction arises from missing and off-track community of practice elements of domain and community.

Relationship of Findings to the Literature

The purpose of this AR study was to inquire into the training opportunities of new Spanish TAs through a CoP lens (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002) in post-secondary Spanish language instruction at Arizona State University. Moreover, it was to implement a new CoP principled training program structure (Wenger et al., 2002) to see how it shapes TA teaching practices in the first semester of instruction. During the last four years, other coordinators and I noticed through observation and student evaluation archival data that TAs needed to address their teaching, especially with regard to LP, CLT, CM, and LMS usage. In the previous cycles of research conducted in relation to this present AR study, I identified a need to explore: (a) how previous experience affects the TA training experience, (b) how to add value to the TA experience, (c) the utilization of colleagues as an important area of support, and (d) ways to increase practicality and participation in training activities. I chose to implement a CoP to address the aforementioned areas of concern because of the

flexibility of a CoP that incorporated meaning, practice, community, and identity. I then paired the training program with Boudett and City's (2014) *Meeting Wise*, to bring value and purpose to training sessions.

Research Question 1

When exploring RQ1, concerning the journey of participants and the evolution of their positionality during the semester, the results of the study suggest that participants' positionality was not static and changed at various points, which is consistent with Wenger's (1998) theory on identity and positionality. Over the course of the semester, the positionalities of all participants shifted in various directions in relation to LP, CLT, CM, and LMS usage. On the one hand, some TAs moved in a linear direction from novice to expert. On the other hand, other TAs moved in an inverted bell-like curve manner. While there is a multitude of factors that could cause this, many TAs expressed a need for understanding the ASU context as being key to being able to perform their duties. Even though my goal was to create a CoP with the new cohort, a number of CoPs already exist in the ASU context as naturally forming groups. Adapting to the pre-existing ASU community involving new practices, standards, and established groups, requires time as participants move from peripheral participation to legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) (Wenger, 1998; Wenger et. al 2002). As part of this changing identity, the utilization of the category "emerging expert" helped to illustrate how a community member might be moving through the degrees of community participation as outlined by Wenger et al. (2002).

Upon analyzing positionalities of LP, CLT, CM, and LMS usage, two of these areas became salient in relation to the other areas of focus: CLT and CM. CLT, for

example, is a complex process that requires creating activities that focus on meaning and form. CM involves a myriad of possible situations that can be affected by many external factors. These factors may include mandates from higher up in a hierarchical system, personal belief vs. program belief, and the effect of personal language learning experience on teaching. A possible explanation of why CLT and CM were salient as being challenging could be that TAs have not had the opportunities to participate in these activities in ways that are both legitimate and participatory, as the LPP theory suggests (Wenger, 1998). These activities, in comparison with LP and LMS usage, represent activities that require more social interaction in that CLT and CM are dependent on others to carry out and involve direct classroom interactions. Schulz (2000) attributed the difficulty of classroom teaching to the myriad of individual differences that students have such as "language learning aptitude, motivation, interest, ambition, learning styles, parental support, and educational, social, and economic needs" (p. 517). The combination the aforementioned components may affect TAs ability to carry out effective communicative language teaching and classroom management respectively.

As mentioned earlier in this section, as TAs move from "novice" to "expert", the results of this study also showed an intermediary step between the two points. While not originally a part of the CoP framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), a label was necessary to describe the TA who was neither demonstrating characteristic "novice" nor "expert" behavior. The term "emerging expert" was used to categorize the phenomenon of the qualitatively different statements of TAs who at times expressed understanding, yet doubt in their abilities. Other times, they presented concrete steps they took to solve a problem, but communicated those steps as being new or untested. I

therefore suggest that the CoP framework be more flexible to include a more dynamic conceptualization of identity. Conducting future cycles of this research as well as replication studies in other contexts will aid in exploring and validating this concept.

Research Question 2

The second RQ sought to understand what experiences affected the TA journey as they experienced their training. Exploring the effect of previous experience on new TA training was a theme that emerged from previous cycles of this action research. Inexperienced TAs—or those without university teaching experience—in this study related their leadership and proxy-teaching positions to teaching in this context, despite a lack of similar university teaching experience. Akin to Fuller and Urwin (2014), these TAs rated themselves as having experience and even felt prepared to teach, based on their prior life experiences. These findings support Fuller and Urwin's (2014) challenge of the traditional linear novice-expert paradigm and align with Wenger's (1998) theories on identity. Inexperienced TAs self-rated as *good* teachers and throughout the study, they felt they could contribute in valuable ways to colleagues learning and the training context. Continuing to explore how previous TA experiences can help foster LPP in the CoP in my context will benefit inexperienced TAs as they begin their training process.

With regard to training in general, TAs had positive perceptions of training, regardless of previous experience, and felt that continued development and experience are necessary to move toward LPP. Lave and Wenger (1991) posit that to achieve LPP, novices must legitimately participate in the community and not purely observe, although observation can be a starting point for learning. It is also possible that TAs describing their need or want for learning was a mark of internal motivation, as it is a powerful

factor that can drive learning and participation in a community (Jimenez-Silva & Olsen, 2012; Kimble, Hildreth & Bourdon, 2008). However, more research is needed to understand motivational factors for TAs, as they occupy the unique position of student, teacher, and future academic in the university context (Park, 2004).

Negative perceptions were also salient in the findings. There was a sense of continued or repetitive training being perceived as unnecessary. A possible contributing factor may be a feeling of marginalization as a barrier to a successful community of practice (Terry et al., 2020). For example, as part of this marginalization, TAs may feel they are perceived as lacking experience, and consequently this makes it more difficult for them to become valued members of the CoP. Furthermore, this perception may signal a need for continuing to add value to training opportunities. Delivering immediate value in the early stages of community development is one of the main challenges of communities in these stages (Wenger et al., 2002). As the community continues to develop, it will be essential to look for these barriers and try to address them through adding value in our public interactions (Boudett & City, 2014), as well as improving the shared vision of growth and learning in the domain of the community.

Research Question 3

The third, and final RQ investigated the presence of core features—mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire—of a descriptive model for a community of practice that Admiraal et al., (2012) referred to as teacher communities. These core features relate to the CoP principled training program implemented in this study. In exploring the presence of these core features, I aimed to explore which features facilitated or hindered the shaping of TA training practices. After data analysis, the

presence of core components of CoP development led to positive effects in the training process. For example, in a previous cycle of this AR study, I identified that TAs refer to colleagues as a first point of contact. Again, the results of this cycle indicated that as a core feature of mutual engagement, TAs perceived colleagues as a positive support system for their learning, in line with Jimenez-Silva and Olsen's (2012) findings of the strength of these interactions through a CoP.

Sharing both material and intellectual knowledge was also prevalent in the findings as a core feature of joint enterprise. Many TAs participated in the sharing of material knowledge and commented on the usefulness of interactions in both private (outside meetings) and public (inside meetings) spaces. A goal of using Boudett & City's *Meeting Wise* agenda to run the weekly meetings was to bring value to the TAs through program interaction. As illustrated in Chapter 4 with participant data, these spaces created opportunities for TAs to connect, create, and learn about the ASU context. While not measured in terms of degree of efficacy, the qualitative data collected from this AR study instruments suggest positive effects in line with Brouwer et al. (2012), who also found positive, yet differing, degrees of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire in teacher teams who met biweekly, over a similar timeframe of three months.

Despite perceived positive effects, factors that hindered the development of the CoP presented dysfunction in the form of missing or off-track CoP elements. While TAs mentioned the utility of meeting, they had differing opinions of the purpose or shared domain of the meeting. This may have arisen from coordinators' presentation of purpose or the development of the interactions within the meetings. With regard to shared repertoire, TAs created interactional norms and participated to a degree in role taking, but

given the research design of this study, observational and TA introspective data were not collected, and therefore inhibited the appearance of shared repertoire core features. TAs also reported a lack of mutual engagement, where interactions were limited to public meeting spaces with a slow decline of private space usage over the semester. Wenger et al. (2002) refer to this phenomenon as disconnectedness, where interactions eventually become simple transactions and there is no sense of shared identity. Wenger et al. (2002) further warn that a CoP is not without its dysfunctions. While not a focus of this study, the CoP in this study appeared to be represented in stage 2—coalescing—of Wenger et al.'s (2002) community development life cycle due to the developmental tensions of a need to incubate relationships and create value. However, it is difficult to determine with accuracy the exact stage in which the community was as the model is not necessarily linear. With continued community development and attention from community coordinators, leaders, and core members, CoPs can grow over time to accomplish the shared goals of the community in question and move to mature stages of community development. (Schlager & Fusco, 2006; Wenger et al., 2002).

Summarizing Relationship of Findings to Literature

Communities of practice are fluid, multidimensional, and regardless of community planning, cannot be completely formed without the input of all stakeholders involved in process (Wenger 1998; Wenger et al., 2002). Although it is necessary to collect more data, not just on the efficacy of the CoP principled training program used in this AR study, but on the measurement of the efficacy of a CoP in relation to the three core features in teacher training settings (Admiraal et al., 2012), the results of this AR study align with the findings of Cho (2016), Jimenez-Silva and Olsen (2012), van As

(2018), and Brouwer et al. (2012) in that the CoP utilized appears to be a benefit to the TAs learning to teach in my particular context. As Brouwer et al. (2012) suggest, the training program at ASU could benefit from continuing to stimulate mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire among, not just the new cohort of TAs, but in and around the various CoPs that constitute the TAs and teaching faculty. Nonetheless, more data is necessary to make stronger assertions, given the myriad of factors that affect community development, such as content of trainings such a pre-service orientation and program meetings, leadership styles of coordinators and core members, motivation of stakeholders, and community cultivation practices.

Implications for TA Training

The purpose of AR is that some type of change comes about in local contexts, and while the implications of this section are based on my local context of ASU, I will also discuss the larger scope of TA training. I believe that I need to continue this research, expanding upon and validating the results in my context, but I also believe that, other researchers should broaden and replicate findings. The findings in this research suggest more time, and therefore a different fundamental training structure, is needed for participants to adjust to the local CoP, regardless of their previous experience. However, there are also strong implications for continued growth and monitoring of the CoPs in a given context.

The first implication is to continue to cultivate the community within the larger CoP already in place, formed by cohorts of TAs from previous years and other stakeholders in the program. Given the limited time and resources in my context, the following concrete suggestions based on findings and relevant literature may help to

strengthen training: (1) improve the methodology and content of training, (2) increase the timeliness and frequency of communication with new TAs, (3) provide clarity of program expectations and accountability measures, (4) involve a larger community of community coordinators, (5) implement peer mentoring, (6) increase public and private space usage, and (7) create flexible standardization in training.

Improving the methodology and content of training involves not only the involvement of LPDs and LPCs, but within the CoP framework, the involvement of the TAs to give all stakeholders a voice in the training process. Increasing the timeliness and frequency of communication with new TAs allows relationships to start to form between new TAs and other TAs, and TAs and LPCs. The information gained in these interactions can allow coordinators to provide individualized feedback and direction in training (Angus, 2016; Gómez Soler & Tecedor, 2018). Within this communication, a loop must be created to allow TAs to provide feedback, but also see how their feedback is heard and processed within the department, whether this be a comment on the topic by the LPD or the concrete implementation of a suggestion. Providing clearer program expectations and accountability measures provides TAs with a guide to understand responsibilities. Gómez Soler and Tecedor (2018) support having strong accountability measures in place, which may increase TAs' joint enterprise, specifically with regard to their commitment to the domain and collective goals as depicted by Admiraal et al. (2012). This structure will be effective within the CoP framework as long as TAs have input to some degree in establishing pieces of the accountability measures.

Allen and Negueruela-Azarola (2010), Angus (2016), and Gómez Soler and Tecedor (2018) support shared department responsibility involving other communities of

TAs and community coordinators, which can help hold more people accountable for training practices by sharing the responsibility of TA training and agreeing on training practices within the larger scope of the program. As part of this collective agreement, implementing peer mentoring (Wenger et al., 2002) and more interactional opportunities may help progress the community to later stages of community development. This means, however, that peer mentoring not only be shared and understood between various stakeholders, but also, it include opportunities for new TAs to participate in activities related to teaching. Increasing public and private space usage refers to the frequency of meetings centered on valuable interactions for growth. As TAs begin to perceive value in these interactions, they become less of an obligation. In addition, within the private spaces, community coordinators and LPCs can provide TAs with structured tasks to complete on their own in line with Gómez and Soler (2018) who suggested TAs value informal discussions with colleagues. Finally, Angus (2016) proposed requiring professional development as part of program requirements such as having required meetings, professional development attendance, and multiple teaching methodology courses coupled with concrete reflection. Within the CoP framework, this may be effective if combined with a degree of flexibility in which TAs may choose from a variety of trainings. These training groups each form a core component of the overall training structure (e.g. communicative language teaching), but give TAs adequate choice in their perceived needs.

In an ideal world, more time for learning to take place suggests that a change in the larger framework may be appropriate for TAs to truly connect to the community, participate in various events, identify as members, and ultimately learn the expected skills

for their position. The current structure of a short pre-service orientation period and subsequent teaching and methodology courses in their first semester may not be adequate to prepare TAs to perform their job, regardless of previous experience, as Allen and Negueruela-Azarola (2010) suggested. An implication for both local and national contexts would be to implement a tiered training program, where TAs have a semester of observation and paired teaching that incrementally increases their responsibilities throughout the semester under direction of coordinators and other experienced TAs.

Gómez Soler and Tecedor (2018) support this type of training, which would allow TAs to begin to understand the processes necessary to complete their main function, create relationships with those who can be seen as resources for help, and favor more autonomy in their work. An expansion of their suggestion would be to incorporate planned activities that would allow TAs to participate legitimately in the new learning process. Concrete examples of such activities are: (1) team teaching activities between new and veteran TAs, (2) new TA led class sessions in the middle of the first semester, (3) active observation tasks in which new TAs look for limited and specific teaching points during observations, and (4) group and paired TA discussion, triangulated with self, peer, and coordinator observations. While there are financial and logistical factors that serve as barriers in higher education, the proper training of TAs, while balancing, and respecting their academic and personal identities, may lead to stronger language programs, due to the high degree of contact TAs have with many undergraduate students. Angus (2016) highlights the importance of incorporating more teaching in TA preparation as it helps to prepare them for careers in academia where teaching is required. Future research, in general, will need to explore these effects on language programs.

Regardless of immediate or ideal training implications, Wenger et al. (2002) support developing a CoP for learning, but also caution that CoPs are not perfect. Strong leadership, continued community monitoring, and a willingness to make changes are essential to seeing the benefits of community development. As I improve as community coordinator, but also as I recruit core members and gain support from other managers, the CoP has the potential to continue to flourish and benefit TAs as the research suggests. Nevertheless, it will be essential to continue to have participation from TAs in such a way they can understand their shared duty while respecting the workloads and stresses of their dynamic academic and teaching professional identities.

Limitations

It is important to note that no research is perfect research, regardless of who conducted the investigation (Mertler, 2017). This AR study presented certain limitations over the timeline of the research: (a) adjustment to the Covid-19 pandemic, (b) mortality of sample, (c) the generalizability of study results, (d) journal prompt modification, (e) data analysis procedures during second cycle coding, and (f) my role as community coordinator. I will briefly describe each limitation in the following text.

The first limitation concerned the implications of the on-going Covid-19 pandemic. This is of importance, given that my colleagues and I are on the forefront of the effects of Covid-19 on research, in general. When my research began during the summer 2019 semester, I, like many others, had no idea that our entire conceptualization of life in the modern age would change the following spring. While the cycle of AR related to this dissertation was not particularly affected in terms of data collection, previous cycles of research were interrupted, delayed, or thrown out altogether, causing a

change in research design. In some ways, the current AR represents a cycle of research that would have been appropriate as a pilot, while in others, it has evolved and served its purpose in the iterative AR process. Furthermore, not only data collection procedures, but also participant involvement and focus, may have been altered in response to their individual experiences with regard to the Covid-19 pandemic. Given the historical significance, and lasting effects of Covid-19, it is important to note this factor as a limitation.

The second limitation involved the mortality of the sample. When this research began, all nine TAs, as part of the new cohort of Spanish TAs, agreed to participate in the study. Due to the research design, a double consent form was used to prevent attention being given to academic work during the school year as part of the research study. As a result, only five of the original nine TAs agreed to complete the second half of the study. On the one hand, it is perfectly acceptable and ethically important that research participants have a right to decide whether to continue or complete a study. On the other hand, the lack of participation in the second half of the study leads me to think that other factors related to either the CoP formation or both the CoP and the relationships between the participants and myself may have caused those participants to stop participating. Interestingly, although not a means for causation in any way, five was also the number of TAs who anonymously completed the final survey about their perceptions of the pre-service orientation. While there is no way of knowing for sure who these individuals are or if they are the same people, it is clear that mortality affected the study in a reduction of data to interpret results.

The third limitation, although perceived and noted before the study began, was the generalizability of results, which does not apply to AR (Ivankova, 2015). The findings in this study only apply to the context of TA training in the department of Spanish and Portuguese at ASU. However, it is important to view this limitation as also a strength. While the results cannot be applied directly to other contexts, the ideas and research can be transferred to other research designs and studies. Moreover, as I discuss later in this chapter as a needed area of future action research, the incorporation of future mix-methods also applies to this limitation in that it can strengthen findings, allowing for easier replication in other contexts.

The fourth limitation was the responses to journal prompts, and the construction of the prompt entries and directions. During the data collection process, participants were asked to reflect on different areas of teaching—LP, CLT, CM, and technology—by answering the question: "talk about what challenges you have faced and what resources (both material and human) you used to find solutions." These prompts were completed during the TAs' first semester methodology course and were not reviewed by the researcher until the end of the study. While at times, the TAs responded to this portion of the prompt, some TAs left out the resources they used to approach a solution to their problems. Furthermore, the last prompt referred to technology in general, rather than the LMS used at my particular institution. Rectifying this would also produce clearer results with regard to TA LMS usage. Overall, changing directions of these prompts, providing rubrics for scoring, adjusting some language, and being more active in the data collection process would have aided in providing a more encompassing view of TA development.

The fifth limitation was the coding procedure utilized in second cycle coding. For RQ1 and RQ2, I assigned sub codes of "novice," "emerging expert," and "expert," as well as LP, CLT, CM, and LMS usage. For RQ3, I assigned sub codes of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. While I employed a constant comparative method (Ivankova, 2015) during the coding process to align codes, it would be have been beneficial to have a second researcher check my coding procedures to bring strong reliability to the second cycle coding.

The final limitation was my own involvement as a community coordinator for the CoP involved in this study. Even though I completed extensive research on CoPs and their development, cultivation, and implementation, the actual implementation of the CoP principled training program in this setting was my first attempt at doing so. As my own self-perception of novice, it is possible that my inexperience lead to factors that inhibited community growth.

Action Plan

Mertler (2017) states, "action research is built on the premise that some type of action will result from your action research project" (p. 219). As a result, one of the signature components of AR is the creation of an action plan, which can consist of formal or informal reports, detailing steps on how to proceed in various ways after analyzing data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Mertler, 2017). While the aforementioned flexibility permits many components to comprise an action plan (Ivankova 2015; Mertler 2017), the following action plan will consist of three main elements: (a) a dissemination plan for my research findings, (b) suggestions for future cycles of this research, and (c) a reflection of the lessons learned. Mertler (2017) suggests that this type of reflection not only

strengthens conclusions, but also helps to reduce the "gap between theory and research and actual practice" through sharing in a wide variety of contexts (p. 257).

Plan for Dissemination of Current Research

The first part of my action plan concerns disseminating my research. Henriksen and Mishra (2019) assert "to disseminate research findings for greatest impact, we must go beyond single outlets or outputs to a broader strategy known as *knowledge mobilization* (KMb)" (p. 398). A KMb plan is essentially a plan to acknowledge and enable effective use of research through sharing (Henriksen & Mishra, 2019). The purpose of the KMb in this section is to detail my post-degree plan for dissemination of the results of the present study on preparing new Spanish TAs in a community of practice principled training program. Effective TA training program knowledge is important because it can directly affect the health of large programs that depend on TAs to teach a high percentage of their undergraduate courses. Sharing this knowledge will aim to educate and inspire programs to search for positive change in their own TA training practices. The following KMb is modeled after *writing a knowledge mobilization (kmb) plan* (n.d.) and consists of six components: objectives, targeted knowledge users, planned KMb activities, timeline of activities, resources needed to implement, and a description of my KMb evaluation strategy.

Objectives. The objectives of the current KMb plan consist of six elements: (a) identify relevant stakeholders in both local and national contexts; (b) plan for the sharing of information with immediate local stakeholders in SILC; (c) articulate specific activities for interaction in scholarly communities; (d) document plans to position my work for broader engagement with pertinent scholarly communities (including both

traditional and non-traditional formats); (e) identify and coordinate resources for post-degree scholarship; and (f) identify and monitor indicators of the effectiveness of the KMb plan.

Targeted Knowledge Users. Targeted knowledge users, or stakeholders, will involve both local and national audiences. Each group will also have perceived needs to reach those stakeholders. Within my local context, three main contacts constitute target knowledge users: other faculty members, the Director of Spanish Second Language Acquisition, and the Director of SILC. First, other faculty members in my school also plan and foster TA training and developing TA relationships, and their insight and understanding as to how my research may impact TA training will help in further community development. Second, as the main contact point in our teaching program, the Director of Spanish Second Language Acquisition will be the "first line of defense" when it comes to scaling up and implementing information from my dissertation work. A perceived need will be to control expectations for implementation and to present data that appeals to administrative needs, theory, and practice. Finally, the Director of the SILC plays a key role in implementing change at all levels of SILC. A perceived need will be to present information that is both objective and data driven, while motivating the Director of the school to see the immediate, and long-term benefits of implementing dissertation findings. Within the national context, through the various types of conferences, several other types of stakeholders will be involved. A perceived need will be to adapt presentation materials to match the platform and audience through research on other successful disseminations in each organization.

Planned KMb activities. The purpose of the KMb activities will be to detail the actions I will take to disseminate my research in both local and national contexts, and the barriers I may face in carrying out these activities. First, I will participate locally in four main activities: (a) section meetings with other faculty, (b) a meeting with the Director of Spanish Second Language Acquisition, (c) a meeting with the Director of SILC, and (d) a proposal submission for presentation at a local conference, the Arizona Language Association (Arizona Language Association [AZLA], n.d.). Perceived barriers for interacting in these activities will be convincing colleagues of the importance of TA training in the wider scope of SILC, negotiating need with resources in discussion with the Director of Spanish Second Language Acquisition and the Director of SILC, and presenting materials at AZLA in a way that will provide benefit to local educators in both post-secondary and K-12 contexts. Second, in the national context, I plan to submit a proposal for the ACTFL national conference, explore journal publications for various journals appropriate for AR with a colleague, as well as create a digital workspace to document and share my work. A perceived barrier for conference presentation will be the competitiveness of the selection of presentations at the ACTFL conference, while the digital workspace creation will be subject to time constraints in my place of practice. The biggest challenge will be journal publication, but I have identified several colleagues who will help me navigate this process.

Timeline. Table 12 outlines a timeline for this research dissemination process.

Table 12

Knowledge Mobilization Plan Timeline

Date	Activity
summer 2022	Presentation with Director of Spanish Second Language Acquisition
fall 2022	Section meetings with colleagues
	Identify appropriate journals with a colleague
	Format and write article for journal submission
	Formal presentation with the Director of the SILC
	Submit to a local conference (AZLA) for presentation
spring 2023	Submission work to ACTFL for presentation
	Prepare manuscript for journal submission
spring 2023	Creation of digital portfolio for sharing of information
fall 2023	Submit to appropriately identified journals

Resources needed to implement KMb. Apart from time resources that will be leveraged by scheduling and completing proposals, some funds will be needed to attend conferences, both physically and virtually. There will be two plans of action in this case: I will request travel funds via our department and Faculty Head, and I will apply for outside funding.

Description of KMb evaluation strategy. In terms of evaluation, the strategy will be to return to the KMb plan here to continue to systematically evaluate if the KMb plan is doing what it was intended to do. As part of this plan, timeline objectives will be broken down into SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Timely) for better understanding of progress. Furthermore, the plan will be reviewed

monthly to reassess the implementation process and SMART goals will be used as indicators of the KMb plan's success.

Future Cycles Research

I strongly believe that continued community development around shared vision will greatly enhance TA development as effective members of the higher education teaching community. Concretely, the present AR study can benefit from four areas of future research: (a) focus on the entire community of TAs and their intersection with the various communities at play within my particular context, (b) employment of a mixed-methodology design, (c) investigation into the motivations of TAs, and (d) exploration in measuring the effectiveness of the established CoP. I will briefly comment on each point and give my reasoning.

First, the CoP envisioned in this study was centered on creating a community for new Spanish TAs entering their first year of the teaching program. While I involved other TAs at times, I was not as focused on the "veteran" TAs as I was the new TAs. Communities can, and do form, between many groups, but CoPs, essentially, exist all around us, and we ourselves belong to any number of communities at the same time (Wenger, 1998). A future cycle of this research should take into account the larger community that is all TAs, and possibly related communities around them such as faculty and staff. Within connecting new and veteran TAs, mentoring within the CoP may also lead to better participation on the part of new TAs (Wenger et al., 2002). This viewpoint may elucidate how the CoP and intervention established in this study continue to evolve.

Second, although this cycle of research was grounded in triangulation of qualitative instruments to bolster validity (Ivankova, 2015), and Tracey's eight-point

criteria for rating trustworthiness of qualitative studies, an important quality of most AR is the use of mixed methodologies (Mertler, 2017; Ivankova, 2015). Mertler (2017) suggests that utilizing both types of data—qualitative and quantitative—may lead to deeper analyses of research findings than by using either qualitative or quantitative data types alone. For future cycles, despite the population sizes, I would like to implement appropriate quantitative measures to expand and compare my view and understanding of the evolving PoP. Admiraal et al. (2012) further suggest, combining observational and introspective data can be helpful in understanding the complexities of CoP development, with Brouwer et al. (2012) offering ideas for concrete quantitative instruments.

Third, motivation is a factor that may affect participation in a community (Jimenez-Silva & Olsen, 2012). Kimble, Hildreth, and Bourdon, (2008) suggest that internal motivation is an essential element of defining what a CoP needs. They elaborate that internal motivation, "rather than any externally impose [*sic*] goals or targets, is what drives the CoP. Along with the development of relationships, it contributes to a feeling of community and *identity*" (p. xii). At the beginning of the present AR, I asked TAs their reasoning for joining our CoP. However, the real motivations for becoming a TA may be much deeper, as well as their desire to teach or teach effectively. Exploring these motivational factors and ways to strengthen motivation may lead to more successful CoP models and greater TA accountability in my context.

Finally, a major area of interest for future cycles of this AR study is documenting and measuring the effectiveness of the implemented CoP. Through continuing this AR in iterative cycles, the research will spiral into a longitudinal study, a needed area of research as noted by Brouwer et al. (2012). Combining this future research with tools that

reliably measures a community's growth, stranding, and effectiveness will aid in validating the implementation, cultivation, and usage of CoPs in the TA educational training setting.

Reflection: Lessons Learned

Completing a dissertation study is a long, arduous journey. While in the past, I completed a smaller scale master's thesis, where I was tasked with writing a research report, this experience was quite different. Throughout the process, I take away three main lessons learned: (a) research is best conducted in a daily fashion, (b) regardless of aspirations, real change takes time, and (c) I must continue to critically reflect on my own leadership skills.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the sheer scale of this AR dissertation did not dawn on me until my final year. As I moved from the summer to the fall of my final academic year, I realized that I needed to begin to involve myself with the research on a daily basis. I started a two-hour accountability session with a colleague in which we worked together to complete work once a week. We would sometimes meet in person, but often met via Zoom. During these meetings, we would state our goals, work individually with occasional breaks for questions or reflection, and finish our meeting, sharing the work that we had completed. Apart from these sessions, I found it difficult with my varied tasks at work to focus on my dissertation. It wasn't until I made a commitment to spending time every day that I began to see my research progress. As a result, my colleague and I slowly expanded from fall of 2021 to spring 2022 to meeting two, three, and even four or five times a week to work. In the future, while I may not spend as much time every day, creating some time for research creation, reading, and

writing will continue to help me as a teacher. Winch and Orchard (2015) elaborate that engaging in the research process may contribute to reflection and action in immediate teaching practices, such as mine.

"Rome was not built in a day," and neither can any research study confirm the completeness of a theory or practice. During my time in the program, I felt at times, that the process of AR meant that the implemented intervention or innovation must be shown to have a clearly positive effect. I know that in research, any result is a "good" result, in that it contributes to the literature on the topic. Nonetheless, as I progressed through courses and moved towards the data collection process of this AR study, I remember feelings of needing to find an extremely effective intervention. However, upon reflection, I am drawn back to, ironically, one of my first courses in my program: Systems Change and Leadership. During this course we discussed what Rittel and Webber (1973) called "wicked problems", where wicked referred to the extremely complex nature of certain problems. Effective TA training is a "wicked problem". While there are ways that I, as a researcher, can help effect change, the concept of TA training itself is embedded within other areas of concern. Rittel and Webber (1973) state one of the defining characteristics of wicked problems is that "there is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution" (p.163). I must not let this deter me from continuing to contribute to unraveling the mysteries of TA training, but I must always remember that time and perspective are necessary when attempting change.

Interacting with TAs has been an important part of my job for the last several years, and as such, I am charged with not only being a leader, but also helping future leaders grow. I know, and always do my best to reiterate to graduate students with whom

I work, that no one is perfect, and we must continually critically evaluate our understanding of the people, practices, and perspectives around us. The very doctoral program I have participated in for the last three years is a leadership program, yet recently, I have encountered several difficult situations in which I have begun to question my leadership style. My belief was that I aspired to a transformational leadership style that focuses on intrinsic motivation follower development, cultivation of others' values, ethics, emotions, and long-term goals (Northouse & Lee, 2018, p. 74). Although, not necessarily a "lesson learned," but rather an important reminder, I believe that I must continue to engage in defining my leadership style, adapting to those individuals whom I serve, and reflecting on whether or not I am meeting those objectives. I know that ultimately, a leader cannot influence all, nor should they, but a leader must continue to work on themselves and their practice. This research experience has reminded me of the significance of my role in leadership development, and my duty to also continually and critically evaluate myself.

Conclusions

Given the prevalence of using TAs to impart a portion or the entirety of post-secondary foreign language classes, properly preparing these individuals to teach is of paramount importance. The outcomes of well-prepared teachers can have far-reaching effects for language programs such as major/minor recruitment, and overall enrollment growth. Furthermore, on a personal level for TAs, having an effective training program allows them to develop as future post-secondary teaching professionals. TAs enter teacher preparation programs with varied amounts of experience, expertise, and representing a multitude of cultural backgrounds. Adjusting to a new program and

teaching context, while being mindful of these factors, requires special time and attention. Moreover, cultivating the necessary skills to teach effectively according to local, and widely accepted practical and theoretical standards, necessitates the creation of a fluid environment in which TAs can perceive value of continued professional development, learn to critically evaluate their own expertise, and experience the new teaching context.

The findings of this AR study suggest that regardless of previous experiences, TAs need time to assimilate to the culture, standards, and community of their context. Furthermore, the CoP principled training program utilized in this AR study showed instances of the necessary core features of a CoP, as well as a need for continued community development. More research is essential to not only continuing to investigate the effects of a CoP principled training program in the ASU context, but also to assist in validating and measuring the effects of CoPs for TA training purposes in both local and national contexts. While localized in nature, this AR study contributes to the literature on TA professional, and teacher development at the post-secondary level. The study also suggests that conceptualizing training through community development may aid in providing the necessary flexibility to train a wide variety of individuals. Nevertheless, coordinators and community developers must be mindful of the barriers that can impede such development.

Final Thought

Teacher education and professional development are *extremely* important at all levels of education, from elementary school to the university context. I am convinced that *all* teachers, regardless of their hierarchical status or perceived expertise, should continue

to commit themselves to their craft. Moreover, despite the lack of attention to teacher education in postsecondary contexts, it is *essential* that all members of teaching faculty, from instructors and TAs to lecturers and fully tenured-professors continue to learn *how* to teach. I have often said that if you were to show me a teacher who believes they know it all, you will show me a teacher who, in fact, knows nothing. Recently, a TA shared a quote that resonates deeply with me, and constantly crosses my mind when discussing professional development. It encapsulates this very idea of never stopping: "he who dares to teach must never cease to learn" by John Cotton Dana. We must always be open to the ideas of change and engage in critical thinking of our teaching practices. One of my greatest hopes for the future is that I can continue to learn in an effort to assist my colleagues and students in whatever it is that they pursue. More importantly, I hope to continue to inspire them in their life-long search for knowledge. As Robert Frost once said, "I am not a teacher, but an awakener." I wish nothing more than to continue to awaken that curiosity and excitement of perpetual learning in as many people and students as possible.

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APPENDIX A

INITIAL RECRUITMENT CONSENT FORM

Dear Colleague:

My name is Steven Flanagan and I am a doctoral student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University (ASU). I am working under the direction of Dr. Ying-Chih Chen, a faculty member in MLFTC, Dr. Marta Tecedor Cabrero, and Dr. Katie Angus. We are conducting a research study on graduate teaching assistant (TA) training. The purpose of this research is to better understand training practices with regard to TA training outcomes.

We are asking for your help, which will involve your participation in interviews, surveys, and tasks designed to document your TA training experience. I would like permission to use typical recordings as part of your training purposes for analysis. While data will be collected as part of normal documentation practices, no data will be used without your permission. Remember, that you can change your mind at any point during the study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty whatsoever. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

The benefit to participation is the opportunity for you to reflect on graduate student teacher training and professional development. Results from this study will also inform future changes in our training practices. Thus, there is potential to enhance the experiences of our faculty and students. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation and you will not be affected in any way for your inclusion or exclusion of the study.

Your responses will be confidential. Initially, the Principal Investigator (PI) and myself, the Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI), will collect data in a survey. Results from this study may be used in dissertations, presentations, or publications but a pseudonym will be used in all documents and all efforts will be made to keep your information anonymous. Once the study is complete, the master list and all recordings/materials will be stored on a secure password protected ASU server for a period of 5 years before being destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team – Dr. Ying-Chih Chen at [redacted] or Steven Flanagan at [redacted] or [redacted]

Thank you,

Steven Flanagan, Doctoral Student
Dr. Ying-Chih Chen, Associate Professor

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact Dr. Ying-Chih Chen at [redacted] or the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance at (480) 965-6788.

By typing your full name below (First, Last) as an electronic signature and clicking next, you agree to your participation in the interview and member checking process.

[TEXT BOX FOR SIGNATURE]

[NEXT BUTTON]

APPENDIX B

BACKGROUND SURVEY

(Completed electronically via Google Forms**)**

Teaching/Education Background

1. (Closed question) What is the highest level of formal education you have completed? If you have completed a level in your home country, not consistent with the examples, please use other and briefly explain the level of education.
   A. High school and/or some college courses
   B. Associate's Degree (2 year degree)
   C. Bachelor;s Degree (4 year degree)
   D. Master's degree
   E. Doctoral or professional degree
   F. Other
2. (Closed question) Have you ever completed a teacher education or training program? This may be as short as a single training session or as long as a degree with the intention of preparing you for teaching.
   A. Yes
   B. No
3. (Closed question) If yes, how much time have you spent in a teacher education or training programs?
   A. Less than one day
   B. Two days to a week
   C. Two to four weeks
   D. Two to four months
   E. Longer than five months
4. (Closed question) Do you have any previous teaching experience? This may be private teaching lessons or formal positions in a school or business and may cover any topic (language, business, history, etc.)
   A. Yes
   B. No
5. If yes, how many years of teaching experience do you have?
   A. Less than a year
   B. one to three years
   C. three to five years
   D. More than 5 years
6. If you have previous teaching experience, please briefly describe your experience including your role (lead instructor, assistant, etc.), level taught (college, high school equivalent, elementary), and context (country, subject, etc.) An example: I have 7 seven years teaching experience as the lead instructor in university Spanish courses.

Teacher Identity

1. How do you rate yourself as a teacher?
   A - Excellent, B - Very Good, C - Good, D - Average, E - Below Average, F - Poor
2. Can you elaborate on your response? What made you choose the answer you chose?
3. How do you reflect on your teaching?
   A. I take notes, B - I pass out things C - I Do not reflect on teaching
4. Is teaching reflection necessary? Why or why not?
5. Do you have a teaching philosophy?
   A. Yes, B No
6. If so, what in one or two sentences, what is most important to you as a teacher?

7. How prepared do you feel you are to begin teaching now at the university level?
   A Extremely prepared, B. Very prepared, C. Prepared, D. Somewhat Prepared, E. Not very prepared E. Not prepared at all
8. Can you elaborate on your response? What made you choose the answer you chose?

Demographics

1. What gender do you identify as?
   A. Male
   B. Female
   C. Prefer to self-describe
   D. Prefer not to say
2. What is your age? Please write your age in numbers. If you prefer not to answer, please type (NA)
3. Please specify your ethnicity. If you identify as more than one, please select "other" and specify.
   A. Caucasian
   B. African-American
   C. Latino or Hispanic
   D. Asian
   E. Native American
   F. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   G. Prefer to self-describe
   H. Prefer not to answer
4. Please type the name of the country you were born in. If you prefer not to answer, please type (NA)
5. Where did you live for a majority of your youth (0-18 years) before coming to ASU? For example, the state/province and country. (Maryland, USA or Valencia, Spain or Guadalajara, Mexico). If you prefer not to answer, please type (NA)
6. What is your native language? This language is the language you spoke from childhood and is your dominant language. If you are bilingual, please use "other" and specify languages.
   A. English
   B. Spanish
   C. Prefer not to say
   D. other

APPENDIX C

FINAL RECRUITMENT CONSENT FORM

Dear Colleague:

My name is Steven Flanagan and I am a doctoral student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University (ASU). I am working under the direction of Dr. Ying-Chih Chen, a faculty member in MLFTC. We are conducting a research study on graduate teaching assistant (TA) training. The purpose of this research is to better understand training practices with regard to properly preparing TAs to teach courses at the university level.

We are asking for your help, which will involve your consent to use archival data from your training experiences this semester. This data includes completed materials as part of your normal training schedule such as exit tickets during your pre-semester orientation experience, journal entries from your 15-week practicum, and your formal observation form completed during the fall 2021 semester. Your name will be removed from these forms and a pseudonym will be assigned. These materials will be stored in a password protected ASU Google Drive server for a period of 5 years.

Furthermore, we would like you to participate in an individual interview which will last 15-30 minutes. This interview will concern your training experiences this semester. Total participation will last 15-30 minutes as the archival data was already completed as a result of your normal training requirements. I would like to video record these interviews via Zoom. The interview will not be completed or recorded without your permission. These recordings will also be stored on an ASU Google Drive server for a period of 5 years and the same pseudonym naming conventions will be applied to these files. Only the research team will have access to the recordings. The recordings will be deleted immediately after being transcribed and any published quotes will be anonymous. To protect your identity, please refrain from using names or other identifying information during the interview. Finally, let me know if, at any time, you do not want to be recorded and I will stop.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and should last approximately 30 minutes. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty whatsoever. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

The benefit to participation is the opportunity for you to reflect on graduate student teacher training and professional development. Results from this study will also inform future changes in our training practices. Thus, there is potential to enhance the experiences of our faculty and students. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation and you will not be affected in any way for your inclusion or exclusion of the study.

Your responses will be confidential. Initially, the Principal Investigator (PI) and myself, the Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PI), will collect archival data and interview data. Results from this study may be used in dissertations, presentations, or publications but a pseudonym will be used in all documents and all efforts will be made to keep your information anonymous. Once the study is complete, the master list and all recordings/materials will be stored on a secure password protected ASU server for a period of 5 years.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team – Dr. Ying-Chih Chen at [redacted] or Steven Flanagan at [redacted] or [redacted]

Thank you,
Co-Principal Investigator (CoPI), Steven Flanagan, Doctoral Student
Principal Investigator (PI), Dr. Ying-Chih Chen, Associate Professor

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact Dr. Ying-Chih Chen at [redacted] or the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance at (480) 965-6788.

APPENDIX D

INITIAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

*Note: All participants will answer questions 1-6

1. Tell me about yourself, and how you arrived at being a TA in the program.
2. I would like to get to know you a little better. Do you have any hobbies or interests? This can include both personal and professional hobbies. For example, playing a specific sport or learning more about your career.
3. Something we are exploring is using a community of practice or a "group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in an area by interacting on an ongoing basis." As we are teaching students, we very often associate with a best-practice community. Would you say that your focus or reason in joining our community is sharing a concern, wanting to solve a problem, or having a passion for teaching? It can be one, all, or none of these. If it is none, feel free to say what your reasons are.
4. A community of practice also focuses on making connections. Would it be ok if I shared your interests with other colleagues and how would you feel about connecting with both new and experienced TAs on both personal and professional interests?
5. A community of practice finally looks at practice "or the ways we do things." Take a look at the compass point protocol (Show picture). Which direction would you say you point and why? (Note most people are never truly one direction, but think of the predominant area).
6. What do you feel is the opposite of you?

*Note: If the participant indicates having teaching experience from their survey then ask questions 7-12. If the participant indicates not having teaching experience then proceed to question 13.

7. Can you elaborate more on your training experience? What was effective (producing an intended or desired result)?
8. What was ineffective?
9. How do you feel about your abilities to lesson plan?
10. How do you feel about your abilities to manage the classroom?
11. How do you feel about your abilities to use technology in the classroom and for the classroom? (canvas or another learning management system)
12. What teaching techniques have you used? Do you feel you can use the communicative language teaching method?

*Note: Skip questions 13-14 if the participant answered 7-12. If the participant indicates not having teaching experience from their survey then ask questions 13-14.

13. Overall, is there anything you hope to learn in our orientation that you have not already mentioned?
14. On your survey, you indicated that you view yourself as a (state what they indicated) teacher. You stated (state what they indicated). Can you expand on the factors that contribute to your rating?

*Note: All participants will answer questions 15-18

15. Do you have any issues or concerns when it comes to being a teacher? (This could include political, cultural, emotional views, etc. It could also be about classroom management or student behavior)
16. When you experience problems that negatively influence your effectiveness, who do you go to or who would you like to go to for support?
17. Is there anything else you would like to ask me about your upcoming experience?
18. Do you have any questions or comments for me?

APPENDIX E

FINAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Now that the semester is over, how are you doing? Do you have any fun plans for break?
2. Earlier in the semester, we shared some opportunities via email to connect with other TAs who share your passions and interests outside of academia. Did you decide to contact anyone or meet up with others regarding these interests? If so, how did it go? If not, why not?
3. In what ways have you connected with both veteran and new TAs such as yourself this semester? In both public (organized by the department) and private events/occasions (organized by you or a group of your peers?)
4. Were these events beneficial or detrimental to your development as an instructor here at ASU? How?
5. Thinking back to your experiences this semester, can you recall a time that you used your experience in some aspect of teaching to help another TA? If so, what happened? If not, can you recall another colleague helping you with their experience?
6. In general, do you feel you were able to implement your previous experiences into your teaching? If so, how? If not, why?
7. This semester, you were specifically a part of a group of instructors who all taught the same level (101/102). What was the purpose of this group in your own words?
8. How did this group share and maintain knowledge about teaching, materials, etc?
9. Overall, can you elaborate more on your training experience this semester? What is something that you would like to keep doing? Why?
10. What is something you would like to see added? Why?
11. What is something you would like to see removed from your experience? Why?
12. In the initial survey, you rated yourself as a "X" teacher on the following scale: Excellent, very good, good, average, below average, and poor. Now that you have spent a semester teaching and learning in the program, I wanted to ask you again what you would rate yourself, and what factors contributed to that new rating. Please be as detailed as possible.
12. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding your training experience this semester?
13. Do you have any questions or comments for me?

APPENDIX F

EXIT TICKET EXAMPLES

Day 1
In your opinion, what are the important points to include in the first day of class? Do you feel prepared for the first day? What resources can you use to plan your class?

Day 2
How do you fulfil the objects of a class? Do you have a lot of experience with the creation of objectives for class? If you have experience, where does it come from? If you do not have experience, what can you do to practice?

Day 3
In my own words, what is the communicative method? How can I incorporate it in my lessons? On a scale of 1-5 how prepared am I for the first day of class with 5 being the most prepared? And why?

Day 4
Tell me two strategies to maintain the target language as you plan your classes. Do you feel prepared to manage your classroom? Why or why not? What else would you like to know about classroom management?

APPENDIX G

JOURNAL PROMPTS

Journal Reflection 1

Prompt (in 1 page): Now that you have been in the classroom for a week, please reflect on preparing lessons and teaching. Talk about what challenges you have faced and what resources (both material and human) you used to find solutions. Finally, reflect on how you will approach future challenges with regard to preparing lessons and teaching. (You may respond in English or Spanish)

Note: If you are not currently teaching, please reflect on previous challenges or anticipated challenges for your first teaching experience.

Journal Reflection 3

Prompt (in 1 page): Thinking about the weekly topics, communicative and task-based language teaching, what have been your experiences in implementing these techniques? Talk about what challenges you have faced and what resources (both material and human) you used to find solutions. Finally, reflect on how you will approach future challenges and growth opportunities with regard to using the communicative method. (You may respond in English or Spanish)

Note: If you are not currently teaching, please reflect on previous challenges or anticipated challenges for your first teaching experience.

Journal Reflection 6

Prompt (in 1 page): Thinking about your experiences this semester, please reflect on your experience with classroom management. Talk about what challenges you have faced and what resources (both material and human) you used to find solutions. Finally, reflect on how you will approach future challenges and growth opportunities with regard to classroom management. (You may respond in English or Spanish)

Note: If you are not currently teaching, please reflect on previous challenges or anticipated challenges for your first teaching experience.

Journal Reflection 7

Prompt (in 1 page): Now that you are approaching the end of the semester, please reflect on preparing lessons and technology use in your classroom (both in Canvas and in your class sessions). Talk about what challenges you have faced and what resources (both material and human) you used to find solutions. Finally, reflect on how you will approach future challenges with regard to preparing lessons and technology. (You may respond in English or Spanish.)

Note: If you are not currently teaching, please reflect on previous challenges or anticipated challenges for your first teaching experience.

APPENDIX H

IRB APPROVAL

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Ying-Chih Chen
Division of Teacher Preparation Tempe
-
Ying-Chih.Chen@asu.edu

Dear Ying-Chih Chen:

On 8/16/2021 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Developing Effective New Spanish Graduate Teaching Assistants (TAs) in a Post-Secondary Community of Practice Principled Training Program
Investigator:	Ying-Chih Chen
IRB ID:	STUDY00014335
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None

Documents Reviewed:	• ExitTicketExample - StevenFlanaganv1.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Final Consent Form - StevenFlanaganv2.pdf; Category: Consent Form; • Formal Observation Form for TAs 2020-2021 - StevenFlanaganv1.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Initial Consent Form - StevenFlanaganv3.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • IRB Protocol Dissertation – Steven Flanagan.v3.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • JournalPromptExample - StevenFlanaganv1.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Recruitment Email - StevenFlanaganv2.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Survey - StevenFlanaganv2.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 8/16/2021.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

REMINDER - All in-person interactions with human subjects require the completion of the ASU Daily Health Check by the ASU members prior to the interaction and the use of face coverings by researchers, research teams and research participants during the interaction. These requirements will minimize risk, protect health and support a safe research environment. These requirements apply both on- and off-campus.

The above change is effective as of July 29th 2021 until further notice and replaces all previously published guidance. Thank you for your continued commitment to ensuring a healthy and productive ASU community.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Steven Flanagan
Steven Flanagan