




Teacher development and multiliteracies pedagogy: Challenges and opportunities for postsecondary language programs

Kate Paesani, University of Minnesota 

Heather Willis Allen, University of Wisconsin–Madison 

Abstract

Over the past two decades, postsecondary language programs have experienced a paradigm shift away from communicative approaches toward more text-based curricula and the development of students' multiple literacies. Numerous curricular and course-level models exist, and empirical research has documented the feasibility, linguistic outcomes, and perceptions of multiliteracies approaches. Yet few studies have investigated how postsecondary language teachers learn about and implement multiliteracies pedagogy and limited professional development resources exist to support teachers in this endeavor. To respond to these gaps and to recent calls for increased research into multiliteracies pedagogy and language teacher development, this article has three aims. First, we summarize current knowledge about postsecondary language teachers' understandings and implementation of the multiliteracies framework, beginning with the 2011 AAUSC volume and continuing to the present. Next, we identify gaps and unanswered questions in this scholarship and suggest directions for future research. Finally, we discuss professional development needs for language teachers and program directors implementing multiliteracies approaches in postsecondary language programs and suggest tools and practices that might facilitate this work.

Keywords: *literacies, multiliteracies framework, language teacher education, professional development*

APA Citation: Paesani, K., & Allen, H. W., (2020). Teacher development and multiliteracies pedagogy: Challenges and opportunities for postsecondary language programs. *Second Language Research & Practice*, 1(1), 124–138. <http://hdl.handle.net/10125/69844>

Introduction

Language teacher education was a running theme throughout the 30-year history of the American Association of University Supervisors and Coordinators (AAUSC) annual volume, *Issues in Language Program Direction*: Approximately two-thirds of the published volumes contained at least one chapter on this topic, and three volumes were devoted exclusively to language teacher education. The first of these, *Development and Supervision of Teaching Assistants in Foreign Languages* (Walz, 1992), highlighted the growing importance of high-quality instruction in undergraduate teaching across disciplines, including language study, and provided models of teacher development programs, approaches to the methods course, and tools and strategies for supervising lower-level instructors. Nearly a decade later, the chapters in *Mentoring Foreign Language Teaching Assistants, Lecturers, and Adjunct Faculty* (Rifkin, 2001) built on the 1992 volume by describing the history, processes, and ways of mentoring teachers and by addressing the three main aspects of faculty work: teaching, research, and service. Finally, the 2011 AAUSC volume, *Educating the Future Foreign Language Professoriate for the 21st Century* (Allen & Maxim, 2013), highlighted the many changes in postsecondary language teacher education that had taken place in the

decade since the publication of its most recent predecessor, and criticized the prevailing model of teacher professional development—a pre-service orientation followed by a one-semester methods course—as insufficient and outdated.

Common themes across these three volumes are reflective of the language-content divide prevalent in many postsecondary language departments and the slow paradigm shift toward curricular and instructional approaches that simultaneously attend to language development and engagement with textual content. These trends include the implications of the language-content divide for postsecondary language teacher education; the need to create standards for teacher professional development; and the importance of sustained, articulated professional development that prepares instructors to teach at all levels of the undergraduate language curriculum. The 2011 volume, in particular, broke new ground in relation to these themes in two important ways. First, it presented more empirical research than its predecessors: Whereas the 1992 and 2000 volumes combined included four studies (20% of all chapters), over half of the 11 chapters in 2011 volume were data-informed. Second, building on previous scholarship on postsecondary language teacher education (e.g., Allen & Negueruela-Azarola, 2010; Byrnes, 2001), the 2011 volume called for adopting coherent frameworks that support curriculum and pedagogy across levels and that anchor professional development for graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), part-time faculty, lecturers, and others teaching in language programs. Indeed, in her position paper in the 2011 AAUSC volume, Byrnes argued that failure to adopt coherent frameworks has consequences that include “serious obstacles to the accumulation of research-based effective educational practice,” “a seemingly endless array of proposals, recommendations, and new ‘theories’ competing for attention in professional discussion and praxis,” and “near *rigor mortis* with regard to the construction of coherent curricula, both undergraduate and graduate” (2011, p. 18).

Three chapters in the 2011 volume explored the multiliteracies framework as one approach for anchoring language programs, reflecting the slow-growing, decades-long trend toward literacy- and text-based curriculum and instruction at that time (e.g., Allen & Paesani, 2010; Bernhardt, 1991; Department of German, 2011; Kern, 2000; Kramsch, 1993; Swaffar & Arens, 2005; Swaffar et al., 1991). The multiliteracies framework is grounded in the overarching concept of *literacies*, which prioritizes overlapping language modalities, interpretation and creation of multimodal texts of various genres, and attention to the linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural dimensions of learning (Kern, 2000; New London Group, 1996).¹ Engaging in the act of *meaning design* is essential to developing students’ literacies and entails establishing form-meaning connections, interpreting the language, conventions, and ideas in texts, and using language in new and creative ways. The multiliteracies framework also proposes four knowledge processes that represent the “things you do to know” (Kalantzis et al., 2016, p. 67) and inform pedagogical practice: *experiencing* a text to express thoughts, opinions, and feelings about familiar and new ideas; *conceptualizing* the language, conventions, and organizational features of a text by connecting them to the meanings they express; *analyzing* a text to question the complexity of language, culture, and ideas; and *applying* what is learned to create new texts and showcase new knowledge (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Kalantzis et al., 2016; New London Group, 1996). Although the focus in this article is on teacher development in relation to multiliteracies pedagogy as conceptualized for first and second language literacies development (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Kalantzis et al., 2016; Kern, 2000; New London Group, 1996; Paesani et al., 2016), it is important to acknowledge that this framework shares much in common with other text-oriented approaches that inform postsecondary language curricula and instructional practices, particularly content-based and genre-based approaches (e.g., Byrnes et al., 2006; Department of German, 2011; Ryshina-Pankova, 2016). Research into these approaches also addresses questions of teacher development and touches on some of the same issues raised in the remainder of this article (see, for example, Gebhard et al., 2013 and Ryshina-Pankova, 2013).

Published scholarship on adaptations of the multiliteracies framework in postsecondary language learning contexts provides numerous curricular and course-level models and empirical studies that document the feasibility, linguistic outcomes, and perceptions of multiliteracies approaches (e.g., Allen & Paesani, 2010; Byrnes et al., 2010; Kumagai et al., 2016; Maxim, 2002, 2006; Warner & Michelson, 2018). Yet relatively

few studies have explored teacher understandings and implementation of the multiliteracies framework, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Multiliteracies in Postsecondary Language Learning: Published Scholarship, 1996-2019

Scholarly Focus	Number (and percentage) of Articles
Student Learning and Perceptions	32 (28.6%)
Position Papers	27 (24.1%)
Curricular Models	15 (13.4%)
Course Models	15 (13.4%)
Pedagogy and Materials	13 (11.6%)
Teacher Development	10 (8.9%)
Total	112 (100%)

Note. Numbers are based on a search of scholarly journals, AAUSC volumes, and one edited volume on teacher development (Johnson & Golombek, 2011), thus this list is not exhaustive.

An important theme in many of these studies is teachers' conceptual development—that is, how they understand and appropriate multiliteracies concepts and tools—and findings suggest that the framework is challenging for teachers to understand and implement. The purpose of this essay, therefore, is to respond to this research gap and to recent calls for increased research into multiliteracies pedagogy and language teacher development (Paesani, 2018; Warner & Dupuy, 2018). First, we summarize current knowledge about postsecondary language teachers' understandings and implementation of the multiliteracies framework, beginning with the 2011 AAUSC volume and continuing to the present. Next, we identify gaps and unanswered questions in this scholarship and suggest directions for future research. Finally, we discuss professional development needs for language teachers and program directors implementing multiliteracies approaches in postsecondary language programs and suggest tools and practices that might facilitate this work.

Summary of Current Knowledge

To situate scholarship on multiliteracies-informed language teacher education from 2011 to the present, we begin with key arguments that laid the foundation for this work. In response to growing concerns about the language-content divide in postsecondary language programs and the effectiveness of communicative language teaching (CLT) for preparing students to pursue advanced-level language study and to participate in increasingly globalized societies, scholars argued that a focus on literacies was needed. Kern (1995) was one of the first to present this argument in relation to teacher professional development, underscoring the need to prepare teachers as literacies experts, not just as language experts, to sustain them through the various teaching roles they may play throughout their careers. He stated that teachers “must be conscious of their important roles as guides in cross-cultural exploration, as instigators of critical reflection about native and foreign discourses, and as models of active literate learners” (p. 86). Similarly, Byrnes (2001, 2005) claimed that adopting a literacies orientation for organizing curriculum, instruction, and teacher professional development allows postsecondary language departments to more effectively address the language-content divide, support language program directors in adopting new teaching paradigms, and encourage pedagogical practices that are relevant across the undergraduate curriculum, not just in lower-

level language courses.

The position paper that opened the 2011 AAUSC volume built on these arguments. In it, Kern (2013) presented four conceptual approaches—including the multiliteracies framework—reflective of new thinking in language education that should inform teacher professional development. Based on implications gleaned from this four-pronged approach, Kern argued for a relational pedagogy (see also Kern, 2015)

that is focused not just on the *acquisition* of language (i.e., the internalization of vocabulary, grammar rules, formulaic expressions, genre structures) but also, and crucially, on the *relationships* that connect these aspects of language to the contexts that bring them to life in discourse. (Kern, 2013, p. 13)

Practical suggestions for fostering this relational pedagogy include opportunities to participate in teaching apprenticeships, formal training in pedagogy and linguistics, teaching across curricular levels, and course design.

Kern's position paper provides a conceptual backdrop for the two data-informed, literacies-oriented chapters in the 2011 AAUSC volume (Allen & Dupuy, 2013; Paesani, 2013). These chapters address questions regarding the pedagogical approaches that are most appropriate for unifying divided language departments and the professional development coursework, tools, and activities that equip graduate students to teach in unified programs. Paesani (2013) answered these questions by describing a graduate-level methods course for secondary and postsecondary teachers of French, German, and Spanish grounded in the multiliteracies framework, and by providing data illustrating its efficacy (see also Allen, 2009, for the description of a similar advanced literacies course). The course was intended to overcome limitations of the traditional professional development model (pre-service orientation followed by in-service methods course) through its focus on literacies and multiliteracies pedagogy, developing instructors' content and pedagogical knowledge, connecting theory and practice, and encouraging reflective teaching practices. Illustrative data from student assessments and a post-course survey suggested that the course contributed to teacher learning by supporting principled decision making, encouraging reflective teaching, and increasing pedagogical and linguistic knowledge. Specifically, students felt they had developed the ability to interpret and reflect critically on texts and teaching materials. Yet the data also showed that students attained varying degrees of conceptual understanding related to the multiliteracies framework, and they lacked confidence in applying these concepts to the creation and implementation of teaching materials.

That teachers attain varying degrees of conceptual understanding and struggle to put those concepts into practice is a running theme throughout research investigating teacher understandings and implementation of the multiliteracies framework, including in Allen and Dupuy's chapter from the 2011 AAUSC volume. This chapter builds on findings from previous studies by Allen (2011) and Dupuy and Allen (2012), namely that (a) participation in one methods course is insufficient for developing the conceptual and pedagogical tools necessary to teach effectively; (b) participation in a second methods course solidifies teachers' conceptual understandings; (c) conceptual development is a slow process; and (d) application of concepts to teaching can be inconsistent. All three of these studies, which focus on Ph.D. students in French and Spanish literature programs, take as a point of departure the need to ground professional development in one overarching concept (i.e., literacies) to facilitate coherent, sustained learning and teaching experiences (Lantolf & Johnson, 2007; Smagorinsky et al., 2003). In their AAUSC chapter, Allen and Dupuy (2013) investigated how participation in a second methods class grounded in literacies and multiliteracies pedagogy influenced five GTAs' conceptual understandings and their ability to apply those understandings to instruction. Findings, based on analysis of participant interviews, methods course artifacts, language learning autobiographies, statements of teaching philosophy, and demographic profiles, confirmed previous research: Participants' conceptual knowledge developed gradually toward more theoretically grounded and nuanced understandings of literacies. Despite this progress, not all participants demonstrated alignment between conceptual understandings and their application to instruction. Based on these findings, Allen and Dupuy proposed a three-part model for GTA professional development that includes formal instruction on literacies-based concepts and pedagogical tools; structured and sustained reflection around GTAs'

conceptual understanding and classroom practice; and collaboration with peers and mentors related to teaching.

Targeting experienced postsecondary teachers of English at a Chinese university, Nauman (2011, 2014) reported on the conceptual development of three focal participants in a two-semester weekly professional development seminar organized around the framing concept of *literacy involves communication*—or the ability to think critically and to interact with others through and about texts of various genres (Kern, 2000)—and related subordinate concepts.² Data sources included all written and spoken materials from the seminar, student artifacts developed during the seminar, and participant classroom observations and debriefing interviews. As was the case in previous studies, Nauman’s participants demonstrated varying degrees of conceptual appropriation and application to classroom instruction. Participants’ ability to conceptualize literacy as communication was enhanced through putting theoretical concepts into dialogue with their everyday experiences as teachers and learners, formal instruction and structured reflection in the methods course, and classroom practice.

Two recent studies provide additional evidence of teachers’ conceptualizations of literacies and multiliteracies pedagogy from the perspective of one Spanish language program transitioning from an exclusive focus on CLT to an approach grounded in the multiliteracies framework. Menke (2018) studied 12 non-tenure-track faculty from this program who were participating in a professional learning circle and analyzed their conceptualizations of literacies and multiliteracies pedagogy and the perceived benefits and challenges of this new approach. Menke’s findings, based on two and a half months of learning circle meeting transcripts, corroborated previous research: Participants’ conceptualizations were incomplete and superficial. One constant in the findings was the central role of texts in multiliteracies pedagogy and their use for engaging learners in critical thinking. Menke additionally found that participants had difficulty connecting the study of language to their conceptual understandings. Indeed, they saw grammar and textual interpretation as distinct aspects of instruction, and language was often absent from discussions about engaging students in textual interpretation and creation. A third finding was that teachers’ conceptual understandings were deeply rooted in beliefs about language teaching and learning based in CLT. Participants regularly pointed out areas of overlap between the two approaches and felt they were teaching textual interpretation, despite their difficulty in clearly defining it.

Connections between the multiliteracies framework and CLT were the focus of a second, two-semester long study of three non-tenure-track faculty from the same Spanish program. Menke and Paesani (2021) explored the nature of teacher discourse around multiliteracies pedagogy and whether and how that discourse reflected concepts from CLT. Based on the analysis of semi-structured interviews, course-level staff meetings, and pre- and post-study questionnaire responses, the researchers found that the three participants were at different points along a conceptual continuum, with one participant closer to the CLT end, another closer to the multiliteracies end, and a third moving away from the CLT end toward greater use of multiliteracies concepts. The two participants closer to the CLT end of the continuum were strongly influenced by their participation in methods courses and postsecondary language programs rooted in CLT, and these lived experiences were often incompatible with the multiliteracies framework. Conversely, the participant on the multiliteracies end of the continuum was influenced by her formal learning experiences, and she was able to align academic understandings of the multiliteracies framework with her lived CLT experiences. Participants’ discourse also reflected the challenge of teaching language forms through multiliteracies pedagogy and they framed this discourse around CLT concepts. This last finding is consistent with Menke (2018) and also with studies showing that multiliteracies instructional activities focused on establishing form-meaning connections in texts (i.e., conceptualizing) are not commonly found in teacher-created materials (e.g., Allen & Dupuy, 2013; Menke & Paesani, 2019; Rowland et al., 2014). All of these studies lend support to Kern’s (2013) claim that it is crucial to foster teachers’ awareness of language and its relationship to various contexts of use.

The importance of establishing form-meaning connections was the focus of a study by Allen and Paesani (in press), who investigated teacher learning related to writing instruction grounded in multiliteracies and

genre-based pedagogies. Specifically, the researchers examined how three GTAs of second-semester French understood and implemented textual borrowing (i.e., a technique for connecting reading and writing whereby learners identify and appropriate word-, sentence-, and discourse-level textual features). As with previous studies, findings from analysis of post-observation interviews and methods course artifacts revealed that participants' conceptual understanding of textual borrowing was emergent, variable, and influenced by their lived experiences and beliefs related to writing instruction. Moreover, analysis of participant-created teaching materials, classroom observations, and simulated recall interview questions showed participants' variable application of textual borrowing to instruction. This variability was evidenced in several ways, including the types of features participants emphasized in textual borrowing activities and their ability to connect those features to meaningful language use in the reading and writing activities they designed.

Two final studies report on professional development in action and show how teachers can more effectively engage with the multiliteracies framework. Palpacuer Lee (2018) provided a narrative account of a professional development program at the Louvre in Paris that aimed to equip K–16 teachers of French with the tools necessary to use multiliteracies pedagogy in their classrooms. To construct her narrative account, Palpacuer Lee incorporated “living texts” (p. 138) from the program (recordings of museum tours and workshops, researcher notes, teaching materials, museum texts, participant-generated multimodal materials) and described the process of 11 participants learning about, experiencing, and enacting multiliteracies pedagogy as they toured (and led a tour of) the museum and collaboratively engaged with museum texts. Michelson & Dupuy (2018) reported on another instance of collaborative professional development: the use of digital social annotated reading (DSAR) to encourage reflection and conceptual understanding related to methods course readings on multiliteracies pedagogy. Analysis of DSAR margin dialogues among four GTAs of French indicated an increase in their reflection about concepts and their ability to create and confirm understandings. To a lesser degree, findings showed that the DSAR platform also strengthened the learning community already present through participation in the methods course. Both studies demonstrate the enactment of professional development around multiliteracies pedagogy and its impact on teacher learning and engagement.

Taken together, the scholarship summarized here provides ample evidence that learning about and implementing the multiliteracies framework is a complex and long-term endeavor. Teachers are heavily influenced by their lived experiences and beliefs related to language teaching and learning, which impacts how and whether they develop deep understandings of multiliteracies concepts and the ability to align instructional practices with those concepts. The research also shows that teachers face challenges in enacting multiliteracies concepts in their teaching, which impacts not only the nature of the instructional materials they create, but also their buy-in of the approach. Implications of these findings highlighted across the studies reviewed here underscore the need to move from the familiar (e.g., CLT principles, personal learning histories) to the unfamiliar to help orient teachers to new instructional paradigms and facilitate conceptual appropriation. Moreover, as has been highlighted in research on teacher cognition for decades, a coherent and long-term professional development plan grounded in multiliteracies principles is essential for facilitating conceptual understanding and pedagogical implementation.

Unanswered Questions, Unexplored Terrain

As [Table 1](#) shows, more than 100 publications have appeared during the past two and a half decades, providing principled arguments for why and how the multiliteracies framework can reinvigorate postsecondary language learning, documenting course and curricular models grounded in this framework, and investigating related student learning outcomes. However, the relatively small number of publications on postsecondary language teachers' understandings and implementation of multiliteracies pedagogy and the collective findings from studies in this subfield support the idea that “the literacy turn currently underway...is more likely to be a slow pivot than a quick, sharp turn” (Menke, 2018, p. 129).

The previous section points to several ways that research has expanded what we know about how teachers

learn about multiliteracies pedagogy and attempt to instantiate it in the classroom. The foci of multiple studies include: teachers' evolving conceptual understandings of and discourses around the multiliteracies framework; contributions of professional development to these understandings and the application of multiliteracies pedagogy in the classroom; and teacher perceptions of implementing this approach in post-secondary language programs. Elements investigated to a lesser degree include teachers' perceptions of the relevance of multiliteracies concepts for their instructional contexts; the professional development activities that are most valuable for developing robust understandings of multiliteracies pedagogy; and the affordances or constraints of carrying out multiliteracies instruction. Questions that research has only begun to address but that merit future exploration include: (a) How do specific professional development activities influence postsecondary language teachers' understandings of the multiliteracies framework? (b) How do language teachers' classroom instructional practices shift as they learn about multiliteracies pedagogy in professional development? (c) How does the understanding and implementation of multiliteracies pedagogy develop among both novice and experienced language teachers? and (d) Which professional development activities are most effective to facilitate appropriation of multiliteracies pedagogy at different points of teachers' professional development trajectories?

One shortcoming of research on postsecondary language teachers' understandings and implementation of multiliteracies pedagogy is the relatively small amount of empirical evidence showing how this approach is implemented and what the consequences are of grounding language courses and curricula in it. This shortcoming is consistent with a critique of the larger knowledge base on language teacher cognition: that it has focused on teachers' inner lives without connecting teachers' perspectives to student learning (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). Although carrying out such research is, admittedly, "methodologically tricky," at the same time, "teachers are in an ideal position to investigate how their learning is enacted in instruction, how students respond to that instruction, and how students' responses shape how teachers continually navigate, arrange, and re-arrange their instruction" (Johnson & Golombek, 2020, p. 125). Future research into applications of multiliteracies pedagogy in postsecondary language programs should balance analysis of teachers' understandings and perspectives with documentation of classroom implementation efforts. Additionally, researchers are encouraged to put teacher and student learning in multiliteracies-oriented language programs into dialogue (see Nauman, 2014, p. 226, for an example of how teacher and student perspectives could be incorporated into future research).

A commonality shared among several publications reviewed here is a focus on fundamental concepts of the multiliteracies framework. In many cases, teachers struggled to understand these concepts, to reconcile them with previous experiences and beliefs, and to align them with their classroom teaching strategies. Concepts that have proven particularly difficult for teachers are literacies as a multi-dimensional language-learning goal; the role of authentic texts and textual interpretation in the multiliteracies framework; and the four knowledge processes (experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing, applying) that anchor multiliteracies instruction. Several studies have furthermore underscored teachers' struggle to integrate analyzing and conceptualizing activities to the same degree as other knowledge processes and to instantiate the notion of meaning design. Several hypotheses have been offered as to why multiliteracies concepts are so challenging to understand and use in instruction, such as the longstanding tradition and influence of CLT-oriented pedagogies in language teaching; instructors' beliefs about what types of cognitive demands are appropriate for lower-level language students; and instructors' difficulty in reconciling concepts from various pedagogical approaches that they have experienced as language learners and teachers (Allen & Dupuy, 2013; Menke & Paesani, 2019, 2021). Some concepts critical for teacher understanding of multiliteracies pedagogy are explored to a lesser degree in previous research and warrant additional investigation. These include the re-imagining of language as a meaning-making resource, which is less prevalent in teacher discourse than sociocultural aspects of literacies development; the range of textual features (linguistic, cultural, organizational, etc.) that contribute to meaning making and literacies development; and the ways that form-meaning connections are facilitated through the use of target language texts and the four knowledge processes of multiliteracies pedagogy.

Publications on postsecondary teachers' understandings of the multiliteracies framework possess several

commonalities regarding the research methodologies used and the instructional contexts and teachers investigated. First, all studies were qualitative, conducted within one language program, and included one to 12 participants. The most commonly used data sources in this research were teacher narratives (e.g., written reflections on teaching), interviews, and artifacts from graduate pedagogy coursework (e.g., reading logs, lesson plans). Less frequently used data sources that should be integrated more robustly in future research include: data that documents dialogic interactions among teachers and between teachers and teacher educators in the course of professional development activities; and data that captures how efforts to instantiate multiliteracies pedagogy unfold in teachers' classrooms (e.g., video observation, simulated recall protocols). Data collection in the studies reviewed most commonly occurred over the course of one semester with some notable exceptions including data collection over one to three academic years. Whereas additional longitudinal investigations are needed, studies from Allen (2011) and Menke and Paesani (2021) demonstrate that progress has been made in responding to previous calls to document the long-term nature of change in language teachers' cognition and instructional practices as they learn new approaches (e.g., Allen & Negueruela-Azarola, 2010; Johnson & Golombek, 2020).

Participants in most of the reviewed studies were GTAs in their first years in the classroom or experienced non-tenure-track faculty teaching elementary- or intermediate-level language courses. Thus, a gap exists in documenting the perspectives of experienced GTAs and tenure-track faculty learning about and implementing multiliteracies pedagogy. Moreover, we are not aware of any publications on the perspectives and experiences of teachers in advanced undergraduate language, literature, or cultural studies courses. This research base has also disproportionately focused on teachers of French or Spanish as a foreign language in U.S. universities; Nauman's work (2011, 2014) on the perspectives and practices of postsecondary EFL teachers in China is the only publication falling outside of this trend. The extent to which multiliteracies pedagogy is highlighted in teacher development in languages other than French and Spanish remains largely unknown and represents a critical need for further research. This gap is particularly concerning for less-commonly taught language programs, whose curricular configurations and pedagogical practices have tended to lag behind those of more-commonly taught languages (Kumagai & López-Sánchez, 2016; Warner & Dupuy, 2018) and for heritage language programs, in which instructor training is problematic due to a lack of comprehensive frameworks or models for professional development (Lacorte, 2018). In summary, future research should continue to widen its scope regarding the types of data that are collected, the duration of data collection, and the teachers, languages, and instructional contexts that are investigated.

Tools and Practices for Professional Development

Research on postsecondary language teacher education and the multiliteracies framework has provided numerous insights regarding professional development tools and practices that can support language teachers and program directors. Three shared aims inform many of the tools and practices recommended to date. The first aim is to ground professional development in a view of teacher learning understood as a complex, long-term process. This conceptualization of teacher learning stands in marked contrast to the traditional model of professional development, which relies on the notion of knowledge transmission, i.e., that pedagogical content knowledge can be transferred from teacher educators to teacher learners through reading research, observing a teacher educator explain or demonstrate new teaching techniques, or attempting to imitate and replicate new techniques through microteaching (Johnson, 2009). As Johnson and Golombek (2016) explained,

a persistent challenge for language teacher education is to create learning/teaching opportunities that foster the development of L2 teacher pedagogical content knowledge. What makes this challenge so persistent is that...because it is emergent, dynamic, and contingent on teachers' knowledge of particular students, in particular contexts, who are learning particular content, for particular purposes, it cannot be acquired in one context and then simply applied to another. (p. 11)

This challenge is particularly relevant in U.S. postsecondary language programs wherein professional development for teachers is often frontloaded, i.e., provided primarily at the outset of graduate students'

program of study (Allen & Negueruela-Azarola, 2010). Ongoing professional development experiences, such as participating in workshops, mentored teaching, presenting on language teaching matters, or conducting action research, tend to be less systematic (Allen, 2014; Angus, 2016). Despite recurrent critiques of this model's shortcomings and calls for change, it remains the dominant model today. Fostering the development of pedagogical content knowledge to support teaching language, literature, and culture at all levels of instruction is all the more challenging given the language-content divide that negatively impacts both the coherence of the undergraduate language curriculum and the professional development of those who teach within it (e.g., Allen, 2014; Byrnes, 2001). In fact, several studies of GTAs' perceptions of their professional development have revealed that although they view themselves as reasonably well prepared to teach lower-level language courses, GTAs feel significantly less confident about their capacity to teach advanced literary-cultural content courses (Levine & Crane, 2012; Mills, 2011). In this regard, the multiliteracies framework can provide a useful orientation to anchor professional development, but as the studies reviewed here reveal, it is a conceptually challenging approach for teachers to understand and implement.

In light of contextual challenges in postsecondary language programs and with the aim of enacting professional development that understands teacher learning as a complex, long-term process, a number of publications provide models for activities to use in a multiliteracies-oriented methods course to integrate theory and practice and maximize teacher learning (e.g., Dupuy & Allen, 2012; Michelson & Dupuy, 2018; Paesani, 2013). These include reflective journals, DSAR, and instructional design projects. Additional models are available through the *Foreign Languages and the Literary in the Everyday* project (FLLITE, n.d.), which curates a collection of open-access lesson plans developed by and for teachers. Professional development activities around this project are grounded in multiliteracies principles and encourage teachers to analyze textual features such as grammar, style, and pragmatics to target in instructional activities. The *Foreign Language Literacies* project (CARLA, 2019) is also informed by research findings showing that teachers need scaffolded support for implementing multiliteracies pedagogy in their classrooms (Menke & Paesani, 2019, 2021). Current resources include a tool for analyzing textbook activities and adapting them to reflect multiliteracies principles and future resources will include a database of activities organized by the four knowledge processes. All of these models, resources, and tools can be used during and beyond the methods course to facilitate long-term and coherent professional development experiences.

The second aim that informs recommendations for postsecondary language teacher education and multiliteracies pedagogy is to use professional development tools and practices that align with the sociocultural theory perspective on teacher learning as fundamentally conceptual in nature. This perspective posits teacher learning as a process wherein teachers' *everyday concepts*, or personal notions about what language is, how languages are learned, and how they should be taught, encounter *scientific concepts* in the research and theory that teachers confront in academic coursework and other formal learning contexts. Interactions between these everyday and scientific concepts create the potential for reorganization of teachers' experiential knowledge and formation of new knowledge (Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2016). However, concept development does not occur spontaneously; instead, it depends on *responsive mediation* (Johnson & Golombek, 2020), in which teachers and teacher educators interact and teachers "play with their emerging understanding of the [scientific] concepts they have been exposed to...and...attempt to enact alternative ways of teaching that they are not yet able to do without assistance" (p. 8). Professional development is thus a means of supporting the gradual process of conceptual development by "present[ing] relevant scientific concepts to teachers...in ways that bring these concepts to bear on concrete practical activity, connecting them to their everyday knowledge and the goal-directed activities of teaching" (Johnson & Golombek, 2011, p. 2). In concrete terms, this entails multiple, sustained opportunities for dialogic mediation, scaffolded learning, and assisted performance (Johnson, 2009).

Some tools and practices that focus on supporting language teachers' concept development include *concept mapping*, wherein teachers represent their current pedagogical content knowledge graphically and maps are revisited and revised over time (Dupuy & Allen, 2012), *dialogic reflection* and *jigsaw reading* among teachers (Nauman, 2014), and *goal setting* (Nauman, 2011). Another conceptually oriented activity that

merits further exploration is *lesson study* (Lewis, 2002), which involves teachers studying new content relevant to instruction, collaboratively designing a lesson related to a specific element of what has been learned in professional development, selecting a team member to teach the lesson to their students while the other team members observe it, and finally using the data from the lesson to reflect on student learning and how the lesson could be revised for use in the future. Unlike microteaching, lesson study is a collective activity situated in the actual context of teaching that unfolds in stages and provides numerous opportunities for responsive mediation on concepts related to the designed, analyzed, and revised lesson. Lesson study can, therefore, be used either as a course component or among small groups of teachers informally working together. Although lesson study's use in language teacher education has been documented (e.g., Dupuy & Allen, 2012; Tasker, 2011), its implementation and associated teacher learning outcomes in multiliteracies-oriented professional development should be further explored in the future.

The third aim shared among professional development activities recommended for multiliteracies-oriented language teacher education also aligns with a sociocultural theory perspective. These activities reflect a view of teacher learning as both individual and collective, and learning to teach as a dynamic process of social interaction in which teachers appropriate, reconstruct, and transform practices of teaching based on individual and local needs (Johnson, 2009). Johnson and Golombek (2020) described the need for language teacher education to include *structured mediational spaces* in which “teachers are encouraged to play/step into being and becoming a teacher” (p. 119) through goal-directed professional development activities and interactions. The authors further explained that within these structured mediational spaces, teachers should be encouraged “to make their everyday concepts explicit, to reflect on and critique them, and to externalize their current understandings of what, how, and why they teach the way they do” (p. 123).

A number of the professional development activities described in the research reviewed here are consistent with this notion of structured mediational spaces. These include a conceptually oriented yearlong *professional development seminar* (Nauman, 2011) and annotated *digital social reading* (Michelson & Dupuy, 2018), a tool that facilitates teachers asking questions, reflecting on concepts, sharing, and negotiating ideas with others. An additional practice that represents a structured mediational space is the *professional learning circle* (Menke, 2018), in which teachers build and share knowledge through a dialogical process and deep reflection about problems or issues relevant to instruction with a focus on a shared outcome. Facilitation of the professional learning circle was not always conducted by the teacher educator in Menke's study; rather, it rotated between the teacher educator and other teacher participants. Benefits of this professional development activity included collaborative explorations of new pedagogical topics, questioning of new ideas without any threat to teachers' identities as language educators, and enhanced understanding of some multiliteracies concepts.

Conclusion

The research reviewed in this article lends ample support to the notion that learning about and applying new instructional paradigms such as the multiliteracies framework is a complex and long-term undertaking. Although this research has important implications for postsecondary language programs, additional work is essential for understanding the nuances of concept development and pedagogical practices grounded in multiliteracies principles, and for broadening the contexts in which multiliteracies-oriented teacher development research is conducted. Not only will this additional research broaden the knowledge base of language teacher education, it will also provide insights into how best to support language teachers and program directors in implementing the multiliteracies framework. Indeed, the professional development tools and practices presented herein represent only a starting point for countering the contextual limitations and traditional ideologies of teacher learning that have long influenced how teachers develop pedagogical content knowledge in postsecondary language programs. Future professional development efforts will depend crucially on participation in structured and dialogic mediational spaces in which teachers interact and negotiate their evolving understandings of the multiliteracies framework. Moving forward with this praxis-oriented agenda will ensure that language instructors are prepared to teach in a conceptually coherent

manner at all levels of the postsecondary curriculum, and that language program directors can effectively support teachers in this endeavor.

Acknowledgements

Some of the ideas presented in this article were developed based on our participation in a symposium on teacher education and multiliteracies pedagogy at the [11th International Language Teacher Education Conference](#), held at the University of Minnesota and sponsored by CARLA. We would therefore like to thank our co-presenters: Mandy Menke, Kristen Michelson, and Chantelle Warner. We are also grateful for feedback from two anonymous reviewers of this manuscript.

Notes

1. Multiple terms are used in the literature to refer to the pedagogical framework we adopt in this article: literacy, literacies, multiple literacies, multiliteracies. We choose to use the term “multiliteracies” to refer to the pedagogical framework first introduced by the New London Group (1996), and “literacies” to refer to the overarching concept that informs the multiliteracies framework. We also use the terms “multiliteracies framework” and “multiliteracies pedagogy” interchangeably throughout the article.
2. Nauman (2011) identified four subordinate concepts of literacy that involve communication: (a) the dimensions of literacy (linguistic, cognitive, sociocultural); (b) the principles of literacy (interpretation, collaboration, problem solving, (self-)reflection, language use, conventions, cultural knowledge); (c) available designs; and (d) the components of multiliteracies pedagogy (i.e., the four knowledge processes). It is beyond the scope of this article to provide definitions of each of these subordinate concepts and we refer the reader to Kern (2000).

References

- Allen, H. W. (2009). Beyond the language-literature divide: Advanced pedagogy for training graduate students. *ADFL Bulletin*, 41(2), 88–99.
- Allen, H. W. (2011). Embracing literacy-based teaching: A longitudinal study of the conceptual development of novice foreign language teachers. In K. E. Johnson & P. E. Golombek (Eds.), *Sociocultural research on second language teacher education: Exploring the complexities of professional development* (pp. 86–101). Routledge.
- Allen, H. W. (2014). Foreign language teaching assistant professional development: Challenges and strategies in meeting the 2007 MLA report’s calls for change. In J. K. Swaffar & P. Urlaub (Eds.), *Transforming postsecondary language teaching in the United States* (pp. 177–192). Springer.
- Allen, H. W., & Dupuy, B. (2011). Evolving notions of literacy-based foreign language teaching: A qualitative study of graduate student instructors. In H. W. Allen & H. H. Maxim (Eds.), *Educating the future foreign language professoriate for the 21st century* (pp. 171–191). Cengage.
- Allen, H. W., & Maxim, H. H. (Eds.). (2011). *Educating the future foreign language professoriate for the 21st century*. Cengage.
- Allen, H. W., & Negueruela-Azarola, E. (2010). The professional development of future professors of foreign languages: Looking back, looking forward. *Modern Language Journal*, 94(3), 377–395.
- Allen, H. W., & Paesani, K. (2010). Exploring the feasibility of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in introductory foreign language courses. *L2 Journal*, 2, 119–142.
- Allen, H. W., & Paesani, K. (in press). Genre instruction, textual borrowing, and foreign language

- writing: Graduate teaching assistant perspectives and practices. *Language Teaching Research*.
- Angus, K. (2016). Saying vs. doing: A contradiction in the professional development of foreign language teaching assistants. *Foreign Language Annals*, 30, 1–17.
- Bernhardt, E. (1991). *Reading development in a second language*. Ablex.
- Byrnes, H. (2001). Reconsidering graduate students' education as teachers: It takes a department! *Modern Language Journal*, 85(4), 512–530.
- Byrnes, H. (2005). Toward a comprehensive conceptualization of teaching assistant education: Contents, commitments, structures. In D. Tedick (Ed.), *Second language teacher education: International perspectives* (pp. 135–155). Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Byrnes, H. (2011). Reconsidering graduate students' education as scholar-teachers: Mind your language! In H. W. Allen & H. H. Maxim (Eds.), *Educating the future foreign language professoriate for the 21st century* (pp. 17–42). Cengage Learning.
- Byrnes, H., Crane, C., Maxim, H. H., & Sprang, K. A. (2006). Taking text to task: Issues and choices in curriculum construction. *ITL – International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 152(1), 85–110.
- Byrnes, H., Maxim, H. H., & Norris, J. (2010). Realizing advanced foreign language writing development in collegiate education: Curricular design, pedagogy, assessment. *Modern Language Journal [Supplement]*, 94, 1–221.
- Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA). (2019). *Foreign language literacies*. <http://carla.umn.edu/literacies/index.html>
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2009). 'Multiliteracies': New literacies, new learning. *Pedagogies*, 4, 164–194.
- Department of German. (2011). Curriculum project. *Georgetown University*. <https://german.georgetown.edu/curriculumproject/>
- Dupuy, B., & Allen, H. W. (2012). Appropriating conceptual and pedagogical tools of literacy: A qualitative study of two novice foreign language teaching assistants. In G. Gorsuch (Ed.), *Working theories for teaching assistant and international teaching assistant development* (pp. 275–315). New Forums Press.
- FLLITE. (n.d.). *Foreign languages and the literary in the everyday*. <http://fllite.org>
- Gebhard, M., Chen, I., Graham, H., & Gunawan, W. (2013). Teaching to mean, writing to mean: SFL, L2 literacy, and teacher education. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 22, 107–124.
- Johnson, K. E. (2009). *Second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective*. Routledge.
- Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (2011). (Eds.). *Sociocultural research on second language teacher education: Exploring the complexities of professional development*. Routledge.
- Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (2016). *Mindful L2 teacher education: A sociocultural perspective on cultivating teachers' professional development*. Routledge.
- Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (2020). Informing and transforming language teacher education pedagogy. *Language Teaching Research*, 24(1), 116–127. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168818777539>
- Kalantzis, M., Cope, B., Chan, E., & Dalley-Trim, L. (2016). *Literacies* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Kern, R. (1995). Redefining the boundaries of foreign language literacy. In C. Kramsch (Ed.), *Redefining the boundaries of language study* (pp. 61–98). Heinle.

- Kern, R. (2000). *Literacy and language teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Kern, R. (2011). Teaching language and culture in a global age: New goals for teacher education. In H. W. Allen & H. H. Maxim (Eds.), *Educating the future foreign language professoriate for the 21st century* (pp. 3–16). Heinle.
- Kern, R. (2015). *Language, literacy, and technology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Kubanyiova, M., & Feryok, A. (2015). Language teacher cognition in applied linguistics research: Revisiting the territory, redrawing the boundaries, reclaiming the relevance, *Modern Language Journal*, 99(3), 435–449.
- Kumagai, Y., López-Sánchez, A., & Wu, S. (Eds.). (2016). *Multiliteracies in world language education*. Routledge.
- Lacorte, M. (2018). Multiliteracies pedagogy and heritage language teacher education: A model for professional development. In G. C. Zapata & M. Lacorte (Eds.), *Multiliteracies pedagogy and language learning: Teaching Spanish to heritage speakers* (pp. 197–226). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lantolf, J. P., & Johnson, K. E. (2007). *Second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective*. Routledge.
- Levine, G., & Crane, C. (2012, November). *A survey of graduate student beliefs about and expectations for teacher education and professional development*. [Paper presentation]. American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Convention, Philadelphia, PA, United States.
- Lewis, C. (2002). *Lesson study: A handbook of teacher-led instructional change*. Research for Better Schools.
- Maxim, H. H. (2002). A study into the feasibility and effects of reading extended authentic discourse in the beginning German language classroom. *Modern Language Journal*, 86(1), 20–35.
- Maxim, H. H. (2006). Integrating textual thinking into the introductory college-level foreign language classroom. *Modern Language Journal*, 90(1), 19–32.
- Menke, M. R. (2018). Literacy-based curricula in university foreign language instruction: Perceptions from non-tenure-track faculty. *L2 Journal*, 10(2), 111–133.
- Menke, M. R., & Paesani, K. (2019). Analysing foreign language instructional materials through the lens of the multiliteracies framework. *Language, Culture, and Curriculum*, 32(1), 34–49.
- Menke, M. R., & Paesani, K. (2021). Understanding teacher discourse around multiliteracies pedagogy. In B. Dupuy & K. Michelson (Eds.), *Pathways to paradigm change: Critical examinations of prevailing discourses and ideologies in second language education* (pp. 83–107). Cengage.
- Michelson, K., & Dupuy, B. (2018). Teacher learning under co-construction: Affordances of digital social annotated reading. *Apprentissage des langues et systèmes d'information et de communication*, 21. <https://journals.openedition.org/alsic/3344>
- Mills, N. (2011). Teaching assistants' self-efficacy in teaching literature: Sources, personal assessments, and consequences. *Modern Language Journal*, 91(1), 1–11.
- Nauman, G. (2011). Synthesizing the academic and the everyday. In K. E. Johnson & P. E. Golombek (Eds.), *Sociocultural research on second language teacher education: Exploring the complexities of professional development* (pp. 102–117). Routledge.
- Nauman, G. (2014). *Paths to new conceptualizations of literacy in Chinese EFL teachers* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The Pennsylvania State University.

- New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60–92.
- Paesani, K. (2013). A literacy-based approach to foreign language teacher development. In H. W. Allen & H. H. Maxim (Eds.), *Educating the future foreign language professoriate for the 21st century* (pp. 60–81). Heinle.
- Paesani, K. (2018). Researching literacies and textual thinking in collegiate foreign language programs: Reflections and recommendations. *Foreign Language Annals*, 51(1), 129–139.
- Paesani, K., Allen, H. W., & Dupuy, B. (2016). *A multiliteracies framework for collegiate foreign language teaching*. Pearson.
- Palpacuer Lee, C. J. L. (2018). Multiliteracies in action at the art museum. *L2 Journal*, 10(2), 134–157.
- Rifkin, B. (Ed.). (2001). *Mentoring foreign language teaching assistants, lecturers, and adjunct faculty*. Heinle.
- Rowland, L., Canning, N., Faulhaber, D., Lingle, W., & Redgrave, A. (2014). A multiliteracies approach to materials analysis. *Language, Culture, and Curriculum*, 27(2), 136–150.
- Ryshina-Pankova, M. (2013). Preparing graduate student teachers for advanced content-based instruction: Exploring content through grammatical metaphor. In H. W. Allen & H. H. Maxim (Eds.), *Educating the future foreign language professoriate for the 21st century* (pp. 82–104). Heinle.
- Ryshina-Pankova, M. (2016). Scaffolding advanced literacy abilities in the FL classroom: Implementing a genre-driven content-based approach. In L. Cammarata (Ed.), *Content-based foreign language teaching: Curriculum and pedagogy for developing advanced thinking and literacy skills* (pp. 51–70). Routledge.
- Smagorinsky, P., Cook, L. S., & Johnson, T. S. (2003). The twisting path of concept development in learning to teach. *Teachers College Record*, 105(8), 1399–1436.
- Swaffar, J., & Arens, K. (2005). *Remapping the foreign language curriculum: An approach through multiple literacies*. Modern Language Association of America.
- Swaffar, J., Arens, K., & Byrnes, H. (1991). *Reading for meaning: An integrated approach to language learning*. Pearson.
- Tasker, T. (2011). Teacher learning through lesson study: An activity theoretical approach toward professional development in the Czech Republic. In K. E. Johnson & P. E. Golombek (Eds.), *Sociocultural research on second language teacher education: Exploring the complexities of professional development* (pp. 204–221). Routledge.
- Walz, J. C. (Ed.). (1992). *Development and supervision of teaching assistants in foreign languages*. Heinle.
- Warner, C., & Dupuy, B. (2018). Moving toward multiliteracies in foreign language teaching: Past and present perspectives...and beyond. *Foreign Language Annals*, 51(1), 116–128.
- Warner, C., & Michelson, K. (2018). Living literacies: L2 learning, textuality, and social life. Introduction to the special issue. *L2 Journal*, 10(2), 3–15.

About the Authors

Kate Paesani (PhD, Indiana University) is Director of the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota. Her research focuses on literacy-based curriculum and instruction and foreign language teacher development, couched within the frameworks of multiliteracies pedagogy and sociocultural theory.

E-mail: kpaesani@umn.edu

Heather Willis Allen (PhD, Emory University) is Associate Professor of French at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a core faculty member of her institution's Second Language Acquisition doctoral program. Her research areas include L2 teacher cognition and design and multiliteracies pedagogies.

E-mail: hwallen@wisc.edu