Preparing Linguistics Graduate Students to Teach

LSA Linguistics in Higher Education Committee

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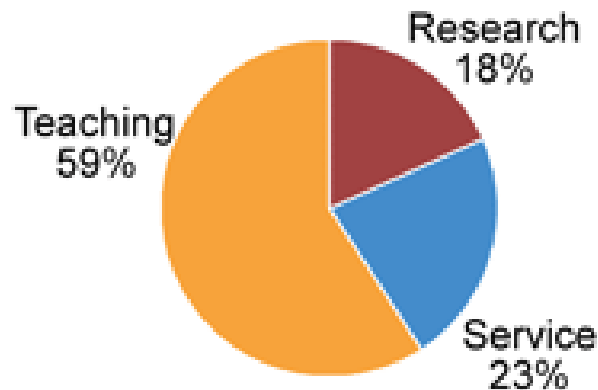Anne Charity Hudley, University of California, Santa Barbara

Sonja Launspach, Idaho State University
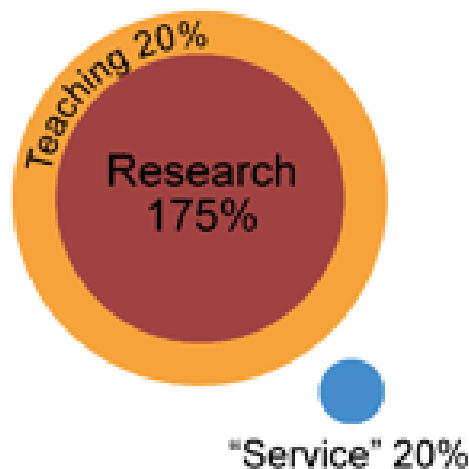
Alex Motut, University of Toronto

The Challenge

"The tendency to devalue teacher preparation in parts of doctoral education is at odds with the ever-growing national pursuit of effective teaching."

– MLA Task Force on Doctoral Study in Modern Language and Literature, 2014

Our Goal

To start a conversation about how we are training linguistics graduate students to teach.

- What kind of skills do teachers of linguistics need?
- What kind of training programs are being implemented?
- What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- How can the effectiveness of a training program be evaluated?
- What first steps might a unit take to develop a training program?
- What's on the horizon?

Panelists

Moderator:

Raichle Farrelly, St. Michael's College

Presenters:

Anne Curzan, University of Michigan

Julia Moore & Matt Goldrick, Northwestern University

Alexandra Motut, University of Toronto

Mary Niepokuj, Purdue University

Panel Format

1) Introduction

2) Panelist presentations

3) Series of questions

4) Additional discussion

First Steps for Developing a Training Program

Keep an eye out for recommendations after the conference. When the document is complete, it will be available here:
- bit.ly/2kLbMic

Or contact Ann Bunger for more information:
- acbunger@indiana.edu

Applied Linguistics Training at Northwestern

- Introduction to program (fall & winter quarters)
- Ling 383: *Applied Linguistics for English Language Teaching*
- Mentoring for new ELP Tutors in ELP
- Mentoring for solo teaching in ELP

Centralized Training at Northwestern

Commitment Level — Low ↕ High
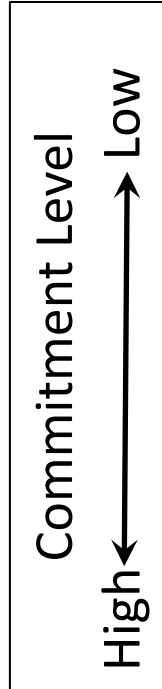
- Mentored Discussions of Teaching
  - MOOC-Centered Learning Community

- STAR: Searle Teaching-As-Research

- Teaching Certificate Program

CIRTL at Northwestern
Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning

Northwestern
SEARLE CENTER FOR ADVANCING LEARNING AND TEACHING

TEACHING ASSISTANT TRAINING IN LINGUISTICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Alexandra Motut, University of Toronto

Levels of Training

Teaching Assistants Training Program (University of Toronto)

Department of Linguistics

Advanced University Teaching Preparation Certificate

Teaching Fundamentals Certificate

TA Training for new TAs

PD Workshops

Peer-to-Peer training

- Peer-to-Peer / Train-the-trainer

  Peer trainers are typically experienced graduate students, many of whom have themselves received additional training in pedagogy and/or how to train TAs

Teaching Context at University of Toronto

- Teaching Assistants are unionized (CUPE3902)
- Some paid training is mandated by the collective agreement between the Union and the University
- Graduate students must do ~120 hours (min) of teaching per year for funding package; many do additional teaching on top of this.
- Upper-year graduate students are given the opportunity to teach courses as primary instructor

Pedagogical Training in Linguistics

- 3-4 hours mandatory job training for new TAs (MA and PhD)
  - Led by linguistics peer-trainer and TATP peer trainer
  - Sample grading activities; grading as a team
  - Active learning techniques
  - Lesson-planning for tutorials, leading discussions, trouble-shooting in tutorial
  - Reporting and administrative duties
  - University of Toronto policies related to duties

Pedagogical Training in Linguistics

- Continuing support through optional (paid and unpaid) workshops at Centre for Teaching Support

- Professional development seminar for 1st year PhD students; focus on:
  - Gathering evidence of effective teaching to eventually create dossier
  - Reflective practices and feedback
  - Creating teaching materials and documenting teaching effectiveness
  - Transitioning from TA → primary instructor

Pedagogical Training in Linguistics

- Strong tradition of faculty-graduate student mentorship:
  - "Back to Teaching" meeting with all faculty and graduate student course instructors (2x year)
  - Faculty mentors are assigned to graduate students teaching a course for the first time
  - Workshops led by graduate students (e.g. "Lead Writing TA"), faculty, and guests, e.g.:
    - *Avoiding plagiarism through effective assignment design*
    - *Respecting gender diversity in the classroom*

Training at the Institutional Level

- Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation:
  - Teaching Assistants' Training Program (TATP)
- Wide variety of teaching workshops
  - Most designed and facilitated by peer trainers
- Peer observation of teaching & feedback
- Micro-teaching sessions
- Dossier review & feedback

Teaching Assistant Training at Purdue

Mary Niepokuj

Nuts and Bolts of Teaching Linguistics

▶ Approaches to teaching specific topics in linguistics

  ▶ Many tasks, such as analyzing linguistic data, are different from anything students have done in other classes

▶ How to choose a textbook

▶ Preparing engaging assignments, activities

▶ Structuring assessments to accurately reflect what you want students to learn

  ▶ These last three are applicable to any course TAs will teach in the future

The Importance of Audience

▶ Teaching does not take place in a vacuum

▶ In structuring a course, TAs need to consider where the course they are teaching fits in to the students' education as a whole

  ▶ Is the course required for specific majors? If so, why? Does the course give students in these majors the training they need?

  ▶ Does the course fill particular distribution requirements at the university (for example, "Human Cultures")? If so, is the course structured so that it actually relates to these requirements?

  ▶ Can the work TAs assign in the course be related to the university's desired learning outcomes?

Making Choices

▶ Every aspect of a course – the topics covered or not covered, the textbook used, what work is assigned, how the work is assessed – is a choice

▶ TAs should be able to articulate to themselves and to their students why they made the choices that they did

Reflective Teaching

▶ One of the best things TAs can do to improve their teaching is to reflect upon their experiences as learners

  ▶ Though graduate students may not have much experience in teaching, they generally have a lot of experience in being students. To the extent that they can draw upon this experience, they can gain confidence in the choices they make as teachers

  ▶ Putting themselves in their students' shoes leads to treating students with respect, a necessary component of good teaching

Professionalization

- TA training should have an eye to graduate students' ultimate goal of employment

  - Students prepare materials in the course that go into a teaching dossier they can draw on when job hunting

  - At Purdue students can use the TA training course to satisfy requirements for certificates in teaching from the Center for Instructional Excellence, demonstrating to future employers that they are serious about teaching

  - Observing TAs in the training course gives me material I often draw upon when writing letters of recommendation.