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Personal Practical Knowledge of Graduate Spanish-Teaching Assistants: An Issue of Experience

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PERSONAL PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE OF GRADUATE SPANISH-TEACHING

ASSISTANTS: AN ISSUE OF EXPERIENCE

by

NANCY YANEZ-PINTO

Under the Direction of Dr. John Murphy

ABSTRACT

The significant role of Graduate Spanish-Teaching Assistants (GSTAs) in Spanish as a foreign language programs at North American universities has not been matched by the development and support efforts of those programs. That is, GSTAs are at the forefront of the introductory and intermediate Spanish courses while receiving very limited support. At the same time, and in spite numerous research focused on graduate teaching assistants, efforts to explore what these novice teachers know, the sources of their knowledge, and how such knowledge may be informing their teaching practices, have been minimal. The purpose of the present study was, therefore, to gain further understanding of the personal practical knowledge (PPK) of inexperienced GSTAs as compared to that of experienced GSTAs. The categories of PPK found in the data were:

knowledge of self, knowledge of students, knowledge of instruction, knowledge of subject

matter, knowledge of purpose, and knowledge of context. The project consisted of eight case

studies (four experienced GSTAs and four inexperienced GSTAs), with a qualitative approach to

the collection of data. The sources of data were: semi structured interviews, classroom

observations, reflective journals, and stimulated recall. Findings revealed that the PPK of

experienced and inexperienced GSTAs is complex, contextual, interconnected, experiential, and

constantly evolving. Knowledge of students was consistently the most salient and influential area

of the PPK of all participants, and it informed more pedagogical choices than the remaining

areas. The knowledge of instruction of the experienced GSTAs was found to be more developed

than that of the inexperienced group, and they also relied more on experience than their new

counterparts. However, the first-time GSTAs were able to work collaborative and thus

accelerated the development of their knowledge of instruction while aiding their teaching

practice.

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DEDICATION

To my son, Sebastian- your arrival changed my life in the scariest and most wonderful ways. To my husband Isaias- thank you for your unwavering love, patience and tireless support, and for being an extremely reliable sounding board. To my parents, Nancy and Roger- thank you for everything you have done for me since birth, and continue to do long past the time I left the nest. This work is dedicated to all of you.

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1   INTRODUCTION

In the vast majority of North American universities, there is a foreign language (FL)
requirement. That is, undergraduate students of all majors are required to take one to two years
of FL classes in order to graduate, making introductory and intermediate level courses
considerably more numerous than advanced level courses. Due in part to the "steadily increasing
heritage speaking populations within the United States, particularly Spanish-speaking ones"
(Allen & Negueruela-Azarola, 2010, p. 377), Spanish is considered to be one of the most sought
after foreign languages at the university level (Zapata, 2002). In the introductory courses,
students are likely to receive instruction from a graduate teaching assistant (GTA). According to
Burkart (1998, p. iv), "in institutions where teaching assistants are present, they teach
approximately half of the sections in the first and second year language courses".

Other authors indicate that the ratio of GTAs in elementary and intermediate FL
instruction at many postsecondary institutions in North America has increased to a level where
most of the teaching is conducted by graduate students pursuing MA or PhD degrees (Brandl,
2000; Chambers & Parson, 2004; Kost, 2008; MLA, 2007).

> [This] unique feature of American universities derives primarily from the double need to
> hire relatively inexpensive instructors for a mass-education system and to provide
> financial support for graduate students who might not be otherwise able to attend school.
> (Azevedo, 1990, p. 24)

FL GTAs do not necessarily function as instructional assistants when, in fact, many of
them serve as the teachers of record as they have become "indispensable to staffing
undergraduate FL courses" (Allen & Negueruela-Azarola, 2010, p. 378). In many programs they
are autonomously responsible for their individual courses, for which they may receive extensive,
little, or even no faculty support at all (Azevedo, 1990; Crooks & Chandler, 2001).

Adding to the relevant role of GTAs in FL programs is the fact that, they tend to be the first, and in many cases, the only contact undergraduate students will have with an instructor of the foreign language and culture. Consequently, FL GTAs can have considerable impact on their students' choices of major and minor areas of study (Kost, 2008). In Benseler's (1993) words: "few academic disciplines exist in which junior practitioners are asked to assume responsibility for the future direction of particular programs, perhaps even entire professions. Foreign language programs are notable exceptions" (p. ix).

The role of FL GTAs has been the focus of considerable research. Back in 1990, in their review of published research regarding the professional development of FL GTAs, Benseler and Cronjaeger indicated that such research consisted largely of descriptions of orientation sessions and training programs offered to FL GTAs. The tendency continued, as exemplified by literature on GTA training, supervision and evaluation (e. g., Barnett and Cook, 1992; Burkart, 1998; Chambers & Pearson, 2004; Crookes & Chandler, 2001; Herchensohn, 1992; Rifkin, 1992; Wildner-Bassett, 1992). Other studies have focused on GTAs' perceptions of FL instruction and training (e.g., Fox, 1993; Brandl, 2000). A more in-depth discussion of language GTA research will be presented in the literature review section below.

Based on the existing research on FL GTAs, a persistent concern is that researchers seem to be ignoring the role that teacher cognition plays in the instructional decisions and classroom performance of FL GTAs. Studies of teacher cognition have highlighted the importance of what language teachers know, and comprise a valuable body of literature (e.g. Borg, 2003a, 2003b, 2006, 2009; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Richards, 1998; Shulman, 1986, 1987, 1999, 2000; Velez-Rendon, 2002; Verloop et al., 2001). In some cases, researchers have explored the knowledge of experienced teachers versus novice teachers (e.g., Gatbonton, 2008, Richards et al., 1995; Tsui,

2003), finding more complexity, richness and integration in the knowledge of more experienced teachers. Most of the novice teachers in these studies had already completed their training, and were not GTAs, that is, they were employed as language instructors. With FL GTAs there is considerable variation regarding their various levels of experience. Some FL GTAs are in their first semester as language course instructors, while others may have been GTAs for years in their programs. Differences between the two groups are of interest and are part of the focus of the present study.

The vast majority of teacher knowledge research has focused on the teachers of English as a second (L2) or foreign language while the knowledge of those who teach other languages remains under-explored (Borg, 2006). A possible explanation for the lack of balance may be what Patrikis (1995, p. 298) calls a "hierarchy of teaching and research" that is present in many FL departments, where an institutionalized division between language and literature persists. In this hierarchy, language and teaching are subordinate to literature, and thus there is a diminished focus on the development of language teachers (Guthrie, 2001), in contrast with departments of Applied Linguistics, for example (Burns & Richards, 2009). Given the importance of Spanish language instruction at North American universities, and the central role that Graduate Spanish-Teaching Assistants (GSTAs) play in the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language in these settings, there is a pressing need to explore and document forms of knowledge that GTAs possess.

1.1   Context of the Study

The focus of the dissertation is to investigate what GSTAs know and do not know, what they consider to be their strengths and weaknesses, the challenges they face, and the reasonings about language teaching they possess while serving as GSTAs in the Spanish language program

at a major university in the southeast region of the United States. In the program serving as the

context of the study, of the 64 Spanish as a foreign language (SFL) courses offered to

undergraduate students (not including literature and culture classes), 52 are for the first four

levels of instruction (81%). In the 2011-2012 academic year (fall and spring semesters), a total

of 92 sections were opened for the lower division program (Span 1001, 1002, 2001 and 2002).

GSTAs taught 62 of these sections (67%). Table 1 shows the numbers and percentages of

GSTAs in charge of lower division Spanish sections for the two semesters previous to the

collection of data for the study (fall 2011 and spring 2012).

Table 1 Number and Percentage of GSTAs in the Lower Division Spanish Program for the 2011-2012 Academic Year

Semester	Level	# of Sections	# of GSTAs teaching	% of GSTAs teaching
Fall 2011	1001	20	15	75.00%
Fall 2011	1002	15	9	60.00%
Fall 2011	2001	6	4	66.67%
Fall 2011	2002	3	1	33.33%
Spring 2012	1001	20	15	75.00%
Spring 2012	1002	18	13	72.22%
Spring 2012	2001	6	3	50.00%
Spring 2012	2002	4	2	50.00%
Totals		92	62	67.39%

The data presented in Table 1 correspond with previous descriptions of the composition

of SFL programs nation-wide as reported by Burkart (1998), Chambers and Parson (2004), and

Kost (2008). They also support the idea that the relevant role GTAs play in foreign language

programs merits increased research attention. However, according to Burkart (1998, p. iv),

> it is not at all uncommon for criteria for selection of [G]TAs to omit entirely any questions about prior preparation or experience in the teaching of a foreign language. Moreover, in many foreign language departments, there is no provision for on-the-job training, and the [G]TAs are left to cope on their own.

During the time the data for the project was collected, the training of GTAs in the

program I examined consisted of one personal meeting with the program coordinator, one

meeting with the coordinator and other instructors of the lower division Spanish program (first and second year courses) before the start of each semester, and a variety of support documents available online to all instructors in this division. The documents include philosophy guidelines, frequently asked questions (FAQ), departmental policies, tips on quiz design and lesson planning, etc. There is also a required course for new GSTAs that is focused on FL teaching and classroom management. The scope and relevance of this course, as seen by the participants of the study, will be discussed in the result chapters.

In addition, there is a constant influx of new GTAs to replace those who graduate or leave. As a result, the SFL program's instructional staff consists of a combination of experienced and inexperienced instructors every semester in a process through which the new GTAs seek guidance of the 'veteran' GTAs. However, the guidance is quite informal, one-sided, neither supervised nor guided by the department, and it does not feature the participation of the more experienced faculty members. It is not the 'educative mentoring' suggested and described by Hornberger (2006) and Malderez (2009), and by Johnson (2009) as part of the sociocultural perspective on LTE. Educative mentoring "is aimed at teacher growth by enabling teachers at all levels of experience and expertise to respect, challenge, and support one another as they collectively seek to reach standards of excellence in their work" (Johnson, 2009, p. 99). In other words, learning to teach depends, at least in part, upon the availability of supportive mentors, who offer scaffolded support and with whom new teachers share opportunities to interact on substantive matters. Several authors have advocated for professional mentoring in the development of FL GTAs (Braun & Robb, 1991; Chalupa & Lair, 2001; Gonglewski & Penningworth, 1998; Leaver & Oxford, 2001; Melin, 2000; Rava, 1991; Siskin & Davis, 2001).

In their descriptions of instructional contexts, Johnson (1989), and Nunan and Lamb (1996) outline two opposing types: high-constraint contexts where teachers are obliged to follow a comprehensive, often externally developed syllabus; and low-constraint contexts where individual classroom teachers have considerable autonomy. The former is the case for the lower division SFL program under study. Given the high number of sections for each instructional level (e.g. 20 sections of Spanish 1001), a high-constraint situation is considered necessary to avoid significant differences among courses of the same level, therefore ensuring that students of all sections are similarly prepared to take subsequent level courses.

Considering the findings regarding the gaps in the knowledge of novice SFL teachers, exploration into the knowledge of GSTAs is warranted in order to assess the need for development and determine the scope and focus of such training. Most GSTAs in the department are not part of a program designed to prepare effective L2 or FL teachers, as might be the focus of either an applied linguistics or teacher certification program. In fact, most of the GSTAs study literature or are even from other academic disciplines as distant from language teaching as business and law. This said, GSTAs "do have knowledge of their own, and this is largely developed from their past educational and school experiences such as their upbringing and their lived experiences as language learners" (Tsang, 2004, p. 165). The impact of prior learning experiences in L2 teaching and L2 teacher cognition is commonly referred to as "the apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975, p. 26), and it has been observed to have a pervasive effect on language teachers, for both good and ill, in the early stages of their development and beyond (Bailey, 1996; Farrell, 1999; Urmston, 2003; Warford & Reeves, 2003). Thus, understanding what GSTAs know about SFL teaching as they begin to teach is essential in order to address ways of filling gaps in that knowledge that are identified through the study.

1.2   Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Teacher cognition is still "a developing area of research interest" (Wette, 2010, p. 570) where many avenues of inquiry remain either unexplored or underexplored (Borg, 2006, 2009). Further inquiry into what experienced and inexperienced teachers know will allow us to better understand what being a language teacher entails.

> Specifically, we need to understand how language teachers conceive of what they do: what they know about language teaching, how they think about their classroom practices, and how their knowledge and their thinking processes are learned through formal teacher education and informal experience on the job. (Richards & Freeman, 1996, p. 1)

In addition, research that attempts to clarify links between teachers' PPK and their classroom practices continues to be limited (Tsang, 2004). The focus of the present study is the knowledge of those who are 'thrown into the midst' of language teaching and who are given great responsibility (as is the case of most GSTAs). The study's three research questions are:

1.   What are some of the more salient characteristics of the personal practical knowledge (PPK) of experienced and inexperienced GSTAs?

2.   How does PPK inform the teaching practices of GSTAs?

3.   Does the PPK of inexperienced GSTAs differ from the PPK of experienced GSTAs? And if so, how does it differ?

1.3   Organization of the Study

The study is organized in chapters to provide a clear view of the pertinent research, the methodology used, the results, and the implications of the study. Following the introductory chapter, the remainder of the manuscript is divided into 12 chapters.

Chapter 2 presents the literature reviewed for the study. The chapter includes a discussion on current research regarding graduate language teaching assistants. A review of current views

on teacher cognition, with a more in-depth exploration of research related to PPK is also part of the chapter, as well as an examination of case study research.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology used in the study. A description of the research context and participants is included. The various methods for data collection (observations, semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall, reflective journals, and artifacts) are described. The chapter also presents a description of the data analysis process. The chapter's final sections focus on issues of trustworthiness and research ethics specific to the study.

Chapters 4 through 11 provide the results of each case study. Each chapter is focused on one of the participants and their identified PPK. The chapters are subdivided to include each participant's background, knowledge of self, knowledge of students, knowledge of instruction, knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of purpose, and knowledge of context. A final section on the participant's plans for the future is included as well.

Chapter 12 presents a discussion of the results focused on the differences and similarities between the experienced and inexperienced GSTAs. Finally, the conclusions of the study as well as possible implications for GSTA research and training are provided in Chapter 13.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Graduate Language Teaching Assistants

Research interest in the work, training and supervision of L2 and FL GTAs expanded in the 1970s with articles describing specific procedures of existing L2 and FL GTA training programs (Freed, 1975; Hagiwara, 1969, 1970, 1976; Nerenz et al., 1979). In 1987, Bernhardt and Hammadou's review of the literature on teacher education revealed a continued focus on L2 GTA training, and a lack of more data-driven research. Only eight of the 78 studies reviewed by Bernhardt and Hammadou were focused on FL teaching and based on empirical research. The authors called for data-driven research efforts.

After the inception of the American Association of University Supervisors, Coordinators, and Directors of Foreign Language Programs (AAUSC), "whose goal is to promote foreign language instruction, strengthen development programs for teaching assistants, and provide a support network for language program coordinators" (Kost, 2008, p. 87), some changes began to be identified in the L2 and FL GTA literature. One of those changes involved a shift away from the notion of 'training', which provides specific guidelines for effective teaching, to that of 'development' (Azevedo, 1990). The latter notion envisions the L2 and FL GTA as a professional whose career can go beyond the current institution. GTA development research establishes connections between teaching, theory, research, dialogue, reflection and insight (Azevedo, 1990; Barnett and Cook, 1992; Berman, 1996; Burkart, 1998; Freed & Bernhardt, 1992; Herschensohn, 1992; Kern, 1995; Kinginger, 1995; Lalande, 1990; Rifkin, 1992; Supko, 1997; Von Hoene, 1995; Wildner-Bassett, 1992).

All researchers who promote the idea of L2 and FL GTA professional development tend to agree that L2 and FL GTA education should move beyond simply providing GTAs with

teaching methods and treating them as technicians. Instead, L2 and FL GTAs should be seen as reflective practitioners capable of understanding and applying theoretical grounding to their teaching practices (Freed & Bernhardt, 1992), and whose development should be based on their future roles as teacher-scholars (Arens, 1993; Huffman, 1998; Murphy, 1991). The notion of GTAs as successful peer supervisors within specific parameters (Davis & Turner, 1993) is also part of the trend in 1990s' research on L2 and FL GTA development.

Schulz (2000) reviewed articles that appeared in the *Modern Language Journal* (MLJ) concerning the discussion of teacher preparation and certification. The author confirmed that L2 and FL GTAs received increasing attention during the latter part of the 20th century. He found abundant descriptions of training programs consisting of "some form of methods instruction, coordination meetings, classroom observations and supervisory conferences" (p. 514). Some programs featured training procedures such as videotaped microteaching or obligatory pre-teaching workshops. Schulz (2000) also found that even though the GTAs' language proficiency was evaluated before teaching, failure to achieve minimum levels of language proficiency in the target language did not disqualify them from teaching. The author found considerable variation among language programs and their training and assessment of GTAs.

In the 21st century literature, the notion of promoting the role of L2 and FL GTAs as professionals persists, and efforts of professional development continue to be the overall focus of related research. Some authors deviate from the traditional reliance on methods courses and discuss the benefits of external impacts such as theory-informed practices (Guthrie, 2001), apprenticeship models (Kost, 2008), action research (Crookes & Chandler, 2001; McDonough, 2006 Pfeiffer, 2002), and sustained faculty support (Chambers & Pearson, 2004). The role of FL

departments and program directors in the professional development of FL GTAs has also been explored (Byrnes, 2001; Debicki, 2001; Guthrie, 2001).

Other researchers have looked beyond external impacts on L2 and FL GTAs, and have explored their reasoning processes. Literature on the significant roles of GTA reflection (Geyer, 2008) and identity (Kanno & Stuart, 2011) illustrate that classroom practice and reflection help nurture GTA identity, and that identity in turn shapes teaching practice. The role of GTA perception of training (Brandl, 2000) as well as positive connections between GTAs' self-perceived abilities in teaching the target language and their level of efficacy (En-Chong, 2004) have also been observed.

Another area that has been investigated is that of L2 and FL GTA beliefs and their effect on teaching practice in relation to technology (Burnett, 1997, 1998, 1999), classroom language use (Dhawan, 2001), self-efficacy (Mills & Allen, 2008), native- versus nonnative-speaker status (Jolivet, 1994; Kraemer, 2006; Liaw, 2004; Mills & Allen, 2008), and teaching context (Rankin & Becker, 2006; Wildner-Bassett & Meerholz-Haerle, 1999). Several researchers have looked into the beliefs and knowledge about grammar and grammar instruction of GTAs (Blyth, 1997; Katz & Watzinger-Tharp, 2008; Salomone, 1998). Other researchers have investigated FL GTAs' perceptions of language use in FL classrooms (Morris, 1997, 1999; Potowski, 2002; Zéphir & Chirol, 1993). Golombeck (1998) studied the personal practical knowledge (PPK) of ESL GTAs (a more detailed discussion of Golombeck's study appears in the PPK section).

In spite of the research contributions mentioned above and the call for empirical research made by Bernhardt and Hammadou (1987) and Schulz (2000), our understanding of FL GTAs continues to be quite limited (Allen & Negueruela–Azarola, 2010). In particular, there continues to be a need to gain insights into FL GTA cognition. Our understanding of what FL GTAs know

and how their knowledge informs their teaching practices is limited. Even though "teacher knowledge and knowing affects every aspect of the teaching act" (Conelly et al., 1997, p. 666), studies of FL GTA cognition are still rare. The relevance and role of teacher cognition in FL teaching are discussed in the following section.

2.2   Teacher Cognition

For over three decades, research on teacher cognition, or teacher knowledge, "has helped to capture the complexities of who teachers are, what they know and believe, how they learn to teach, and how they carry out their work in diverse contexts throughout their careers" (Johnson, 2009, p. 10). Thus, one concern of teacher cognition research is "understanding what teachers think, know, and believe" (Borg, 2009, p. 163). Significant work regarding teacher knowledge has come from first language (L1) literature. In fact, many L2 authors acknowledge and use the work of Shulman (1986, 1987) as a conceptual frame for exploring L2 teacher knowledge (Richards, 1998; Velez-Rendón, 2002). Shulman (1987) is widely recognized for his empirically based proposition of seven knowledge categories encompassed by the construct teacher knowledge:

- Content knowledge
- General pedagogical knowledge
- Curriculum knowledge
- Pedagogical content knowledge
- Knowledge of educational contexts
- Knowledge of learners and their characteristics
- Knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values and their philosophical and historical grounds. (p. 227)

When it comes to what language teachers need to know, a major construct comes into play: the knowledge-base of second language teacher education (SLTE). This knowledge base can be defined as "all professional-related insights, which are potentially relevant to a teacher's

activities" (Verloop et al., 2001, p. 442). Thus, "a knowledge-base sets the standard for professional licensure and credentialing, and in essence defines what it means to be a professional L2 teacher" (Johnson, 2009, p. 11). Tedick (2005) expands the definition through a listing of some of its essential components:

> Research and theory on teachers' knowledge and beliefs, teacher cognition, teacher learning in formal and informal contexts, teachers' way of knowing, teacher socialization, reflective teaching, teacher identity, values and ethical dispositions, and the nature of disciplinary knowledge. (p. 1)

For over four decades, however, the core of SLTE has been built on second language acquisition (SLA) research traditions (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, 2004, 2005; Johnson, 2009). The centrality of models of language acquisition and linguistic knowledge has been a historic convention motivated by the idea that language teachers need to know the system of the language they are teaching just as teachers of mathematics would need to have a strong background in mathematics in order to be able to teach mathematics effectively (Troudy, 2005). However, one could argue that while knowledge of either mathematics or linguistics may be a necessary initial condition for teaching, the possession of such knowledge does not guarantee that its possessor will be able to teach their subject of specialization successfully to others.

SLTE specialists such as Freeman and Johnson (1998, 2004, 2005) and Bartels (2004) refer to this focus on SLA as 'linguistic imperialism' and argue that knowing what language is, how it works and how it is learned does not necessarily translate into knowing how to teach it. Freeman and Johnson (1998, 2004, 2005) propose a knowledge base that is more directly informed by instructional pedagogy, which they consider to be neglected in traditional conceptions of SLTE, and by sociocultural conceptions of language teaching. They further propose that although language may be part of the subject matter of SLTE, its status as part of what L2 teachers need to know does not imply that SLTE is a separate discipline from general

teacher education. However, these specialists agree with Tarone and Allwright's (2005) observation that "teach is not an intransitive verb" (p. 17), and that therefore SLA should not be ignored. Freeman and Johnson's position is that research into the thinking processes and knowledge base of learners of L2 teaching is sorely underdeveloped. In addition, they reject the premise that knowledge about language (KAL) and SLA may serve as the core of LTE and propose instead that it is the teacher and the teacher's professional learning that should serve to support articulations of a knowledge base of L2 teaching. In their own words:

> The core of the new knowledge-base must focus on the activity of teaching itself; it should center on the teacher who does it, the contexts in which it is done, and the pedagogy by which it is done. Moreover, this knowledge-base should include forms of knowledge representation that document teacher learning within the social, cultural and institutional contexts in which it occurs. (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 397)

Guided by the principle that a knowledge-base is not static, and breaking from the KAL- and SLA-centered language teacher education perspective, Johnson (2009) argues in favor of a sociocultural perspective on teacher cognition. The thrust of Johnson's position is that:

> higher level human condition in the individual has its origins in social life. That is, instead of assuming that there are universal features of human cognition that can be separated from the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which they emerged and are used, a sociocultural perspective focuses on sociocultural activities as the essential processes through which human cognition is formed. (p. 3)

Johnson further argues that "a sociocultural perspective also emphasizes the role of the human agency in this developmental process" (p. 4). Thus, learning does not simply come from the outside in, but from connections made by the learner between socially mediated activity and internal mediational control. The result is potential for transformation of both the learner and the activity being learned. In the case of SFL programs, one implication is that for social mediation to take place, less experienced teachers (i.e., GSTAs) and more experienced teachers need to be in communication for such learning opportunities to take place.

Providing a sense of integration in teacher knowledge, one of Shulman's (1986, 1987) major contributions was the development of the concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which "goes beyond knowledge of the subject matter per se to the dimension of subject matter for teaching" (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). L2 researchers have extended Shulman's (1986, 1987, 1999, 2000) PCK construct and applied it to L2 teaching, suggesting that L2 teaching entails not only knowing language and knowing about language, but also knowing how to support others in learning to produce such language (Hawkings & Irujo, 2004).

Other specialists have proposed comparably comprehensive and detailed models of L2 teacher knowledge. Richards (1998), an L2 teacher education specialist inspired by Shulman's (1987) construct of PCK, proposed six dimensions of L2 teacher knowledge: 1) theories of teaching, 2) teaching skills, 3) communication skills and language proficiency, 4) subject matter knowledge, 5) pedagogical reasoning skills and decision making, and 6) contextual knowledge. Although other writers sometimes conflate the second and fifth dimensions, Richards (1998) explains that the former (i.e., teaching skills) involves the development of lesson-specific competencies (e.g., activity design and implementation), while the latter (dimension 5) refers to more reasoned knowledge such as the development of longer term instructional goals. It is likely however, that there may be some overlap between these two dimensions. Richards' (1998) suggestion that all six dimensions interact and complement one another, supports the need for an integrated and integrating knowledge base of L2 teacher education.

In considerations of knowledge about teaching, the construct of pedagogical knowledge is essential. Gatbonton (1999) defines pedagogical knowledge as the teacher's accumulated knowledge about the teaching act (i.e. its goals, procedures and strategies), which serves as the basis for the teacher's classroom behavior and activities. Based on findings of earlier research in

general education, Grossman (2000, p. 6) presents a list of what constitutes pedagogical

knowledge including:

> knowledge and beliefs concerning learning and learners; knowledge of general principles of instruction, such as academic learning time, […] wait time […] or small group instruction; […] knowledge and skills related to classroom management; […] and knowledge and beliefs about the aims and purposes of education.

Within the field of L2 teaching specifically, Gatbonton (1999) posits the following six

domains of pedagogical knowledge:

- knowledge of how to manage specific language items so that students can learn them
- knowledge about the goals and subject matter of teaching
- knowledge about techniques and procedures
- knowledge about appropriate student-teacher relationships
- knowledge about evaluating student task involvement and progress during the lessons. (p. 46)

In a longitudinal observation study with ESL teachers in Canada, Woods (1996) was able

to group into two categories a number of factors influencing classroom decision-making;

external and internal factors:

> External factors are situational factors teachers take into account in making decisions (or to be accurate, what teachers know, assume and believe about these factors). Internal factors are ones internal to the decision-making process itself, i.e., the internal structuring of decisions and the relationships of decisions to each other. (Woods, 1996, p. 128)

As examples of external factors, Woods (1996, p. 129) mentions: availability of

materials, student attendance, class dynamics, and conversations with other teachers, among

others. The internal factors are somewhat harder to decipher from Wood's (1996) discussion but

they are related to how different instructional moments within a lesson, course or activity affect a

teacher's decisions and how those decisions interrelate. Thus, L2 teachers need to develop the

ability to use methodology and techniques in effective ways, in different teaching contexts and to

meet different instructional purposes. Richards et al. (1998, p. 9) call this process of transforming

content into learnable material "pedagogical reasoning".

2.3   Teachers' Personal Practical Knowledge

In 1983, Elbaz introduced the notion of personal practical knowledge (PPK), which is closely related to the actual practice of teaching. In Elbaz' (1983) analysis there are five orientations to PPK: "the orientation to situations, the personal orientation, the social orientation, the experiential orientation and the theoretical orientation" (p. 14). PPK was later defined by Clandinin and Conelly (1987) as a "moral, affective, and aesthetic way of knowing life's educational situation" (p. 59). The first two aspects of the definition of PPK presented above by Clandinin and Conelly (1987), morality and affectivity, are what set PPK apart from other notions of teacher knowledge (Golombeck, 2009).

> [PPK is] a term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons. Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher's practice. It is, for any teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25)

Thus, PPK is personal, contextual, based on experience, a guide to teaching practice, mainly tacit, and content-related (Meijer et al., 1999). It is also "expressed through story, image and metaphor" (Golombeck, 2009, p. 158). VanDriel et al. (2001) indicate that the most important characteristics of personal practical knowledge are that it is: a) action-oriented knowledge; b) person-and context-bound; c) implicit or tacit to a considerable extent; d) integrated knowledge; and e) that teachers' beliefs play a very important role in building practical knowledge (p. 142). Further, it is the personal nature of PPK that leads to the image of teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons, and not just carriers or transmitters of information (Conelly et al., 1997, Golombeck, 1998, 2009).

In Turkey, Ariogul (2006) examined FL teachers' PPK and the background sources shaping their knowledge and classroom instruction. Through classroom observations, audio and

videotaped lessons, stimulus-recall activities, formal and informal interviews with teachers,

thick-description field notes, and curriculum documents, the author found that

> teachers' knowledge is fluid, always developing through personal, professional, and educational experiences. In the process of that development, the teachers adapt and readapt their practical knowledge according to the needs and expectations of their learners as well as their accumulated experience. (p. 76)

Tsang (2004) found that PPK affected much of the FL teachers' interactive decisions

while teaching and it informed most of their post-instruction decisions, which, in turn improved

future lesson planning and teaching (p. 194). Working with ESL student teachers, Morton and

Gray (2010) found that their PPK was highly informed by dialogic mediation and discursive

problem-solving generated though lesson planning conferences.

Exploring the PPK of native and non-native language teachers, Meijer et al. (1999) found

that not all teachers possess the same quality of practical knowledge when teaching reading. In

the authors' words:

> The practical knowledge of some teachers is not as elaborate as the practical knowledge of other teachers. […] Because [the former] generally indicate explicitly that they have never thought about some issues, for example, about students' reading processes, the explanation cannot simply be that these teachers' practical knowledge is more tacit than other teachers' practical knowledge. Instead, we conclude that these teachers' practical knowledge with respect to teaching reading comprehension is limited. (Meijer et al., 1999, p. 81)

Reflected in these findings are the vital roles of teacher education and actual teaching

experiences. The question arises at this point regarding the effect of GSTAs' limited experience

and, in some cases, complete lack of training with respect to their knowledge of instruction.

In a related study, Golombeck (1998) observed, interviewed and conducted stimulated

recalls with two native English speaking MA level GTAs at a major university in the U. S. The

author found that "the teachers' personal practical knowledge informed their practice by serving

as a kind of interpretative framework through which they made sense of their classrooms as they

recounted their experiences and made this knowledge explicit" (p. 459). She also found that "the way L2 teachers understand and respond to their classrooms is mediated by their experiences as teachers, learners, and personas outside the classroom; personal and interpersonal factors; and values, as well as their professional knowledge" (p. 459).

Based on her findings and the data collected, Golombeck (1998) proposed four categories for the content of teachers' personal practical knowledge: a) knowledge of self, which relates to "the identities to which the teachers referred when they constructed their experience"; b) knowledge of subject matter, which is the "disciplinary knowledge that a teacher uses in the classroom"; c) knowledge of instruction (pedagogical knowledge) and; d) knowledge of context, which includes the "institutional and sociopolitical setting along with the time, place, and actors within the setting" (Golombeck, 1998, pp. 451-52). Golombeck's (1998) categories of PPK were also observed by Chou (2003) among EFL instructors in Taiwan. Similar categories have been described by Ariogul, (2007), John, (2002), Meijer et al., (1999), Sen, (2002), and Van Driel et al., (2001) in their work with ESL and EFL instructors. These researchers have included new categories such as knowledge of students, knowledge of curriculum, and knowledge of purpose or instructional goals.

In the dimensions of PPK there is a conciliatory and interconnected effect for various important aspects of L2 teacher knowledge. Content, context, experience, and know-how are given the same sense of relevance. Thus, considering the encompassing nature of PPK, and the existing variations in training and experience among GSTAs, understanding how PPK is developed by these novice language teachers, and how it informs their teaching practice, is an ideal arena for exploration regarding GSTA cognition.

2.4   Case Studies

The present investigation consists of multiple case studies. As the most widely used approach to qualitative research in education (Duff, 2008, p. 21), the qualitative case study has also found its place in applied linguistics research (Duff, 2008). Broadly defined as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit (Merriam, 1988, p. 16), the case study can be characterized as:

> a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth, data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes. (Cresswell, 2007, p. 73)

The case study, then, is not a choice of methodology but a choice of case, which is studied by a variety of methods (Stake, 1995, 2000, 2003). With the purpose of understanding phenomena in depth, qualitative case studies take place in a natural setting, make use of the researcher as the main instrument for collecting data, employ tacit knowledge to achieve conditions for common understanding, and use inductive analysis to arrive at a theory about human interaction (Burnett, 1998). Emphasis is placed on the particular and not the general (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Case study researchers "take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does" (Stake, 1995, p. 8). Rather than selecting participants at random as is typically done in quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988, 1998, 2002; Yin, 2003), a good case study must always attempt "to preserve the multiple realities, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening" with respect to the phenomena being studied (Stake, 1995, p. 12).

Description, issue, and interpretation serve as the three main elements of case study research (Stake, 1995, 2000, 2003). Merriam (1998) states that when a bounded system such as a

person, an event, a process, a program, or a social group is the focus of the investigation, then a case study is the most appropriate approach to understand that system. The author asserts that a case study should be: a) Particularistic – as it focuses on a particular situation, event, program or phenomenon; b) Descriptive – as the end product of a case study is a rich, 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study; c) Heuristic – as it heightens the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study; and d) Inductive – as it relies on inductive reasoning (pp. 9-13).

Case study research is viewed by some specialists as little more than a form of "reporting" (Wolcott, 2001, p. 91), and it has been accused of lacking representativeness and rigor (Hamel, 1993). However, most qualitative researchers characterize it as a valuable research strategy that can provide rich explanatory insight that could not be attained through other forms of inquiry (Merriam, 2002; Richards, 2003; Stake, 2000). These researchers believe that introducing readers to experiential and contextual accounts of particular cases can increase both propositional and experiential knowledge (Stake, 2003). In other words, case analyses provide opportunities to construct and expand our knowledge of phenomena being investigated by vicariously experiencing what others do (Samimy, 2008).

When reality is viewed by the researcher attempting to translate the participants' interpretations or understandings, multiple sources of data are essential to providing a complex picture and an in-depth understanding of the issues under investigation (Merriam, 2002). In this sense, the number and choice of methods to investigate a particular case become determining factors in the degree of understanding of the participants' reality. Multiplicity of methods helps researchers corroborate and increase the amount of evidence gathered. Yin (2003) lists the six most commonly used sources of data in case studies: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts. The choice of

methods by researchers depends greatly on the "underlying research questions and the forms of evidence deemed necessary to answer those questions" (Duff, 2008, p. 128), as well as on the feasibility of analyzing the data collected through such methods.

Even though generalizability is not the purpose of case study research, some researchers expand their scope by conducting collective (or multiple) case studies in which the experiences of different individuals, or groups of individuals, are examined.

> [The purpose of such studies is] to increase generalizability reassuring oneself that the events and processes in one well-described setting are not wholly idiosyncratic, […] seeing processes and outcomes that occur across many cases or sites, and understanding how such processes are bent by specific contextual variations. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 157)

As a consequence of this expansion, a growing number of scholars argue for a greater focus on the contextual and macrosociological basis of learning and performance (Duff, 2008). For these researchers, contextual issues are significant contributors to their participants' traits, behaviors, knowledge and abilities, and by studying these issues they can gain a fuller, more ecological understanding of their participants.

Considering the broad and inclusive nature of PPK, case study research is a suitable choice of qualitative approach to the exploration of the PPK of GSTAs. The inclusion of contextual issues in case study research contributed to my goal of gaining insight into the PPK of GSTAs due to its contextual nature. Finally, by presenting eight case studies, I was able to find shared elements in the realities of the participants, as well as cognitive differences, which will be presented in the Comparative Results chapter. The following chapter presents a detailed description of the methodology employed in the study.

3   METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology chosen for the current study. Section 3.1 describes the research setting of the study, and provides an overview of the participants. Section 3.2 discusses how the data were collected, including a detailed description of the sources of data. Section 3.3 describes the process of data analysis used. Finally, Section 3.4 examines what was done to increase the trustworthiness of the study.

3.1   Context and Participants

The context of the study is an SFL program at a major university in the southeast region of the U. S. More specifically, the study focused on the lower division Spanish program (first and second year courses). A total of eight GSTAs participated in the project. All participants were teaching one or two introductory or intermediate-level Spanish classes.

Two of the GSTAs (Julio and Pat), had shown interest in participating in the project prior to the recruiting period as a result of informal conversations we shared. The remaining participants were recruited via a department-wise email and an oral invitation I made during the program's orientation meeting prior to the start of the fall semester of 2012. Julio and Pat were also instrumental in convincing some of the more hesitant GSTAs to participate in the project.

During the proposal stages of the project, a total number of six participants was considered to be the minimum necessary to achieve the desired depth of understanding needed to address the research questions. Fortunately, eight GSTAs responded to the invitation to participate, and all eight remained until the end of the data collection period. Four of the participants had at least three semesters of previous experience as GSTAs in the SFL program, and therefore were considered to be in the experienced GSTA group. For the other four

participants, the data were collected during their first semester as GSTAs in the program, which placed them in the inexperienced GSTA group.

All participants received a compensation of $50 at the end of the data collection period. They also selected their own pseudonyms for the purpose of the study. However, participant numbers were used for identification of the data and during the audio-recorded interviews. Table 2 contains background information for each participant.

Table 2 Background Information of the participant GSTAs

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Place of origin	Prior semesters as GSTA	Level teaching	Native language	Study program(s)
Julio	Male	34	Guatemala	5	1001	Spanish	- Spanish MA - Teaching Certificate
Pat	Male	22	Georgia	3	1001	English	Spanish MA
Ann	Female	35	Texas	3	1001	English	Spanish MA
Elena	Female	25	Georgia	4	2001	English	- Spanish MA - Trans & Interp
Mary	Female	26	Georgia	0	1001	English	Spanish MA
Margarita	Female	29	Venezuela	0	1001	Spanish	Law School
Lula	Female	24	Illinois	0	1001	English	- Spanish MA - Translation
Claire	Female	22	Bosnia	0	1001	Serbian	- Spanish MA - Translation

3.2   Data Collection

The project consisted of multiple case studies, with a qualitative approach to the collection and analysis of data. As suggested by previous research, a combination of different data collection methods was used in order to seek answers to the research questions presented earlier, and to better capture the multiple, complex aspects of language teaching (Kagan, 1990). The methods, to be defined in the following section, included semi-structured participant

interviews, classroom observations, stimulated recall (SR), and reflective journals. All participants attended every interview, wrote and submitted all their journal entries, allowed me to carry out all classroom observations, and provided me with classroom artifacts. One semi-structured interview with the program coordinator provided a more complete picture of the participants' teaching context and what the program expects of them. The project's data collection period extended over the entire Fall semester of 2012. All participants were asked to read and sign a consent form (Appendix F) approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the start of the period of data collection.

A pilot study was conducted with one participant (not included in the eight participant sample) during the 2012 summer term prior to the initiation of data collection in order to identify any potential problems with the proposed research methodology (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The same research methods mentioned above (semi-structure interviews, classroom observations, stimulated recall, and reflective journals) were used in the pilot study though during a shorter data collection period of five weeks.

Below are the timelines of the data collection for both the pilot study (Table 3) and the full-scale project (Table 4), as well as a flow chart (Figure 1) for the events as related to every participant.

Table 3 Timeline of Data Collection for the Pilot Study

Week	Events
Prior to Week 1	Email and personal contact with program coordinator and potential participant outlining project and requesting their participation
Week 1	1st interview (with participant) 1st observation
Week 2	2nd interview 2nd observation 1st teacher journal
Week 3	3rd interview 3rd observation 1st think aloud protocol
Week 4	4th interview 4th observation (videotaped) Stimulated recall (during interview) 2nd teacher journal
Week 5	5th interview 5th observation 2nd think aloud protocol

For the full-scale project, research related events occurred weekly for the participants. Overall, the proposed schedule of events was designed to allow participants some 'breathing room' by conducting the interviews and observations every two weeks. However, for the weeks during which the participants were interviewed or observed, they were asked to email or hand-write (as per their preference) a reflective journal entry (Appendix C). Also, in order to make more efficient use of the data collection period, I worked with four participants weekly, and not all eight. After a schedule was agreed upon during our first meeting, I created a calendar of events (Sample in Appendix B) for each participant that I emailed and printed for them to post on their cubicle walls. The following acronyms are used in Table 4 and Figure 1 in order to make maximal use of the space available: VT = videotaped; SR = stimulated recall

Table 4 Timeline of Data Collection for the Full-Scale Project

Week	Events	
-2	E-mail and personal contact with potential participants and recruitment	
-1	Final participant selection	

Week	Events for Participants 1, 2, 3, and 6	Events for Participants 4, 5, 7, and 8
1	1st Interview	1st Interview
2	1st Classroom Observation 2nd Interview	
3	1st journal	1st Classroom Observation 2nd Interview
4	2nd Classroom Observation (VT) 3rd Interview	1st journal
5	2nd journal	2nd Classroom Observation (VT) 3rd Interview
6	3rd Classroom Observation (VT) 4th Interview (SR)	2nd journal
7	3rd journal	3rd Classroom Observation (VT) 4th Interview (SR)
8	4th Classroom Observation 5th Interview	3rd journal
9	4th journal	4th Classroom Observation 5th Interview
10	5th Classroom Observation (VT) 6th Interview (SR)	4th journal
11	5th journal	5th Classroom Observation (VT) 6th Interview (SR)
12	6th Classroom Observation 7th Interview	5th journal
13		6th Classroom Observation 7th Interview

Figure 1 Flow Chart of Events for Every Participant

3.2.1   Sources of Data

3.2.1.1   Semi-structured interviews

As one of the more common data collection methods used in qualitative research, and more specifically in case studies, the semi-structured interview provides a gathering of thoughts and ideas for a particular purpose framed in a specific time and space (Duff, 2008). Interviews allow researchers to learn about what they cannot observe on their own, and to find other explanations for what they do observe (Glesne, 1999).

> Semi-structured interviews […] use a standardized interview schedule. The interview schedule consists of a number of pre-set questions in a mostly determined order. However, this type of interview is not completely reliant on the rigorous application of the schedule. If the interviewee wonders off the question then the interviewer would generally go with it rather than try to immediately return to the next question in the schedule […] And to further focus attention on the interviewee and their views the interviewer generally says very little. (Landridge, 2004, p. 50)

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher is allowed to introduce more questions based on the participant's answers, and the participant is allowed to provide more "background, additional anecdotes or other information about a given topic or issue as they see fit (Baker, 2011). Thus, the researcher's opportunities to gain access to the participant's cognition increase with the flexibility of the semi-structured interview. Some studies that have employed semi-structured interviews to explore teacher cognition are: Borg (1998), Mangubhai et al. (2004), Tsui (2003). Chou (2003) used semi-structured interviews in her study of the PPK of EFL teachers, and Golombek (1998) did the same in her exploration of the PPK of ESL GTAs.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out in order to elicit data regarding the participants' teaching situations and context, their teaching experiences, and their knowledge and understanding of their acts of teaching. In total, seven interviews were conducted individually with each participant. All interviews were carried out in reserved study rooms at the university

library in order to provide privacy and ease of access to all participants. As I was able to reserve

the study rooms (only allowed to do so two weeks in advance), the room number was provided to

the participant via email. The first interview focused on the participants' personal learning and

teaching background. In order to gain deeper understanding of the participants' PPK, questions

for subsequent interviews were guided by related classroom observations and answers or

situations observed during previous interviews (See the questions for the first interview in

Appendix A.1 and a sample question set for a second interview in Appendix A.2). Participants

were given the choice to have the interviews in English or Spanish in order to provide a more

comfortable environment where they could express themselves freely (as a researcher-

interviewer I am equally comfortable in both languages). However, all participants chose to carry

out the interviews in English. Six of the eight participants were native English speakers, and the

two native Spanish speakers had lived most of their life in the US, so they were very comfortable

carrying out the interviews in English. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed in regular

English orthographic form to facilitate data analysis.

3.2.1.2   Observations

Preference for direct observations in case studies in applied linguistics follows a

naturalistic view of classroom research and reflects an interest in documenting the physical,

socio-cultural, and linguistic contexts of language learners and teachers (Duff, 2008). As a

research tool, observation allows researchers to gather large amounts of data related to the

behaviors they wish to better understand (Gass & Mackey, 2007). Thus, a research goes from the

hypothetical to the actual (Borg, 2006). For case study researchers, classroom observations are:

> a useful means for gathering in-depth information about such phenomena as the types of
> language, activities, interactions, instruction, and events that occur in second language
> and foreign language classrooms. Additionally, observations can allow the study of a

behavior at close range with many important contextual variables present. (Mackey & Gass, 2005, pp. 186-7)

Some of the researchers that made use of direct observation in their explorations of teacher cognition are: Farrell (2003), and Johnson and Goettsch (2000). Tsang (2004) carried out direct observations in his exploration of the PPK of three preservice ESL teachers. For the present study, each participant was observed a total of six times. Field notes were taken during the in-class observations and were primarily used to corroborate the participants' reports on their teaching practices, as well as to generate interview questions (Glesne, 1999). A relatively open and flexible observation sheet (Appendix C as adapted from Chou, 2003) was used to facilitate data collection. The field notes were focused on describing the events taking place in the classroom, and the time of such events.

Three of the six classes observed were video-recorded using a digital camera. The first videotaped class for all participants was done as an opportunity to test the technology and logistics of videotaping a live teaching session. It was also intended as a way to help the participants get used to the camera in their classrooms (Borg, 2006; Gass & Mackey, 2000). The first video recording of each participant was discarded, as it was done as a pilot. The second and third video recordings were used to carry out stimulated recall interviews with each participant. To avoid conflict between the video-recording and note-taking procedures during classroom observation, the video camera was mounted on a tripod and set at a height and angle that allowed for capturing the teachers' actions, thus freeing the researcher to take in-class notes. In addition, the camera angle was always set above the students' heads to keep the focus of the video recording on the GSTAs.

3.2.1.3   Stimulated recall

In stimulated recall (as defined for the purpose of the study), the researcher either audio or video records a lesson –or series of lessons-, which constitute the stimulus. Later on, the recording of classroom events is played for the participant, with the researcher and/or the participant periodically stopping the recording to discuss thoughts or impressions of particular moments in the lesson (Gass & Mackey, 2007). Stimulated recall is considered to be an effective complement to classroom observations since it provides researchers increased access to the participant's point of view (i.e., tacit reasoning) regarding the observed events (Mackey & Gass, 2005). For example, Olshtain and Kubferber (1998) found through this method that the FL teacher they observed made use of past-tense stories to illustrate generalizations of his present beliefs. The researchers would not have been able to infer this example of internal teacher reasoning through the examination of observation data only. According to Borg (2006, p. 225), "overall, the semi-structured and stimulated-recall interviews appear to be the strategies most commonly adopted for eliciting verbal commentaries in the study of language cognition". Some of the studies that have employed stimulated recall to investigate teacher cognition are: Andrews and McNeil (2005), Breen et al. (2001), and Gatbonton (1999). Golombek (1998) made use of stimulated recall to explore the PPK of ESL GTAs.

Two stimulated recall interviews were conducted with each participant based on video recordings generated during observed classes. The stimulated recalls were considered two of the seven interviews carried out with each GSTA, more specifically, interview 4 and interview 6 in the project calendar. As recommended by Gass and Mackey (2007), the interviews were held soon after the recordings took place, with two days being the longest interval between the

original class and the stimulated recall, to keep the recorded events fresh in the participant's memory.

Instructions adapted from Gass and Mackey (2000) were given to the participants at the start of the interview (See Appendix E). Both the researcher and the participant being interviewed had access to the pause button on the computer that was used to play the video recording. In this way, each was able to pause the recording at any time during the stimulated recall interview. The participants were free to make any desired comments or observations of their own whenever they decided to pause the recording or as it played. The questions I asked during the interview were selected from a list, as suggested by Gass and Mackey (2000). The stopping of the recording by the researcher and the questions chosen during the stimulated recall interviews were guided by observations made during the taping and by the participants' reactions as they viewed the recorded lesson together. Some of the questions were:

- Can you describe what is happening now?

- What was your goal here? – Do you think you achieved it?

- Can you identify the reason(s) behind what you said/did here?

- Would you change anything of what happened?

The primary focus of the researcher's questions was to bring to the fore some of the reasoning behind the GSTAs' decisions during the videotaped class. I intentionally remained as neutral as possible during the interviews (Gass & Mackey, 2000), providing non-judgmental responses like "OK", or "I see". The stimulated recall interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed into regular English orthographic form in their entirety for later analysis.

3.2.1.4   Reflective journals

A reflective journal is "a first person account of language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular candid entries in a personal journal [that is] then analyzed for recurrent patterns and salient events" (Bailey, 1990, p. 215). Data that can be collected through this source include "instructors' insights into their own learning and teaching processes, their self- and other-comparisons, decision-making processes, the process of development (or not) over time, attitudes toward classroom learning and teaching, the use of strategies, and the recognition and use of feedback" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 103-4). Bigelow and Ranney (2005), Johnson (1994), and Mok (1994) are some of the researchers who have explored teacher cognition through reflective journals.

For the project, the participants were asked to submit via email, or in their own handwriting if they preferred, a reflective journal entry every two weeks (see Appendix D). Since I anticipated some reluctance among the participants to complete this task on a regular basis, I asked the GSTAs to write and submit the reflective journal entries only during the weeks in which no observations or interviews were scheduled. This timing of the journal writing was deliberate and intended to make it easier for the participants to complete the planned reflective writing tasks. Informal follow-up conversations and emails were also timed as additional strategies for keeping the participants motivated to complete the journal writing. The simple format of the journal itself, along with the guiding questions adapted from Richards and Lockhart (1996), were intended to make the task less onerous for the participating GSTAs. The data collected from the journals were also used as a basis for guiding some of the subsequent interview questions. All hand-written journal entries were typed and digitally stored for data analysis.

3.3   Data Analysis

3.3.1   *Organization of the data*

Data were gathered primarily from interview transcripts (including the stimulated recall interviews) and reflective journals. Observation field notes and classroom artifacts were considered secondary data. The data were organized in sets in order to build an individualized report for each participant. A folder was created for the data tied to each participant, which included the researcher's field notes, interview and stimulated recall transcriptions, reflective journals, and artifacts. Other sets were created in order to be able to group participants within the two main distinctive variables: experienced vs. inexperienced GSTAs.

3.3.2   *Interpretive framework*

Since the purpose of the investigation was to identify the characteristics and differences between the participants' PPK, a set of categories were used as the interpretive framework. The categories were based upon existing PPK literature and reflected a synthesis of previous findings (Chronologically: Elbaz, 1983; Golombeck, 1998; Meijer et al., 1999; Van Driel et al., 2001; John, 2002; Sen, 2002; Chou, 2003; and Ariogul, 2007). The preliminary categories selected as the project's reference points were:

- Knowledge of self
- Knowledge of students
- Knowledge of instruction
- Knowledge of subject matter
- Knowledge of purpose
- Knowledge of context

Based on the themes identified during data analysis, some of the categories listed above were further divided into sub-categories. Other categories were added to the framework as needed during the data analysis process (See section 3.3.3 below). It must be said at this point that my prior experiences and knowledge as a GSTA and doctoral student were not excluded from this data analysis. As Charmaz (2002) asserts, "coding necessarily reflects the researcher's interests and perspectives as well as the information in the data" (p. 682). In qualitative research, these interests and perspectives can add power to the analysis as the "the personal-self becomes inseparable from the researcher-self" (Creswell, 2003, p. 182).

3.3.3   *Identification of themes and patterns*

Themes help to give control and order to research and writing (Van Manen, 1990). Each data set was studied for the purpose of identifying recurring threads of meaning that appeared throughout the data, or appeared less regularly but carried considerable impact (Ely et. al., 1997). These threads were cross-referenced and coded based on the interpretive framework previously described. Specific words, phrases and sentences that suggested key concepts were highlighted. A qualitative analysis tool called DeDoose was used to aid in the coding and analysis of the data (See Appendix F for screenshots of the qualitative analysis tool used). Finally, all data were compared and contrasted among participants in order to identify points of comparison and contrast in their PPK. Table 5 shows the categories and sub-categories of codes identified in the data. The categories, as they apply to each participant, will be discussed in the participant results chapters (Chapters 4 through 11). The themes that emerged as points of comparison and contrast between the two groups of participants (experienced versus inexperienced) are presented and discussed in the comparative results chapter (Chapter 12).

Table 5 Categories and Codes Found in the Data

Category and Codes	Excerpt/Illustration
Knowledge of Self • Improvement • Limitations • Personality • Positive aspects	*I hope that I'm improving just my overall behavior and philosophy and my understanding of what's going on but, I just have a… general… just an easygoing personality and I can't let go of that part of my personality. But at the same time, you know, every day I gain a little bit more knowledge as to how to address the students and what to do, you know, the specifics. But… other than that I like having fun. I like the students to have fun too…*
Knowledge of Students • Student abilities • Student attitudes • Student limitations • Student needs • Student expectations • Student learning • Differences among students • Student-student interaction • Student-teacher interaction	*It's truly frustrating for when students will stop me in the middle of class and be like "Um… I have no idea what you just said, but I think you said the cat crossed the street, and if that's what you said then the answer is… he went into the house". That really frustrates me when students just translate what's being said in class. And I tell them every single class for like the first several weeks that I don't expect them to understand everything, and that I just expect like a percentage, like maybe 10% for them to get and that I will make sure that they do know…. That I won't let them leave the class without knowing the essentials, what I need for them to know, the important stuff, so… It frustrates me when they put that expectation on themselves to understand every single thing, and it's not realistic…*
Knowledge of Instruction • Knowledge of teaching materials • Knowledge of assessment • Knowledge of assignments/activities • Knowledge of language acquisition/learning • Knowledge of teaching methodology • Flexibility • Planning • Time management	*I feel like at this point in the semester both my students and I are getting tired of activities. I am running out of ideas of how to keep them interested. I did try a reading comprehension exercise in class over the cultural reading. The students seemed to like it because they could see how much they understand in Spanish. If I could go back to the beginning of the chapter, I would manage my time a little better in order to have more time for the harder concepts ("ser" and "estar"), etc.*
Knowledge of Subject Matter • Cultural knowledge • Linguistic knowledge	*I gave my students a quiz over formal & informal commands. I just gave them a chart with the 9 most common verbs and asked that they write the command conjugations (both affirmative and negative) for "tú", "Ud.", "Uds." and, for a bonus, "vosotros". I don't normally put so much emphasis on grammar + memorization, but commands are so ever-present. I feel it's important for them to be able to recognize and use them when necessary.*

Knowledge of Purpose	*I want my students to not feel intimidated. I don't want them to feel like "Oh, my gosh, how am I ever going to learn something so difficult and complicated?" Like I don't want to make it feel overwhelming for them. I don't want it to seem complicated… I want it to seem interesting. But more than that I want it to seem accessible. Like it's something they can do. Even if they don't get an A+ or master every single thing we did throughout the course, I want them to leave the classroom with a certain confidence and interest. To feel that they've at least scratched the surface and they know what it holds and that there's something there for everyone…*
Knowledge of Context • Classroom context • Department/program context • Context outside the university • Peer collaboration	*I… think that [the program] promotes like independent study. I think it promotes the students to take it on themselves to really study the information. And I've heard the director say that we are a bridge between the material and the student, which puts a lot more responsibility on the students to take it upon themselves and to study on their own.*
Background • Apprenticeship of observation • Academic background • Personal background • Language learning background • Learning of instruction • Work experience	*Last fall (2011), I started my master's studies and I was working at the time so I couldn't be a graduate assistant. But I finally got the chance in the spring and I became GLA. I was a tutor in the language lab. So I did that in the spring and summer. And I was a little nervous about being a GTA, but I knew it would be a great opportunity, so I applied, and of course I was approved [laughter] because most graduate students are. But I had a little bit of experience, very informal, some ESL stuff years ago.*
Current Goals	*[My program is] Master's of Arts in Spanish. And I've taken more literature classes, but I'm studying for the areas of the conquest of Latin America, listening skills, and applied linguistics.*
Future • Teaching-related future • Non-teaching, professional future • Academic future • Personal future	*I'm not against teaching in the future, but like I said, I want to translate and interpret. But I like the fact that now I have some experience, so if I can't find jobs interpreting or translating, I can find jobs teaching.*
Program support • General program support • Program training	*I was very excited but then I showed up [at the foreign language teaching class for GTAs] and it's only one hour as opposed to 2 and a half hours, and it's not as hard for us I guess. I think it's more designed for people doing PhDs. But I was excited to learn about those concepts because I think I need them.*
Teaching enjoyment	*I love the experience [of being a GSTA], and it's also*

	helped me brush up on my Spanish skills because I'm having to teach things that either I never learned, just sort of got… no one ever taught me but I learned as I spoke Spanish. Or things I forgot, like the difference between preterit and imperfect. Not that I forgot completely but it's nice to go over the rules and teach myself at the same time I'm teaching them.
Frustrations with Teaching	*I still cannot help but to some extent feel bad for them because they still look at me with these confused faces when I speak Spanish to them. However, at the same time it frustrates me especially if I am using words that we covered in class and they are still not familiar with the meaning of the word. I try to repeat verbs and adjectives that were covered in class so that they hear it often and get used to it, but at the same time they need to study these words at home and know what they mean so that they are not confused.*
Language Use	*As [the program director] said [laughter], I speak majority Spanish in class. I'm so glad that he said that, at least in the lower levels, we could use English for teaching grammar because otherwise I don't think I would be able to do it so they can understand. I do try to do about 95% in Spanish because I agree with the approach. Even though I wasn't taught that way, but I had about 6 years to learn what they have like 4 semesters to learn. But I do speak Spanish the majority of the time. I monitor myself, because I do speak very quickly in English, so in Spanish as well, so after a while I thought back and said to myself, 'you're probably taking a bit too quickly' [laughter]. So I'm still working on speaking a little more slowly, especially in Spanish, but I'm trying to every class, if I realize they're not understanding me, maybe try to use a synonym or a cognate. I rarely, very rarely, do the code-switching unless it's something I know they will not get otherwise. But I try to stick to Spanish.*
Influence of GTA Experience	*- I used to get tons of emails with a million questions. So I go into every single class, for the first three or four classes, I go into the site, open everything and make sure to ask any questions, and now I only get one or two emails. With the oral [assignment], I go into it, explain it to them, and I tell them what it is, how to get to it and what my expectations are. And then later on I'll show on the projector…* *- So you're anticipating problems…* *- Yes. Anything that came up over the past semesters I try to at least mention it.*

3.4   Trustworthiness of the Study

Consumer confidence (Willis, 2007), or how much the target audience trusts the results

of a study presents more difficulties to achieve in qualitative research than in its qualitative

counterpart. However, there is no need in qualitative research to "eliminate all but one true

reality from [a] study's conclusions" due to the fact that "reality is socially constructed, and thus

there are multiple perspectives on reality" (Willis, 2007, p. 220). In qualitative research, validity

is made more likely by maximizing clarity and agreement (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Several

efforts were made to increase confidence and the results of the present study.

3.4.1   Triangulation

In qualitative research, triangulation is a process through which researchers verify

evidence by using different sources of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation was achieved

in the study through the use of interviews, classroom observations, reflective journals, and

stimulated recall. By analyzing and comparing the data collected from these sources, a fuller

picture of the participants' PPK emerged.

3.4.2   Member checking

Member checking is another way of verifying data interpretation. For this strategy, the

researcher solicits participants' views on their actions or words as they have been featured in

rough drafts of writing (Stake, 1995). For member checking, samples of coded journal entries,

and interview and stimulated recall transcripts were sent via email to the participants, and their

impressions were solicited. All participants responded to this request and none of them presented

any objections or substantive corrections to be made on the data. However, one of the

participants, Elena, commented on how she had changed her mind about one of the answers she

provided during an interview. The answer and her change of heart will be discussed in her results chapter.

3.4.3   Prolonged observation

In order to achieve prolonged observation, the classroom observations were conducted within a space of four months, that is, a full academic semester. As mentioned earlier, six full SFL classes were observed for each participant at regular two-week intervals during the data collection period. At the same time, seven total interviews with each GSTA were conducted at regular two-week intervals. Finally, five reflective journal entries were collected from each participant in two-week intervals as well.

3.4.4   Second coder reliability

Inter-coder agreement is considered an important element in building confidence in qualitative data analysis (Willis, 2007). For thematic coding, this "external check" (Lee, 2011) can be understood as "the degree to which coders agree with each other about how themes are to be applied to qualitative data... [which] suggests that the concept is not just a figment of the investigator's imagination and adds to the likelihood that a theme is also valid" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 104).

Working towards such validity, I requested the help from a colleague who had recently completed his doctoral degree in my home department of AL/ESL and had done similar coding for his dissertation research with a focus on corpus linguistics. Since I had acted as his second coder then, we were familiar with the process of collaborating for purposes of data analysis. To start, we met for a training session during which I explained some of the theoretical background, and the research questions of the project, as well as the coding process I had carried out. At this

time, we went over a small set of data together so he could start familiarizing himself with the codes and ask any questions regarding the coding process.

Once we considered that the second coder could take on data on his own, I provided him with approximately 10% of the data. The data set contained interview excerpts, including stimulated recall data, and journal entries from all eight participants. After several days of coding the data set, the second coder returned the coded data and I compared our results for the first time. After the first comparison, we had only achieved 56% inter-coder agreement. The difference was almost entirely due to the fact that the second rater had applied a much lower number of codes to the data. During a conversation with the second coder, we were able to identify the cause for the low agreement rate. As he later confirmed via email:

> I think I was first looking just at the most general theme for each extended passage, rather than examining the smaller sections of each one. Once I realized that you were looking at the data in that way, I could see the more nuanced approach to coding, and with that I began to identify more codes within each passage (email from second coder).

After the second coder re-analyzed the data, we achieved 96% inter-coder agreement, which is considered optimal for qualitative analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

3.5   Ethical Issues

From the investigation's conception, one of the possible concerns regarding research methodology was the fact that I am a fellow GSTA in the program serving as the context for the study. Thus, as a colleague to my participants, I followed Creswell's (2003) mandate to systematically reflect on who I was during the inquiry and be sensitive to my personal biography and how it shapes the study (p. 182). I would argue that being a colleague to the study's participants allowed for a more comfortable relationship in which there was a reduced fear of being evaluated. Also, as the research questions of the project were presented and explained to the participant, they were able to see that their teaching skills were not going to be judged and

that, on the contrary, I only wanted to gain a better understanding of their thoughts and how they shape their teaching choices. In fact, I expended considerable time and effort trying to make these particular characteristics of the study clear.

Another way in which I worked to minimize my role as a colleague in favor of my role as researcher, was the establishment of clear guidelines to be adopted during observations. These guidelines included pre-observation instructions to ignore me to the extent possible during the observed classes, as well as leaving any sharing of materials for after class (Baker & Lee, 2011). In addition, the guidelines for myself included avoiding eye contact and interactions with the instructors during observations (Baker & Lee, 2011). Finally, my responses during interviews were limited to either follow-up questions or neutral acknowledgements of understanding, such as "uh-huh", or "OK".

3.5.1   Informed consent

Prior to the collection of data, all participants provided informed consent (Appendix G). The design, review and approval of the consent form, recruitment materials, and reflective journal sheet were carried out under the authority of the Georgia State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Strict confidentiality guidelines were also reviewed and approved during this process. Protocol Number H12566 was approved by the IRB for this study (Appendix H).

4   RESULTS: JULIO

As the participants, Julio, Pat, Ann, Elena, Mary, Margarita, Lula, and Claire allowed me to observe their classes, conduct interviews, and read their journal entries, a picture of their cognitive processes, more specifically, their personal practical knowledge began to emerge. Their thoughts are presented, as much as possible in their own words, in the next eight chapters. Each chapter will be devoted to one participant in an attempt to share their stories as they told them. The first four chapters will focus on Julio, Pat, Ann, and Elena; the four GSTAs who had had at least three semester of teaching experience in the program. The last four chapters will focus on Mary, Margarita, Lula, and Claire; the four GSTAs in their first semester as instructors. This is Julio's chapter.

The participant number, interview or journal entry number, and the location of the excerpt within the source document identify direct quotes from the participants. For example, the identifier P1I2-317 is made up of the participant number (P1 represents participant one, which is Julio), the interview number (I2 represents interview number 2), and character start number (317 indicates that the excerpt begins at character 317 in the transcript). A letter "J" will appear instead of the letter "I" to indicate that the excerpt comes from a journal entry. The letters "SR" will be presented in brackets after the interview number to indicate when an excerpt comes from a stimulated recall interview.

Like most of the participants in the project, Julio was teaching a Spanish 1001 class during the data collection period in the fall semester of 2012. Section 4.1 presents Julio's background. Section 4.2 discusses Julio's PPK and is sub-divided into five categories: knowledge of self (4.2.1), knowledge of students (4.2.2), knowledge of instruction (4.2.3),

knowledge of subject matter (4.2.4), and knowledge of context (4.2.5). The knowledge of

purpose category is not presented in a separate sub-section since it is intertwined with all other

PPK categories. Thus, it is included in those discussions. Finally, Section 4.3 presents Julio's

plans for his personal and professional future, and Section 4.4 presents a summary of the

findings revealed in the chapter. Table 6 presents Julio's code assignation totals, that is, the

number and percentage of times each code was applied to Julio's data in order of frequency.

Table 6 Code Assignations in Julio's Data in Order of Frequency

Code	Number of Assignations	Percentage
Knowledge of Students	**152 (total)**	**24.6%**
Student abilities	16	
Student attitudes	30	
Student limitations	19	
Student needs	11	
Student expectations	6	
Student learning	18	
Differences among students	19	
Student-student interaction	4	
Student-teacher interaction	29	
Knowledge of Instruction	**137 (total)**	**22.2%**
Knowledge of teaching materials	21	
Knowledge of assessment	21	
Knowledge of assignments/activities	18	
Knowledge of language acquisition/learning	5	
Knowledge of teaching methodology	18	
Flexibility	11	
Planning	19	
Time management	24	
Knowledge of Context	**79 (total)**	**12.8%**
Classroom context	18	
Department/program context	34	
Context outside the university	15	
Peer collaboration	9	
Knowledge of Self	**72 (total)**	**11.6%**
Improvement	13	
Limitations	36	
Personality	12	
Positive aspects	11	
Influence of GTA Experience	**39**	**6.3%**
Knowledge of Subject Matter	**36 (total)**	**6%**
Cultural knowledge	25	

Linguistic knowledge	11	
Program support	**26 (total)**	**4.2%**
General program support	14	
Program training	12	
Background	**19 (total)**	**3%**
Apprenticeship of observation	1	
Academic background	3	
Personal background	2	
Language learning background	1	
Learning of instruction	6	
Work experience	6	
Frustrations with Teaching	**13**	**2.1%**
Teaching enjoyment	**12**	**1.9%**
Knowledge of Purpose	**12**	**1.9%**
Language Use	**11**	**1.8%**
Future	**7 (total)**	**1.1%**
Teaching-related future	6	
Non-teaching, professional future	0	
Academic future	1	
Personal future	0	
Current Goals	**3**	**0.4%**
Total Code Assignations	**618**	**100%**

4.1   Julio's Background

Julio was 34 years old at the time we started meeting for the project. A native of Guatemala, his family moved to California during his childhood. He was the most experienced GSTA in the group, having taught in the program for five semesters. As our cubicles in the GTA room were across the hall from each other, we had many opportunities to relate as colleagues. It was during one such opportunity that I shared what was then just an idea for my dissertation project and he showed a lot of support and enthusiasm for it. Months later, he was the first participant to volunteer for the project. He was pursuing both a master's degree in Spanish and a Teaching Certificate in foreign language. His interest in education and language teaching started at a young age.

> Since I graduated from high school I was interested in education and the teaching profession so I have an undergrad general education. […] I'll say about three years ago I

was going on mission trips interpreting and translating and I saw there was a need for language instructors in Spanish, and so… I decided to focus on getting a Spanish MA and a Teaching Certificate in foreign language, but I'm also interested in teaching English so I really like teaching languages. (P1I1-155)

Julio's undergraduate years in California provided him with early opportunities for

teaching as part of his education degree.

When I was in college during my undergrad I was exposed to every spectrum of… education… everywhere from special education to… gifted, as well as general classroom and… pretty much from kindergarten to 12th grade. So, I had a pretty good view of the education program. I wouldn't say a complete view, but I would say more so than most of what happened in just a kindergarten classroom, or just a 12th grade classroom. So I did that for four years with special education, I did it with ESOL, and also with general ed. And so that was for four years of training. (P1I1-2542)

Upon obtaining his education degree, Julio moved to Georgia and taught third grade for

two years before deciding to start his graduate studies. His goals were very clear from the

beginning: becoming a language teacher, and gaining experience and financial support in the

process.

I came here with the goal to get my teaching certificate, and I wasn't as much interested in the MA, but I wanted the assistantship. So that tells you where my interests are. I want to learn how to teach. An MA is great, but as far as my objective, it's not the most important thing. The most important thing for me is to be a great Spanish or foreign language teacher. (P1I7-11132)

In the following sections, Julio's love for teaching is illustrated as his personal practical

knowledge is explored.

4.2   Julio's Personal Practical Knowledge

4.2.1   Knowledge of Self

Julio is very open about his personality. Out of the 618 code assignations to the data

connected to him, 72 instances were related to his knowledge of self (11.6%). He shared what he

considers limitations and positive aspects that affect his teaching. One of those limitations stems

from a very serious medical condition diagnosed six years before.

> I know that one of my personal challenges is my personal issue. I was diagnosed with MS. I had brain surgery, and with that brain trauma -even MS is brain trauma because there is scarring of the brain tissue- there are some factors of cognitive… there're some days where I'm not fully aware of my cognitive… fluency. Like when I'm expressing ideas… One of the first things I do before coming to work is make sure I take my medicine. Even if I feel fine, if I get into the classroom and not take my medicine, I feel scattered. So my particular style of teaching is round-about. Sometimes I come across like I don't know what I'm talking about. I try to fight that, but it's really my style. Even in regular life, it seems like people don't understand. (P1I5-668)

Julio seems to have a hard time identifying where his personality and the MS meet. "*I sometimes think 'well… maybe that had something to do with it'*" (P1I5-890). However, his ability to identify when outside help is needed (i.e. taking his medicine) allows him to perform effectively as a GSTA and a graduate student. "*There are often times when I know I need my medicine. […] I'm very thankful that I'm doing pretty well health-wise, considering*" (P1I5-1046). When I ask him to describe his classroom behavior, Julio recognizes that it is a work in progress, and that he is not alone in what he considers to be his limitations.

> I think it's… it changes. I hope that I'm improving my overall behavior and philosophy and my understanding of what's going on. I just have a… just an easygoing personality and I can't let go of that part of my personality. But at the same time, you know, every day I gain a little bit more knowledge as to how to address the students and what to do, you know, the specifics. But… other than that, I like having fun; I like the students to have fun.
> *NYP: So do you think you have an animated class?*
> At times I know I do, and other times I can be a little boring because I get in lecture mode, you know. I really don't want to do that; I really want the interaction but… you know, as teachers sometimes we get in a soapbox and we just start. We don't look at the time. (P1I1-5006)

Time management is another one of Julio's perceived limitations, which will be

discussed in the section related to his knowledge of instruction. Going back to Julio's knowledge

of self, his journal entries provided powerful insights into his personal challenges and how he is

learning to overcome them.

> I have been finding myself reflecting on aspects of my teaching more; everything from challenges, healthy coping and strategy to unhealthy dissatisfaction. One example of the challenges is yesterday when I got to work. I usually arrive at least three hours before starting to teach. As soon as I got to my office yesterday I noticed I forgot to take my morning medicine. In the past, I would freak out a little bit and maybe sugar up on candy or coffee. Yesterday I noticed that I didn't freak out, or self-medicate in order to try to have my mental edge. I continued planning and strategizing on the material I needed to cover. After the class I felt I did well even without my morning medication. It was the first time this semester that I forgot to take my medicine and hopefully the last this semester, but did feel better planning and the notion of my personal challenges made a positive difference. In regards to healthy coping and unhealthy dissatisfaction about my teaching, I'm starting to notice that my time feeling disappointment of wasted opportunities is less. I'm tending to focus more on solutions rather than spending too much time feeling guilty. In other words, I feel my self-talk is getting better at the same time that my personal notion of shortcomings and challenges is getting more focused. This means I can see that the task of teaching in my present circumstance is very challenging and students and administration will be better served when I don't pile up all the responsibility on myself. Less self-judgment opens up opportunities to improve. (P1J4-846)

When I ask him during our last interview to comment on this entry, he expands on the

evolution of this issue throughout his experience as a GSTA.

> I'm telling you… there've been semesters where I wanted to kick myself. I wanted to fire me. I wanted to stop. Because you put the burden on yourself. But I'm working with adults. With them, you know they want to do good [sic] for the most part, and you ask yourself 'Why didn't they do good? Why didn't I do a better job?' But now I cope and I understand I didn't do an excellent job, but my heart was there, I tried. I did as good as I could. And it's up to the student too. They get the tools to do well. So I'm nicer to myself. Even you could notice that at the beginning I was like 'Oh! That's terrible!' and even in saying that, there is not as much guilt as before. Now it's more like 'Well, I'll do better next time'. (P1I7-15155)

Julio has a tendency to be very self-critical, and the next sections in this chapter will

illustrate how his self-criticism expands to the rest of is personal practical knowledge. However,

his 'coping' reveals a learning process as an instructor and a better understanding of his teaching

context as he accumulates experience as a GSTA. He also seems to have a clear understanding of

his strengths, and how to reduce the impact of his perceived limitations. The next two excerpts

taken from different interviews illustrate that.

> I try to definitely deal with [remembering things] seriously, you know. That's why I don't usually like to assign many things because it's more work for me, and more opportunities for me to forget stuff. This was something that wasn't even in the book. I asked them to do a Family Tree. They did use it for asking each other questions, but I didn't collet them after we used them, and this particular student asked if I was going to collect them… He reminded me two times right before the end of class because I forgot to collect it after we used it in class. Now, the important stuff I'm pretty good at remembering. (P1I3-12751)

> I have my own way of doing things and sometimes it works pretty well. I'm a, not random, but I would say creative person. And that sometimes seems a bit random, but I definitely have a plan. […] Sometimes the plan doesn't come true, but I think as I learn and grow as an instructor… choosing the right exercises, the right plan, I'll get better at that. So for example, in choosing a particular exercise, in my mind I'm like 'Wow! I need to try that!' and then when I get to the classroom, I find it didn't work. But the good part is that I remember stuff, so…
> *NYP: You don't make the same mistake twice.*
> Yeah. (P1I5-2371)

Julio's desire to improve his teaching ability is a constant element in our conversations

and his journal entries. "*My challenge is how to perfect all this that I'm trying to do*" (P1I5-

3021). However, he believes that he has already shown improvement thanks to experience as a

GSTA.

> I have such a better time than in previous semesters. As a GTA I feel a lot better now. I believe that my level has improved. Before you just don't know where you're going, and now I have a better idea, and it makes me feel better. (P1I7-15102)

Another aspect of Julio's PPK that has been partly informed by his GSTA experience is

his knowledge of students. In the following section we explore this relevant dimension of his

PPK and its effects on his teaching practice.

4.2.2 *Knowledge of Students*

Julio's awareness of the students and how they affect his teaching practice is even more

present in our exchanges than his knowledge of self, with 24.6% of the total code assignations.

He understands that how the students see him depends on them as much as much as it does on him.

> I believe some students think very positive of me, and some student might not think very positive. I think there are many factors. The students themselves will have different experiences that would have them see me in a different way. But as far as what I think I project is… a very understandable, liked person. (P1I5-668)

During our first stimulated recall interview, Julio's reaction to what he calls "off-tangent" comments showed his desire to relate to students. "*I guess I… I'm thinking I can relate to them. I want to be as transparent as possible. And I think when they see that I'm a real person, they can identify with that*" (P1I4[SR]-391). As we discussed one of the classes I observed, Julio further reveals his knowledge of students in the way he manages sleepy students in the classroom.

> Well, this is a high school kid. She wasn't asleep for long... I have to talk to her. […] Usually… you don't want to get into that; waking somebody up. They'd just get embarrassed.
> *NYP: What do you think you're going to say to her?*
> About how her participation grade will be affected if she's asleep. That she's going to miss important information. I'm not going to make a big deal out of it, but I want her to consider it. […] It has happened before when I've tried to do something, like make noise or stuff like that. But, I end up embarrassing them and I don't want to do that to them. Now I rather talk to them afterwards and ask what's going on. […] But I won't let it go because I know it affects the energy of the whole class and myself too. It makes me feel boring, or more boring! (P1I3-8950)

This exchange reveals how Julio's experience as a GSTA has informed his knowledge of students and, as a result, has modified his strategy regarding this particular issue (i.e., addressing the issue after class). It further illustrates his tendency to point out what he considers negative aspects of his personality in the classroom. Earlier he stated that he liked having fun teaching and wanted students to have fun as well. He also mentioned that he feels boring when he gets in what he called 'lecture mode'. The last sentence of this excerpt seems to indicate that whenever 'fun' is not present in the lesson, he fears he comes across as a boring instructor. I tried to get more of his thoughts on that topic.

NYP: Do you feel like your class is boring?
Well… for example the last time you were there I was like 'Man this stuff is so boring!'
That *I* was bored. That it was not fun, you know. As fun as it could be.
NYP: So you're always assessing that part of it?
Yeah. It's just a feeling that you get.
NYP: What do you do when you feel that way?
I go back and I think what I can change. Maybe it was too much grammar that day; too many practices. Maybe we could do a fun exercise, you now, video. Like, 'today I know we're not going to do as much practice, but we're going to do video, and a song, and stuff like that'. (P1I3-10393)

The answer to that last question sums up what Julio considers to be a fun class. He

expects students to enjoy videos and songs, and to be bored by grammar and practice.

I found out a few semesters ago that students were actually not frowning or complaining, but some of the students were looking forward to the videos and some of the cultural videos. They were enjoying them, they were laughing. I saw that they were having a good time. (P1I2-6802)

Based on this experience, Julio incorporates videos in his class quite often. "*I try to do*

like three per chapter. And there's always a YouTube video or something about the country or

the theme of the chapter that I think it's worth doing, so we probably do about four videos per

chapter" (P1I6-13879). But the videos do not mean only fun; Julio sees further value in them.

I believe that if what we do is meaningful to them, and they get that meaningfulness, whether it is something funny or… it means something to all of them. Like last time with the video they kept laughing about how the lady moved her hands, or her eyes were off [laughter], but it was a connection they were making. (P1I2-9119)

Julio is aware of the differences among students, and how such differences affect his

teaching practice. The following exchange reveals a lot of his thoughts on the students'

expectations and experiences, the different types of students in his classroom, and their effect.

I think their expectations and needs vary. Some of them have had…uh… really positive [language learning] experiences and so they bring that. For some of them, it's their first time, you know. Some of them have negative experiences. So they're just there because they have to, so it ranges.
NYP: What do you think is the percentage of those who want to speak the language?
Um… I would say… it varies as well. You know, depending on the level of the students. A particular class may have underclassmen and another class may have upperclassmen

students. But I do find, which is one of the reasons why I'm in language teaching, the percentage is high, you know. I mean, I don't know the details, but my guess would be about 50% genuinely want to learn, if not higher.

Julio has an appreciation for both the eager students and those who lack motivation. As

he describes the two types of students, his knowledge of students comes to the surface.

At times both can be great and at times both can be annoying [laughter]. Because you can have the student that didn't do the work and you want to motivate. And you also have at the other end of the spectrum: a student that is, you know, too focused. They have two dictionaries on the desk, and you know they're really trying too hard and not really enjoying it. (P1I1-7465)

Julio admits that, given the chance, he would rather have a class full of eager students

because "*they want to do the work*" (P1I1-7549). And he is aware that his approach to teaching

such class would vary from what he does with his current students.

I would do less code-switching, because… definitely the skill level would be different. I would also go into more. You know, take it to a higher-level thinking and so… Right now, we can't go deep into the language. But if there would be a group to try harder and be more eager, we could go into much more of the language, you know, culture, ideas… (P1I1-8012)

Julio's appreciation for more dedicated students stems from what he has experienced as a

GSTA. He finds that "*there is a correlation between effort and grades: their homework, their*

quizzes, their absences. The students that are on target is because they really put in the effort"

(P1I4[SR]-15078).

Julio's knowledge of students is also evident in his assessment of the language skills they

bring into the classroom. He understands that "*some of the students have been more exposed to*

the language than others" (P1I4[SR]-15002). He is also aware that some students 'get through

the cracks' of the placement exam and end up in a course level that is lower than their skills

where they believe a high grade will be easier to achieve. On his first journal entry Julio

mentioned having one such student in his class, and during our last interview I asked him how that situation had evolved throughout the semester.

> I thought that she was… higher than the level of the class. But she's not my highest student there. I have other students that made a better job about disguising themselves [laughter]. I figured it out later.
> *NYP: How does their presence in the classroom affect what you do?*
> Sometimes they challenge what I say because they are thinking ahead. And it helps sometimes. But then you are teaching at the level of the class and one of them throws in a wrench and says 'hey, but you can do this too, right?' and it's like… At first it catches me by surprise and I don't want to confuse the rest of the class, but if I throw it back and ask for examples, it actually helps. It's not on me to prove it, and they make the class more interactive; more interesting. (P1I7-12922)

Julio has developed a strategy to manage 'misplaced' students that has turned a difficult situation into teaching opportunities. In reference to the students' contributions to the class, we talk about how a student recited a jingle on the use of the verbs '*ser*' and '*estar*' (the Spanish forms for the verb 'to be'), and he thinks he will use it in the future. "*I appreciate this from students. It's a relationship, you know. They are learning as much as I am learning. If I just stand there and download information, I don't like that. So I appreciate when students provide stuff*" (P1I3-7002).

Another example of how Julio's knowledge of students affect his teaching practice comes from what he describes as an increased influx of freshmen in his class this semester. He has increased the time he spends giving reminders and instructions for assignments. "*It's just who I am; to make myself available. [Laughter] And they're actually going for it. Oh, my goodness! They are reaching out for help, which is good*" (P1I2-13587). But he is not entirely happy about the extra work and the apparent 'neediness' of the students. *"'Come on, you want me to hold your hand for this?' And it's not a big deal, but I have noticed I'm re-explaining things a lot more*" (P1I2-13981). He does the extra work knowing that "*a student that has been here before has an idea of what's going on with the program more than an incoming freshman*" (P1I2-1345).

He has also decided to present more of the textbook's video tutorials on vocabulary and grammar that are available online. "*I believe that as much as I can push it for them to actually find a liking to [the videos], then they would actually start [watching them] on their own*" (P1I2-7254). By the time of our last interview, Julio is content with the students' overall performance and considers that his efforts paid off for most of them. And although he is concerned about the ones who are failing, he does not blame himself, as he would on earlier semesters.

> I surely think that it takes both the student and the professor. But in our case, one of the wonderful things of working with adults is that they know what they're doing. They have been to class. They have their grade reports. And I've been good at providing grade reports on a regular basis. So it is no surprise for them what their scores are. (P1I7-329)

Through his experience as a GSTA, Julio has achieved an understanding of the students' abilities, attitudes, and limitations. He has also learned about the role the students play in their own success (or lack thereof) as language learners. Julio's knowledge of self and knowledge of students meet in his ability to cope with the negative ("*I felt pretty good about my inner-talk*" [P1I7-3148]) and his support to students to the point where they will accept it. "*I do my thing and then it's up to them*" (P1I7-14679).

4.2.3   Knowledge of Instruction

Julio's knowledge of instruction is prevalent in the data, with 22.2% of the total code assignations. It includes his knowledge of teaching methodology, language learning/acquisition, assessment, materials, assignments and activities, and planning. His description of how he plans his lessons provides an effective summary of how these elements, along with his teaching experience, affect his practice.

> I look at the material first, what we'll cover, and what the textbook offers, and what our goals are. Something that I started doing a few semesters back was asking myself, 'what's my goal?' And obviously there's the calendar and the syllabus, but also 'did we cover the material for the exam?' So I look at the exam. Especially, I don't want the students to see something brand new in the exam. Like a format of a question, or… so I

make sure, if there's going to be a fill-in the blank section, and obviously are not set in stone, but we do have an idea of what's going to be there possibly, so that I have a fill-in the blanks activity. I make sure my students have seen this. And I tell them this is a type of question that may come up. So definitely that would be a priority to include in my plan. (P1I12-6549)

Julio considers his teaching style to be "*out of the box, or different, as opposed to being on the textbook*" (P1I4[SR]-6654). His 'different' style stems in part from his own language learning experiences. "*I've been in other first semester language classes, and I really didn't learn that much, and I've felt bad about it. So I really don't want [my students] to feel that way*" (P1I6-8231). He also attributes part of his teaching philosophy to constructivism.

> [Constructivism promotes] interactions, and being the support, the coach of the learning, rather than the center of the learning. So I really like student-centered, student-led activities, but in our program, which gives us, you know, 50 minutes a day, it's really hard to get into anything. (P1I1-12120)

When he reflects about the elements that restrict his teaching practice, two factors seem to be a constant in his decision-making; time and materials. I will bring to the fore Julio's thoughts on time and time management later on. Regarding materials, he thinks the textbook is "*not the best, but not the worst*" (P1I1-10987). He has made a conscious decision to present the class content in a manner very different from how it is presented in the book.

> I think the textbook itself, like many textbooks, they make it too hard, you know. They don't speak in the clearest fashion. They take it a few steps further that it's needed. And I wish we had more examples in the book; or clearer examples. (P1I1-11934)

As part of Julio's efforts for improving upon what he sees as the limitations of the textbook, his main tool for presenting the material is the 'prezi'; a presentation software tool that has gained popularity among teachers.

> I started using it a few semesters ago. I've been using it more now than before. I like it because […] I have a mac computer so I've had issues when a PowerPoint would be read by another type of computer. And prezi is online, an online resource, so if you have reliable Internet, which we do here on campus, it's a pretty reliable service. And I use it; especially this semester I use it every day. Just to have my plan for the day, and the few

uh… slides or major things that I plan to talk about. So it's a good reminder for them to visually see it, and for me to stick to it; to try to stick to it. (P1I2-4497)

I admired Julio's design skills as demonstrated by his prezis during the classes I observed. He shows great control of the tool, and also that he can be flexible when things do not go as planned. During the last class I observe, his prezi does not work, and after a couple of failed minutes trying to find the problem, he turns to the whiteboard in order to present the material.

> [The technical difficulty] does have an impact. But if you know what's going to be there, if you planned it and you know what's on that prezi, you can do it. There is a board! You can write it! It does have an impact, it does distract you for a minute, but it won't keep you from teaching that lesson. Maybe the value of the lesson will be a bit lower, but it won't stop it. It's not like I need to cancel class. (P1I7-11812)

One of Julio's preferred strategies is to dim the lights in the classroom while the students do pair work, and then turn them back up before going over the answers with them. His knowledge of instruction is evident in the reasoning behind this strategy.

> One purpose is that they can see the model on the board. Another purpose is that, psychologically they are like 'Ok, the exercise is over. I need to start paying attention'. The thing with them is that you want them talking but sometimes they get used to it and it takes a while for them to realize that the exercise is over. (P1I2-8598)

Julio's knowledge of language acquisition and assessment is evident in his views regarding the program's effectiveness in measuring student learning.

> We address all four skills. We do have a plan. I just believe it's superficial, you know. Especially with foreign language. Like I said, there has to be that inner fire. And there's no formula like in math, but with language you really have to stick to doing it and desire to practice it and learn it. So I believe the assessment is very superficial, it's not meaningful for our students, for many of our students. […] I guess what I mean is that [the students] just want to get a check, or complete, on that particular assessment or assignment, and they don't see, 'I'm using the language'. We don't try as educators to make it meaningful and connect it to their person, you know, make it meaningful to their interests. So, I believe that they see it as an assignment that they need to do so they can pass this class. […] And I believe that is more of an issue that is maybe, academic society's perspective of foreign language. And so, maybe it has to do with the program itself. (P1I1-13798)

Grounded in these beliefs, Julio seems most enthusiastic about teaching when he is able to introduce his 'projects'; assignments that are not included in the textbook or syllabus and that stem from the students interests. This semester, he was able to incorporate a video project (students make a video in Spanish and post it on YouTube), and a speed-dating exercise. He was very excited when he told me about the latter. "*This is another thing I want to try. It's kind of silly, but I heard some students were excited about going speed dating, and I was like 'We should have one here, but in Spanish!'*" (P1I4[SR]-2884). But he's not improvising; he has a goal and a plan. "*I don't want to just throw it out there. I want to prepare them. I want to give them something to say*" (P1I4[SR]-3113). "*I think it's a good plan. I think it's going to work. […] And I think it motivates them that they will have a social experience with the language, so they go 'Oh, I better know this!'*" (P1I5-5126). "*I have like four pages of questions that they wrote to each other. They've actually done all the work. I just compiled [the student-generated questions] and sent them to them*" (P1I6[SR]-7002). The assignment required the students to write down answers to the questions in relation to themselves, and be ready to ask and answer them in the context of a simulated speed-dating experience.

> During the speed-dating, they are not going to be able to use their paper. So that's a reason to sit down and study. I want them to study these questions. We've been preparing step by step. They're pretty good questions, I think. For a first semester Spanish class, I like what we're doing. (P1I6[SR]-8164)

Julio is happy to provide the students with what he considers to be a meaningful language experience in the classroom. And he is providing similar opportunities for them outside the classroom through his video project. Unlike the speed-dating exercise, the video project is not new to his class. "*It's not in the [official class] calendar. It's something that I like to do and that I've done in the past*" (P1I4[SR]-1289). "*I think they do good work in those videos*" (P1I6-6092).

This project also reveals Julio's knowledge of student attitudes and learning. "*The project is a big deal for me and I find that students really like this assignment. And they have fun and they learn*" (P1I4[SR]-1547).

Despite his enthusiasm for these projects, Julio maintains his tendency to be self-critical. During our first stimulated recall interview, Julio has a revelation regarding the apparent professionalism of his teaching style.

> I know that I take my teaching very seriously, but it doesn't seem like I'm very serious… seems kind of… not unprofessional, just not very structured. Obviously I have thought out all this, and I do have the agenda that I want to work through, so I do have a structure and an objective. I have a purpose for showing this, but… I don't know. (P1I4[SR]-6432)

Later on he tries to articulate what he does not like about what he is seeing in the video, and finally finds a positive. "*I guess I see so many areas of improvement. So many areas that I intend to make better. I intend to do something but there're missing elements. Truly I see a potential, an improvement*" (P1I4[SR]-7763).

Time management is one of the areas that trouble Julio regarding his teaching. He feels limited by the 50-minute class period. However, he admits that he has a tendency to go "off tangent" in his lessons, and that sometimes leaves him with less time for practice.

> I think my time management has to be a little better. When I'm in the classroom I don't want to miss that personal opportunity to talk to students because I believe they learn from that. But I really have to make sure I stick to my plan. It's not that I over-plan. I think it's more […] about time management during the lesson. (P1I7-12336)

Julio's first experience watching his teaching on video brings to light his concern in this matter. As he sees himself spending what he considered too long talking about the video project, he expresses his frustration. "*Yeah, I'm wasting too much time. Just seems so long. […] I haven't even gotten to the agenda for that day*" (P1I4[SR]-1896). While trying to articulate what he was thinking at the time of the events we were watching, he demonstrates that he is aware of the issue

in the classroom. "*I'm already thinking it's taking too long. I need to be covering material already. What I'm talking about is important […] I want to be able to convince them that this is a worthwhile effort, not only for their grade. But I'm also aware that I need to do it less*" (P1I4[SR]-2361). In subsequent interviews, Julio reports being "*a bit more prompt*" (P1I5-11023) in his lessons, and that he continues to work on his time management skills.

Language use, that is, the amount of time Spanish or English are used in the classroom, is another of Julio's perceived limitations regarding his teaching practice. He describes it as a constant battle, and admits to using what he considers too much English during class, which he considers a bad habit. "*I think at times I want to use [English] to present the material and quickly get out of it, but sometimes I get stuck, you know*" (P1I4[SR]-1024). During our first stimulated recall interview, Julio's unhappiness with his use of English in class is evident. "*It's just hurting me to hear so much English right now […] I'm not pleased with all this English. And it comes to mind 'Man! I should know how to do it better!'*" (P1I4[SR]-2621).

Julio reveals his awareness of this issue while teaching, and one of the reasons for his use of English in class: getting the message across. "*In my mind I'm always thinking I need to do Spanish, but sometimes I switch to English because I… I guess mistrust that they will understand*" (P1I6[SR]-9652). Julio describes how he struggles with this issue and how he takes his cues from the students.

> I try to reduce the English as much as I can, and try to really teach the language with the language. Obviously translation is not good, you know. But unfortunately the reality is that there has to be a negotiation. So I'm always assessing if they are understanding me. I don't want to leave them in the dust. […] If a student, even though they may know, has a demeanor of, 'I don't know what you're talking about', then it makes me want to bridge that gap, and so here comes the negotiation. But if a student is like 'yeah, I know what you're talking about'… I definitely look at them. That's very normal for me to do. It's a hindrance sometimes. I don't want it to affect me too much. Then I start negotiating too much; giving in a bit too much. (P1I2-11210)

Julio also attributes his use of English in part to the high amount of content to be covered in class. "*I want to get away from that grammar translation method […] but it's a challenge. We have so much stuff*" (P1I6[SR]-1754). "*Every semester I tell myself I have to use more Spanish. And then I try to teach the theme and the culture and the grammar, and it sucks me back into the English*" (P1I4[SR]-12143). Julio's inner struggle with this issue is quite evident.

> As I come into class I'm talking to myself in Spanish: '*Bueno, Julio, tú lo puedes hacer. Vamos a hablar español*' [Ok, Julio, you can do it. Let's speak Spanish]. And then… I kind of always feel defeated getting out of the class because I don't want to speak so much English. (P1I4[SR]-12363)

However, he believes that as the semester moves along, his use of Spanish in the classroom increases. At the same time, Julio seems to have a hard time imagining a Spanish class in the program taught entirely in Spanish. "*It's just that our system doesn't allow for… I mean, if we went all Spanish I wonder what would happen*" (P1I4[SR]-12586). The following exchange reveals Julio's thoughts about the use of Spanish by other GSTAs, and how his experience as a student has influenced this aspect of his knowledge of instruction.

> *NYP: Do you think there are other GTAs who use only Spanish?*
> Uh… No. I don't think so.
> *NYP: And do you think that if there were, they would be successful?*
> [Laughter] Jeez… Yeah. I think they would. [But] see… I know the reality. They are not in [a Spanish-speaking] country. We can't immerse them in the language. They are in my class less than three hours a week. But it's my job. I have to create something! I'm up for the challenge, but… Having been in other people's class, I know there is always that mixture of languages. I have not seen one person teaching us only in the one language that is the target. Even in graduate courses there's always a negotiation. (P1I4[SR]-13417)

Julio's knowledge of context is also revealed in the previous exchange, and will be discussed in detail in section 4.2.5. In the present section, Julio's knowledge of instruction has come to the fore and, its effect on his teaching practice as a GSTA has been evident. The

following section presents Julio's knowledge of subject matter, that is, his linguistic and cultural knowledge of the Spanish language.

4.2.4   Knowledge of Subject Matter

This dimension of PPK was particularly hard to explore in the study. It was important for me that the participants did not feel that they were being 'tested' or 'judged' at any time during our time together. Such feelings would have likely kept them from being as open as they were during interviews, or even influence their behavior during the observed classes. Thus, I never openly asked about their linguistic or cultural knowledge of Spanish. However, and even though only 6% of the code assignations in Julio's data were related to his knowledge of subject matter, such knowledge, and its influence in the GSTAs teaching practice, did become evident in the data.

In Julio's case, his awareness of culture seems to permeate many teaching decisions. As mentioned earlier, one of Julio's favorite activities is to bring videos and songs into his lessons. And his rationale for this teaching decision reveals his thoughts on the connection between culture and learning.

> I want to encourage them to get into the culture. I believe that culture… that learning Spanish is followed by the interest in the culture. If they see an artist; if they see the words [of a song], I believe that would entice them toward putting an extra effort. (P1I4[SR]-4171)

Julio's choice of songs shows his awareness of the structures and topics he is presenting to the students. "*I try to do something that's connected. Either grammatically, like a song in the present tense, or a song in the chapter. One chapter talks about artists, like Shakira. so I try to show that. That's the connection*" (P1I5-13275).

Julio also makes use of the cultural videos that are part of the course textbook materials, and he often makes additional comments about the content of the videos and the importance of

knowing about the culture of the language they are studying. "*I'm trying to stress the value of learning culture. That it has a value, not only economically or politically, but in dealing with each other. So I tell them that knowing about culture empowers them to know how to communicate with the world*" (P1I6[SR]-2728). Julio's video project (where the students make a video in Spanish and post it on YouTube) stemmed from its potential to expand on the cultural content of a particular textbook chapter. "*It was born out of one of the chapters in the textbook, talking about [Spanish] art. […] So one semester I was like 'Oh, yes! Let's do it!' And it worked out well with the topic of the chapter*" (P1I4[SR]-1957).

Julio also demonstrates his knowledge of subject matter in his awareness of vocabulary and how it relates to the students. "*[The food] vocab is especially good for bringing in their experiences into the lesson. I try to do it with all of them, but this one is very good for that*" (P1I6[SR]-12941). His knowledge of Spanish grammar and knowledge of instruction interact in one of his preferred teaching strategies.

> Sometimes I like to play dumb with them just to check if they know. And they gain some confidence […] Using examples with -*er*/-*ir* verbs, then I put one -*ar* verb in there and they tell me: 'It doesn't go there'. And then I'm like 'Oh, you guys already know this, sorry!' So I do that on purpose. (P1I3-8896)

Another example of Julio's knowledge of subject matter is his explanation to the use of the '*vosotros*' form (a second person plural form used only in Spain).

> I answer that you should know it. It shouldn't be new to you, but you may not see it as much. It's more general knowledge for most Spanish speakers since it is in use in a smaller population of the Spanish-speaking world. Only in Spain. But native speakers know it even if they don't use it. (P1I2-7979)

This explanation also shows Julio's knowledge of context. The following section presents more examples of that dimension of Julio's PPK and its influence in his teaching practice.

4.2.5 Knowledge of Context

12.8% of the code assignments in Julio's data were related to his knowledge of context.

His awareness of the Spanish program's policies and expectations is particularly salient. He

emphasizes the "policy-driven" nature of the program, and the importance of helping students to

be aware of the rules "*and what the program expectations are, you know… that they know to*

read the calendar and the syllabus" (P1I1-10258).

Even though Julio has been in the program the longest out of the eight participants in the

study, interaction and collaboration with other GSTAs are not prominent in his practice. He

consults other GSTAs on what he calls 'admin stuff' (issues with students, late work policies,

etc.), but that seems to be the extent of his collaboration with other GSTAs.

> I don't know how they teach, or what they teach. There is very little interrelation among
> us. […] We talk when there's a problem with something, but more on the administration
> side. Like, 'what do you think I should do about this or that?' But it's usually someone I
> feel comfortable with. (P1I3-2423)

When talking about the possibility of sharing teaching materials with other GSTAs, he

indicates a willingness to do so, and the possible reasons why it has not happened in his case.

> I've had the desire but it hasn't materialized. I'm not sure why. Maybe the environment
> or the opportunity haven't been quite right. I know that when I've had the request from
> others to share… I would be willing to do it, but I think it's different to say, 'hey let's get
> together and share' as opposed to, 'I really don't talk to you, but give me what you got'
> [laughter]. I wouldn't mind at all but the environment has not been just right. The bible
> has a verse that says, 'iron sharpens iron', so I wish we could do that. They can help me
> with my shortcomings, or my challenges, and I would help them also. I would like that.
> (P1I7-3787)

Julio brings in his knowledge of context outside the program as he expresses his

frustration regarding his perceived lack of teamwork among GSTAs.

> I want to work in an environment where there's teamwork. The professional field does it.
> People that do business, they work together. It's not like we are not allowed, but we don't
> have the structure; we don't know how to do it. And maybe not everyone wants to do it. I

do want to get better, and learn from other people in my level. I don't know… I wish we were more of a team. (P1I7-10723)

The lack of teamwork that Julio describes seems to be part of the context of the four

experienced GSTAs in the study, as it will be revealed in the following three chapters. However,

one of the findings of the investigation was that the inexperienced GSTA participants did in fact

get organized to share materials and consult one another from the start of the semester when the

data was collected. As was the case with the other experienced GSTAs in the project, Julio seems

to be unaware of this situation and continues to work in a more isolated way. Further discussion

on this issue will be presented in Chapter 12.

Julio's knowledge of context is also present in his views regarding the training and

support GSTAs receive from the department.

> I believe we're lacking in that department. I think very highly of our leadership. [The program coordinator] is awesome, but I think he's over-burdened. They should give him some help. It sounds sad, but this is what I see. He's carrying the weight of a whole lower division program. […] I feel it's like, 'here you go. Teach this' [laughter]. But how do I teach it? I don't think that's right. I've learned and grown a lot, but for the sake of the future… I believe a more extensive orientation could have helped me a lot. (P1I7-6874)

In the previous excerpt Julio also mentions how his experience as a GSTA has helped

him grow as a language teacher. Another improvement in his practice that he attributes to

experience rather than program support is his use of software to manage grades.

> My administration stuff is a lot better now than at the beginning. That would be one of the things I wish they had told me: admin stuff; how to keep records of everything we have to do. Here in our position as GTAs we're basically… it feels like there's some administration support but it's not huge. (P1I4[SR]-9098)

Julio admits that GSTAs are welcome to meet with the program coordinator to seek

guidance, and that there are documents online available to GSTAs with important program

information. However, he finds limitations in the reality of how these resources are put to use.

I haven't been bitter about the feeling that I'm flying alone. There are a lot of resources for GTAs to do well. But I think a better communication is needed. There's a whole lot of information that we need. I question who really goes to those meetings. I think most GTAs don't. And not to blame the administration or us, but I think we need to bridge that lack of communication. (P1I5-10876)

Part of what Julio calls the 'policy driven' nature of the program is a recent effort in reducing DFW rates (the number of Ds, Fs, and Ws [withdrawals] in a course). GSTAs have been instructed to work on minimizing the incidence of these lower grades. Julio sees the benefits of this policy, and has made efforts to implement it in his classes, but he also understands that it can be used as a way to judge a GSTA's performance.

This semester I told [the students] to decide that if they wanted to pass the class, to get to it; and if not, to withdraw. So that clarity helps students decide. It also makes the department look good. And I think it's good actually. […] I've also been more straight forward with W deadlines. Making sure they know what's going on. I feel good about that. It's not just that I want less Ws to look good. Although there's that aspect. "Oh, so-and-so [i.e. a GSTA] had one W and so-and-so had five. So there must be a problem'. I think that's pretty ignorant to think that way. But people do, and some people in power do.

Julio's knowledge of context outside the university and how it aids in his teaching goals is quite evident the following excerpt from our second stimulated recall interview. He describes the content and reasoning behind his talk at the start of the video recorded class.

I'm telling them about how Spanish is becoming prominent in the world. […] I know we have an interest in them learning the language and the grammar, but I kind of want to tie it to current affairs. I think this was shortly after the presidential debate. And they mentioned that the Spanish-speaking world has an economy equivalent to China's, but we have been neglecting the Spanish-speaking world. So I was trying to convey to them the current affairs, and the value of the language they are learning. It's important. It's valuable. I then told them a story about a friend from Florida who doesn't speak Spanish. She's trying to find a job in Florida and she was telling me how frustrating it is to find a job there because Spanish is required of her. So I try to show them how important this is. And that even the fact that they have taken the class matters; that they should put it in their resume. I mean, they need to back it up, but it can't hurt them. (P1I6[SR]-1603)

Julio's PPK permeates his teaching practice as well as his attitude toward teaching and learning to teach. His words also show how his teaching experience as a GSTA has informed his

PPK (e.g., how students' expectations of the class affect their performance). Even though he

sometimes focuses on his perceived limitations, he demonstrates a true passion for language

teaching, the Spanish language, and the success of students. His hopes for the future of his

teaching career are consonant with these passions and show a positive view of his GSTA

experience.

4.3 Julio's Future

Julio was set to graduate in the spring semester of 2013 contingent upon his performance

on his exit exams for the master's program, and the practicum and student teaching portion of the

teaching certificate. He intends to continue his career as a language teacher. He hopes to one day

become his own boss, and make a difference in students' lives.

> I would love to work in an international school or charter school that emphasizes
> language learning. I would love to work in a very strong languages department. A school
> or a system that really encourages learning foreign languages. I think that's my stepping-
> stone. I'm looking toward more entrepreneurial, or… my own way… it's not that I don't
> believe in what people are doing, but I want to learn from what they do well, and then I
> want to go my own way. So I do have an entrepreneurial desire for the future. […] A
> language academy, language school. Definitely have a good support to get kids to learn,
> and encourage them to go places. To open up the world for the students is my real desire.
> And even if it's not here in the US, it could be elsewhere. Receiving students from here.
> Or teaching English in another country. (P1I7-812)

Julio hopes to continue developing his teaching skills, but is not interested in pursuing

doctoral studies. "*I do have the intellect to get a PhD, but I don't have the strength [laughter]*"

(P1I7-2576). However, he appreciates his academic experience and the opportunity to have been

a GSTA.

> The experience here has helped me. I would be an asset to many school systems because
> I know what's required at the university level. I know that programs vary, but I think that
> would be an asset for me; a great selling point for me to a school. I was a GTA for two
> years at [this university], MCL department, lower division Spanish. I'm assuming that
> they would ask what's that like or what I learned, and I would say I would be a great
> asset because I know the next step and I would want to prepare our students, if it's a high
> school level, to get at a higher level so they, at the university, can achieve more. […] I've
> grown as a teacher. My GTA experience is up there, very important as far as my

professional objectives. […] Even with all the problems, the experience has been good. (P1I7-1835)

4.4   Chapter Summary

Julio is the oldest and most experienced GSTA in the project. His ultimate goal is to be the best Spanish teacher he can be, which prompted the decision to pursue an MA in Spanish as it would give him the opportunity to be a GSTA. Julio's struggles with brain trauma do not diminish his love for teaching, but are a significant part of his knowledge of self. His tendency to focus on his perceived limitations is another aspect of his knowledge of self, and it affects other aspects of his PPK.

Through his experience as a GSTA, Julio has achieved an understanding of the students' abilities, attitudes, and limitations. He has also learned about the role the students play in their own success (or lack thereof) as language learners. His knowledge of instruction is informed by theory and practice, and he has been able to introduce projects that better suit his idea of what meaningful activities can do to motivate student learning.

Even though Julio shows a desire to work as a team with his fellow GSTAs, his collaboration with peers has been minimal. He also expects more of the department's efforts in GSTA support and training. However, he is highly appreciative of his GSTA experience and he is certain that his professional future will be centered on language teaching.

5   RESULTS: PAT

Like Julio, Pat was considered an experienced GSTA at the time the data was collected for the project. Also like Julio, Pat showed great interest and enthusiasm for the project since its early stages during informal conversations we had shared in the GTA office. During his participation in the project in the fall semester of 2012, Pat was teaching two Spanish 1001 classes. In this chapter we will see the first reference to the university's Language Acquisition Resource Center (LARC) (i.e. language lab) where students can go for language support and tutoring. As with all participant chapters, Pat's narrative will be built primarily around his own words, and will start with an overview of his background (Section 5.1), followed by an exploration of his PPK in relation to the dimensions previously discussed (Section 5.2). Pat's thoughts on his personal and professional future will be presented in section 5.3. Finally, section 5.4 presents a summary of the findings tied to Pat's data. Table 7 presents Pat's code assignations as identified in the data in order of frequency.

Table 7 Code Assignations in Pat's Data in Order of Frequency

Code	Number of Assignations	Percentage
Knowledge of Students	**216 (total)**	**29.2%**
Student abilities	15	
Student attitudes	40	
Student limitations	21	
Student needs	11	
Student expectations	1	
Student learning	12	
Differences among students	53	
Student-student interaction	9	
Student-teacher interaction	54	
Knowledge of Instruction	**166 (total)**	**22.4%**
Knowledge of teaching materials	44	
Knowledge of assessment	22	
Knowledge of assignments/activities	17	
Knowledge of language acquisition/learning	13	
Knowledge of teaching methodology	29	

Flexibility	10	
Planning	9	
Time management	22	
Knowledge of Context	**91 (total)**	**12.3%**
Classroom context	19	
Department/program context	31	
Context outside the university	31	
Peer collaboration	10	
Knowledge of Self	**70 (total)**	**9.5%**
Improvement	4	
Limitations	31	
Personality	17	
Positive aspects	18	
Background	**63 (total)**	**8.5%**
Apprenticeship of observation	12	
Academic background	9	
Personal background	7	
Language learning background	9	
Learning of instruction	23	
Work experience	3	
Influence of GTA Experience	**32**	**4.3%**
Knowledge of Subject Matter	**31 (total)**	**4.2%**
Cultural knowledge	10	
Linguistic knowledge	21	
Frustrations with Teaching	**18**	**2.4%**
Program support	**16 (total)**	**2.2%**
General program support	5	
Program training	11	
Teaching enjoyment	**15**	**2%**
Future	**8 (total)**	**1.1%**
Teaching-related future	5	
Non-teaching, professional future	0	
Academic future	1	
Personal future	2	
Language Use	**7**	**0.9%**
Knowledge of Purpose	**6**	**0.8%**
Current Goals	**1**	**0.1%**
Total Code Assignations	**740**	**100%**

5.1 Pat's Background

At the time we started meeting, Pat was 22 years old, was working toward a MA degree in Spanish, and already had three semesters of previous GSTA experience in the program. A

home-schooled native of Georgia, Pat's interest in Spanish began at age 15 when a cousin who had lived in Cuba started giving him lessons.

> I wanted to learn a lot more of it so I began reading articles that interested me on the Spanish Wikipedia. And I guess you can say that was my Spanish in high school because I was home schooled. And so that was an important part of learning Spanish for me and so then, before going to a four-year university, I went to [a technical college] in order to get a website design certificate and there I met one of my friends who is half Nicaraguan, and so… she and her whole family were very kind and very good examples of Spanish speakers. So after meeting them I realized that Spanish would be a good major to pursue. Plus I grew up in a small town in Georgia, so we lived close to a military base and there were people there from many countries: Dominicans, Panamanians, Puerto Ricans. So another university had a campus in the town and so there I was able to take Spanish 1001 with a wonderful professor with a great sense of humor. After that, I took the CLEP test and I was able to get into an introduction of literature, which was taught by his wife. […] I really loved being in the Spanish program there. (P2I1-221)

Pat majored in Spanish literature while obtaining a teaching certificate as well. His teacher certification requirements included a brief practicum experience where he co-taught one Spanish lesson in an advanced placement class at a private school. Another part of his teaching certificate was student teaching in high school. This experience seems to hold high significance for Pat, particularly in relation to the Spanish instructor with whom he worked during that time. "*I had the privilege of working with a Puerto Rican veteran, and he was an excellent mentor*" (P2I1-1987). For Pat, having a teaching certificate not only provided him with a solid foundation for his GSTA experience, but also helped him achieve such experience.

> It was that teaching certificate that really gave me an edge when I applied here in 2011. When I came here there weren't many graduate assistantships available in the summer of 2011, but my teaching certificate allowed me to become a GTA in august of 2011. (P2I1-2476)

During his undergraduate studies, Pat was exposed to literature on language acquisition and language teaching that inform his GSTA practice.

> We had a couple of courses about the input hypothesis, Krashen, the benefit of the silent period, the benefits of giving context before you actually present a video, or sound clip. I think the biggest principle of the professors that taught me was the uncertainty factor, and

teaching proficiency through reading and speaking. Of course, you cannot make that your only… When you're adapting to the textbook we use it's hard to have consistent results using only those methods, but anyway the influence is still there in the quizzes I make. You know, sometimes I give them a quiz or something that is an episode of MTV Cribs with Ka$ha to teach the parts of the house where they fill in the blanks. (P2I1-3276)

Pat has also sought to inform his teaching practice by other scholarly experiences.

Ever since about 2009 I have attended the Southeastern Coastal Conference on Languages and Literature where you can see a mixture of linguistics, language teaching and literature presentations. So I've gotten some things [for my teaching] out of the applied linguistics there. (P2I1-4634)

In regards to carrying out his own presentations, he indicates that "*so far it's only been about literature, but we'll see how it goes this year in September*" (P2I1-5303). Despite his academic and scholarly background, Pat credits part of his Spanish proficiency to a non-academic experience during his undergraduate years.

For a couple of semesters I carpooled with a Colombian friend. She complained about a lot of things in Spanish, and that was a lot of listening, a lot of input. So sometimes when I want to check if something is correct when I'm writing I try to think back to her grammar. (P2I1-19547)

Another important part of Pat's background is his exposure to other foreign languages. He has audited several language classes and has completed online courses on his own time.

That's given me a more flexible idea about what grammar is. As a result it allows me to be more patient when people make mistakes than I used to be. I remember that when my classmates made mistakes in Spanish class, it used to bother me a little bit. But with time, it's allowed to not make ugly faces when I correct my students. (P2I1-3453)

In addition to his somewhat informal studies of other languages, Pat has taken Portuguese classes while completing his graduate program. At the time of our conversations, Pat was studying Portuguese at the 2001 level. When prompted to think about the origins of his teaching decisions, Pat frequently refers to his Portuguese classes. Examples of this influence will be presented as part of the discussion on Pat's PPK in the following section.

5.2   Pat's Personal Practical Knowledge

5.2.1   *Knowledge of Self*

Pat does not seem to like to talk about himself. Only 9.5% of the code assignations in his data were related to his knowledge of self. However, Pat describes himself as having "*kind of a personality that is concerned about people*" (P2I5-13786), so he is the kind of instructor who will, for example, regularly send out emails that read "*Hi [student name], we haven't seen you in class for a couple of days. Is everything alright?*" (P2I5-13913). This aspect of Pat's personality makes him available to students outside of the classroom, and even outside his office. "*As I was getting on to the train, one of the students who hasn't had Spanish in ten years, she came down and I was able to explain reflexive verbs to her on the train*" (P2I5-20981). Thus, Pat's efforts to reach out to students, as well as the reasonings behind some of his classroom behavior, are informed by his knowledge of self. In regards to his classroom behavior, he describes it as

> that paradoxical balance between authority, to the point I'll take out points in their writing assignments if they decide to arbitrarily capitalize a word in the middle of a sentence, and … as one of my friends who teaches put it: 'don't be afraid to make a fool of yourself'. So I think it's keeping the paradoxical balance between those two. (P2I1-7154)

Pat's class is highly interactive. For example, Pat shows preference for asking the students simple personal questions in relation to the content being covered, or questions pertaining the videos, readings, or activities carried out in class. When referring to the benefits of this practice and his preferred use of yes/no questions, Pat's experience as a learner and his knowledge of self come to the surface.

> I feel like at least with the yes/no questions I'm eliciting some kind of easy response and let them know they are being talked to. I notice anytime I'm in class and I'm feeling very sleepy, somebody asks me a question and I answer with something that interests me, I'm good for at least two more minutes. […] There are times when I think 'Will this class ever end?' and then someone asks me a question and I feel better. (P2I6[SR]-16978)

A salient characteristic of Pat's teaching style is his regular use of exaggerated gestures to illustrate ideas or instructions. He chooses not to write on the board, but instead keeps his PowerPoint presentations in edit view so he can type on them during class. Pat's knowledge of self, as well as the first example of the influence of his Portuguese classes, come to the surface as he explains the reasoning behind his gestures and this particular use of technology.

> I'll definitely say that my Portuguese professor in the spring is definitely responsible for helping me see that [gestures] are a thing you can do. A lot of people would do a drawing on the board, but I'm just not that good at drawing. Maybe I would be good, but I'm not very fast at it. That's the other thing; the PowerPoint business has also evolved due to the fact that, as you can see from my Chinese notes here, my handwriting is pretty terrible. So they always ask about things, and even if I write something short, I always have to confirm what some of those letters are. So typing helps. I think it's a generational curse, not having a good handwriting. I don't know what to do about it while I also have to devote time to master's classes. (P2I2-11236)

The previous excerpt illustrates how Pat's knowledge of self, exemplified by his awareness of what he considers limitations, his drawing and handwriting skills, informs his teaching practice and allows him to make use of other abilities. As he further reflects about his use of gestures in class, Pat continues to reveal his knowledge of self.

> I guess sometimes, depending of the situation, I do become over the top in how I express what I think. Usually with the goal of making someone laugh. So I think in that way, they might be a reflection of how I might be outside the class. (P2I2-14437)

Pat also seems to have an understanding the usefulness of certain gestures in achieving instructional goals.

> I guess I do the ear gesture a lot; my hand on my ear to try to elicit responses from them. In kind of a way 'I can't hear you. Please speak more loudly'. I think that's become a habit now to let them know I want them to talk. Even when they're speaking perfectly loudly, I still do it to elicit responses. (P2I4[SR]-6825)

Watching his teaching on video brought up Pat's self-critical side. "*I see that sometimes my gender agreement with direct object pronouns is not always spot on*" (P2I4[SR]-8348). "*I see that my posture is slightly better than I imagined it to be, but not perfect*" (P2I4[SR]-7012). One

of the effects of the stimulated recall interviews was Pat's increased awareness of his

pronunciation in Spanish and his lack of satisfaction about it.

> I see my accent has gotten worse than when I used to carpool with my friend from Colombia two years ago. […] I felt like I was definitely on top of everything we had learned in the Spanish phonetics class before then. So I can see my pronunciation has fallen a little bit. […] I noticed that my vowels just aren't quite as pronounced. They are going through a very, very slight… 'gringification' if that's a word. It's not bad yet, but I see that unless I do something serious like move somewhere after I graduate or something, that this can kind of only get worse from here. (P2I6[SR]-10629)

Another of Pat's perceived limitations stems from his early academic background. His

knowledge of self informs not only pedagogical decisions in the classroom, but career paths.

> I make it a point to let everyone know who teaches at a high school how much I look up to them because that is not one of my skills.
> *NYP: So you want to stick with adults?*
> Yes. Out of pure limitation.
> *NYP: Why do you think you're not equipped to teach in high school?*
> There's a number of factors. One main one is that I didn't go to high school [since I was home schooled]. […] I can listen to people, sure. Listen to students complain about it. I can listen to it, but as far as having feasible solutions that are applicable to their environment; that's a whole other thing. (P2I7-24739)

Paradoxically, even though Pat's class is highly interactive, he considers a lack of self-

assurance in communicating with the students sometimes to be his biggest limitation as an

instructor.

> Last time a student arrived late, it was a good student, but he was demanding to take the quiz outside in the hall. I was explaining to him that the syllabus says that quizzes happen within the first 10 minutes of class. I don't remember whether I was making eye contact with him or not as I was explaining that, because this was a student that was considerably taller and older than I. So there are still things like that, that tend to affect me in standing up to students in some cases. [I felt] intimidated. (P2I5-4153)

Pat's difficulty in making eye contact also manifests itself during class. "*Sometimes I*

don't make eye contact in class because I may be slightly embarrassed by the question that came

up, say they don't understand something I really thought they had understood" (P2I5-5278).

Despite the embarrassment Pat may feel from students' questions, the students remain central to his decision-making in the classroom, as will be evidenced in the following section.

5.2.2   Knowledge of Students

Pat's knowledge of students is reflected in much of our interactions. 29.2% of code assignations in his data are related to his reasonings regarding students, making it the most used code family. Pat gains an early insight of the students' expectations for the class during the first day of the semester as he asks about what they would like to get out of the course. However as he describes the answers from his current students, it becomes evident that Pat's knowledge of students' expectations and needs is also informed by his previous experience as a GSTA.

> A lot of them gave me kind of the generic expressions of 'to get a better understanding of Spanish'. There were some… there was one student who I believe said her grandmother is from Puerto Rico and she wants to be able to understand more about her grandmother… Let's see… Of course for a lot of people it's just a required class and they would really love for it to be a simple scantron machine-type class with power points, and if they could they would do all the online workbook in the first couple of weeks, but that's not beneficial to them. As for their needs, it's definitely varied and you have people with different needs in 1001. Like for the people who have already had it, some of them need a fair amount of badgering over email in order to get them to do the work. And of course, the students who have less Spanish [experience], I think some of them need to know that the instructor knows that they exist outside of the classroom and that their instructor needs to… is willing to talk to them about their problems and help them succeed. And I think some of them need to be more expressive about what their problems are and so it's helpful to bridge the gap with them. (P2I1-10598)

One thing that stands out about Pat's teaching practice is that, as early as the second week of the semester, he knows all of the students' names. This is his way of "*letting them know that I acknowledge that they are people and not just cogs in a machine. Letting them know that that I acknowledge them… It's mostly a subconscious thing, but I think it helps*" (P2I2-4574). More practically, "*the fact that I know their names allows me to call on them. That's another thing*" (P2I2-4867). Thus, Pat's PPK interrelates in how his knowledge of context and human

interaction affect his knowledge of students, and how his knowledge of students affects his

teaching practice (i.e., classroom management).

At the time of our interviews, Pat was teaching two 1001 courses; one at 10:00am and the

other at 11:00am. Differences between the two classes come up frequently during our

conversations, serving as illustrations of Pat's knowledge of students. During earlier interviews,

Pat starts to point out differences such as "*the 10:00am class shows more initiative than the*

11:00am class" (P2I2-748). At one point in the semester, Pat went to the extreme of changing

the seats in his 11am class due to a student's accusations of harassment by a group of classmates.

"*She hasn't reported any additional problems, and was thankful. They do periodically ask if they*

can have their old seats back, but I say no" (P2I7-16021). By the time of our final interview,

Pat's views on the differences between the two classes are more marked, but he also seems to

have a better understanding of the possible reasons behind the differences.

> This is my first time teaching a class starting at 11am. My 10am class I think is really great. That's established. It has a similarly good dynamic to previous classes. But my 11am class has some memorable personalities. It probably is my least favorite group of students to date. […] I think it's due precisely to its proximity toward lunch. And as a matter of fact, as I ask many of them what they had for breakfast, a surprising number of them reply eating nothing.
> NYP: *[Laughter] So they're just a bunch of hungry people.*
> Yes!
> […]
> NYP: *What has been the highlight of this semester for you?*
> Let's see… I think… just overall my 10am class. Nearly every day my 10am class is a highlight. It's just a group full of such great people, with such [great] personalities. It's hard to say what happens in particular, but sometimes they'll just come up with hilarious comments or things like that.
> […]
> NYP: *Ok. So the worst part has been the 11am class?*
> Yes… I didn't think… One teacher whom I was shadowing, he said he had a class that was like pulling teeth. As a matter of fact, it was the last class of the day. Now I see what he was saying. A class that is at the end of the day, or close to lunch, can be like pulling teeth. (P2I7-201)

Even though Pat considers his two classes to be quite different, he does not have a homogenized image of the students in those classes. He demonstrates that his knowledge of students extends to the individual by frequently singling out particular students during our conversations. The following four excerpts are examples of Pat's knowledge of individual students.

> I do have one student from England who has never taken Spanish before. You can ask just about any other person in the class '¿*Donde trabajas*?'[Where do you work?] and they'll get it, but I'll have to say it a few times before she can answer. (P2I2-9612)

> One student whose native language is Romanian, and it's been a while since I looked at Romanian grammar, but I think he's transferring. He's missing about 25%. We'll see how that evolves. (P2I3-8720)

> One of my dual enrollment students expressed concern that she had studied with flash cards, and that did not help with her performance on the first exam because she was just learning vocabulary. […] Her flashcards did not help her with listening even though she had felt pretty confident with her flashcards. (P2I5-11976)

> That one student's usually the first to volunteer. […] She's a joint enrollment student so, on the one hand I don't like to pick her every time, but on the other hand she's just trying to do what she can to do well on the class. She knows lots of Spanish. She didn't do extremely well on the second exam, which surprised me a little bit. […] And that student was in a terrible mood last week. To the point to where there was one day she didn't come and I thought this class went perfectly because this student wasn't here. […] I think she was definitely upset about my changing all of their seats. (P2I6[SR]-11898)

Pat's knowledge of individual students is also exemplified by his annoyance with a student who seems to have an attitude problem.

> The whole 'stew' vs. '*sopa*' [soup]. I thought it was kind of an annoying question. He just… that student in particular… He acts very dependent and polite when he's asking for things outside of class, or when he comes to office hours, but in class he's doing that exact same thing, of deliberately closing his eyes. […] On the one hand I appreciate questions, but in particular these questions feel full of indignation and entitlement when he asks them. It's probably the first time since maybe student teaching that I thought to myself 'I don't like your questions, nor do I like answering them'.
> *NYP: Is that normal then? Eyes closed? Sort of checking out?*
> Yes, and you see how he sits kind of hanging out of his chair. But he's black, so I feel that I can't tell him to sit in a different way for fear of discrimination accusations, which in itself is a form of discrimination. I was thinking about this last night too. On the other

hand, the only thing that he reaps of course is a bad performance. So would it be better if I feel more comfortable to tell him he needs to sit up straight? Yes, absolutely. But in the meantime he is passing, but still at a mediocre level that I feel he would not be having if he felt more intrinsically like a participant. So I feel there are some negative consequences he brings upon himself by acting that way. (P2I6[SR]-2112)

The previous excerpts indicate that Pat is not only aware of the students' attitudes and behavior, but also that he keeps track of their performance in class. The latter exchange brings up another issue Pat deals with in relation to students: race. Pat is white, and he seems to have difficulty communicating some thoughts to students of other races for fear of misunderstandings that might have negative results.

That's probably an irrational fear, and if I talk to the right people I could get over it. But I have not really, because that's not such a thing that you can talk about at the work place so easily. I think I just need to find the right person to talk about that. And if I can find a better way, I'll appreciate that. (P2I3-15869)

In previous semesters Pat has been concerned about confusing students' names, that is, calling a student by a classmate's name. He now feels more at ease about making such a mistake.

Maybe more this semester because it's Caucasians I'm mixing up. I don't think… if it's African-Americans in the future I don't think I'll be able to stop feeling embarrassed about that.
NYP: Do you think they care?
I don't know. That's the thing. I don't know. (P2I7-17998)

Pat's "fear" is informed by his knowledge of differences among students, but not by his own experience. He has never been a target of discrimination accusations. "*Although so far this has not happened, I feel that constant vigilance is necessary to remain free of trouble*" (P2J2-246). The following excerpt, taken from Pat's second journal entry reveals two examples of how Pat's fear of possibly offending students sometimes impacts his teaching decisions.

There were two moments in class on Friday which I felt could have been close calls if not for my alertness. First, one of the questions in our textbook's clothing unit is 'what do you wear when you go to the beach?' I deliberately skipped this one in order to avoid the discomfort of asking female students such questions, opting instead for the less threatening 'what do you wear to college?' or 'what do you wear to a party?'.

In the second class, during an activity in which students were asked what colors they associate with various objects and concepts, we arrived at '*el demonio*' [the devil, or demon], as printed in the book. In both classes, I had no problem to typing '*rojo*' [red] on the board. However, one student then answered "negro". Although, ecclesiastically speaking, Judeo-Christian demons are often associated with shadows, I decided not to record this response due to my fears towards allegations of racism. We then moved on to some brief interview questions. It bears mentioning that my concerns do not shut me up completely. If I see a fairly non-threatening opportunity to make my students laugh, I take it and it works. (P2J2-589)

The final sentences in the excerpt show that even though Pat's fear affects some of his teaching decisions, "*it might affect about 2 or 3 things I'm possibly thinking about saying or doing that day*" (P2I7-15098), it does not completely close him off to the students. His knowledge of students allows him to take advantage of his sense of humor in order to lift the class' spirits. Pat's knowledge of students is also reflected in his understanding of how overwhelming learning a foreign language can be, and in his efforts to help those students who struggle most.

I've gotten a surprising number of people who have taken me up on invitations to come see me in the office to go over assignments. Normally there are very few takers.
NYP: And how are you dealing with that?
Fairly well. I saw three people just this morning. (P2I3-9241)

In the past I have agreed to meet with them at the library on Saturdays. Because… it seemed important to me. That hasn't really happened since last fall semester, but… if anybody actually needed that, it's not something I would be opposed to. […] [I send them to the LARC]. And the other thing I do is walk to the LARC with them, and make sure that they meet the people. Because it feels much more endorsed and their confidence will go up if they feel that it's a good thing and their professor will actually walk with them to it. And that's why I also show the video in class. I found the LARC orientation video in the copy room so I keep it on my drop box so I can show it in the beginning of the semester. (P2I4[SR]-19003)

Despite Pat's perceived embarrassment and fear regarding some of his interactions with students, it is clear that his awareness of their skills, attitudes, and limitations informs many of his teaching decisions both within and beyond the classroom. Another integral element in Pat's

pedagogical reasonings is his knowledge of instruction. The following section explores this dimension of Pat's PPK.

5.2.3   Knowledge of Instruction

Knowledge of instruction is the second most applied code in Pat's data, with 22.4% of the total code assignations. Pat's idea of his role in the classroom seems to be very clear, and it also seems to be informed by his teaching experience as a GSTA.

> [My role is] to make the language come to them, whether they like it or not. And in the process they will find that they like it. It's interesting; generally when I ask questions nobody seems to want to volunteer. But when I call people up specifically to talk, they will talk. So they see it's not bad once they get up there. My role is to make them speak [the language], make them listen to it, so that it can become a partially formed talent by the time we are done with them in December. (P2I1-511)

As to whether it is possible to intrinsically motivate students, his thoughts go beyond what he alone can achieve. "*I think intrinsically motivated… I can certainly take steps that will improve their attitudes toward the language. If that happens, if they do become intrinsically motivated, I would be one of a number of factors. But I don't think it would be just me*" (P2I5-11132).

As previously mentioned, Pat's class is highly communicative. It is also taught almost entirely in the target language. His knowledge of instruction can be observed in the strategic use he gives to English translation.

> I really try [to use Spanish only], but every now and then they just won't get it, and so I have to… I think we were talking about the expression '*fuera de moda*' today. Somebody said 'I don't understand. Why would anybody say 'outside of style'?' and I said 'Yeah, that's it! Outside of style: out of style'. So I did translate a bit for that expression. I guess that took ten seconds, so it makes sense not to take class time for more than that. (P2I4[SR]-14387)

Pat's classes, in general, consist of a series of practice and communicative activities related to the grammar or vocabulary content of the day, as well as the viewing of videos and

subsequent practice or discussion. There is no lecturing in Pat's class. As students are informed

during the first day of class, his assumption is that students must come prepared to practice and

use the language in class after reviewing the assigned textbook materials, watching grammar

tutorials, and completing online work at home. As to the reasonings behind these pedagogical

decisions, they appear to be informed by Pat's knowledge of instruction.

> I would say that the input hypothesis is everything… that they will begin speaking after they hear so much and… What else? The silent period. For the students who are new I think… that is where some of the more advanced students help too because my talking with them can provide more comprehensible input for the students who don't understand much at first. I don't know the name for it but… also the idea of spending as much time in Spanish as possible, especially me as the instructor and… this is kind of a throwback to the class that stood out to me as helping me a lot, but I had some Portuguese in the spring and that was where I learned everything I know about gestures now. Because she is wonderful at using gestures. […] I think the gestures she comes up with on the spot, or maybe she rehearses them, I don't know… they are wonderful. (P2I1-14323)

We can see from the previous excerpt the roots of Pat's communicative approach to

teaching. Pat's apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) is also evident in the excerpt. His

knowledge of instruction, in the form of the use of gestures in the classroom, is informed by his

experiences as a foreign language learner. Pat wishes to recreate some of these experiences for

the students.

> In the book, since the chapters are organized in tree '*pasos*' [steps], I asked 'what is *paso*?' Then I spent maybe thirty seconds walking around the classroom saying '*paso, paso, paso, paso*'. And they got it. If nothing else it… I guess I haven't read anything about this yet, but it seems to be a way to give them a more outlandish memory associated to that particular word. I can certainly remember the circumstances in which I learned certain words in Spanish. Often during a hilarious moment in class, and it stuck with me. So I hope that will happen for them. (P2I3-16873)

Pat's strategy to dealing with error correction further reveals his knowledge of

instruction, and his efforts to keep his class communicative. "*Mainly I just re-state. I ask them a*

question and do recasting. I guess just because it's an additional invitation to speak rather than

a means of stopping the speaking" (P2I5-16998). Demonstrating his knowledge of subject

matter, however, Pat states that "*for more complicated things, like preterit verbs, which come in for the final, and absolutely for indirect object pronouns; definitely toward the end of the semester I tend to use the grammar tutorials quite a bit*" (P2I5-7142). Regarding the grammar tutorials, which are part of the textbook materials online, he states, "*we tell the students to use those, but I feel like by actually using them in class is kind of like endorsing a sport drink*" (P2I5-7398).

A favored activity in Pat's class is to pick four students to come to the front and ask them direct questions relating to the vocabulary and grammar being covered that day. Pat's reasonings behind the activity reveal how his knowledge of instruction informs his teaching practice.

> I remember from a TPR [total physical response] book that it's a very minimalist way of allowing them to move in the class, which will help the kinesthetic learners. I'm sure there are other ways I can be doing it, but at least if I'm doing that, it's better than nothing. And one of the articles, which we read for our listening comprehension class, talked about being an interested interviewer in class. So I think it was in the spring semester that I noticed some chairs in the corner of the classroom –in fact it was that same classroom– and I thought 'let's see how that goes'. And it seems to instill some enthusiasm on most of them.
> *NYP: So besides having them move, is there anything else you want to get from that activity?*
> Yes. Make them talk. I think it also helps the students understand better that they need to pay attention to these people who are talking. I realize that it still doesn't work all of the time, but at least they are seeing the students and as I glance to the left, I can still see them. And I think perhaps for some people it may be a source of anxiety, but I feel it's one more way to get them used to talking and being talked to. (P2I3-11378)

As previously mentioned, Pat frequently types student responses to activities on his PowerPoint presentation for the day. Pat's knowledge of instruction and of language acquisition is evidenced in his reflections regarding the limitations of this teaching technique.

> I recognize that while I type the students' responses, I hear some talking to one another. Although I have now presented at a conference on the benefits of writing responses on the projector, I see that this method is not a silver bullet. I need to strike a balance between writing their responses and walking around the classroom. After all, the classroom management experts note that the two best ingredients for effective classroom management are maintaining proximity with students and keeping them busy.

I believe that transcribing their responses on the projector is a good technique, but there are many more methods that could help both me and my students. Perhaps more talking and listening is a good place to start in boosting their listening comprehension. After all, listening is one of the most important skills which I aim to strengthen within them through both relevant context and lowered affective filters. (P2J1-1042)

5.2.4   Knowledge of Subject Matter

The highly communicative nature of Pat's teaching practice makes overt references to linguistic and cultural content a rare occurrence in his data. Only 4.2% of the total code assignations were related to knowledge of subject matter. Even Pat's definition of language seems to reflect his inclination toward oral communication in the classroom.

I suppose… at least as far as I'm concerned for my job, I would probably define it as… a very complex network of sounds, and the way they are arranged, that a large enough group of people agree upon to mean the same thing. (P2I5-251)

However, Pat's knowledge of subject matter is present in his awareness of differences and similarities between Spanish and English. "*I'm trying to explain the different terms for live animals versus cooked animals. Sometimes it's hard for them to understand. But they usually get it when I ask 'what's a beef?'*" (P2I6[SR]-16237).

Pat is not only familiar with the vocabulary he presents to students, but with the order in which it is to be presented. During one of our stimulated recall interviews I noticed he used the word for "hat" to refer to what looked like a baseball cap in the video. "*I was mainly going with the vocabulary that they had just seen in the video activity. I think* 'gorra' *[cap] is in chapter 2*" (P2I4[SR]-8597).

In spite of his understanding of the sequence in which the content is presented in the textbook, Pat shows flexibility as well as knowledge of subject matter in how he dealt with a student's premature question about an expression in a video.

I told her that we're going to be working with '*tener*' [to have] after. Sometimes if it's a non-related question I say we'll talk about it during office hours. Another time I think I

went ahead and explained it really quickly. I have reminded them in the past that they don't need to understand everything; that they need to listen to it from the top down. But that student continued asking what '*tengo ganas*' [I feel like…] was, so I gave her several examples. (P2I4[SR]-13698)

Pat's understanding of Spanish grammar also informs his assessment decisions. He

understands that some structures are not as easily constructed as others.

In some cases, the things that they have to write in, there are two steps involved. And partial credit should be given for completing one of those things correctly. Like in the quiz today, if they put the correct reflexive… if they conjugated the verb correctly for '*yo*' [first person singular], I would give them half credit even if they lacked the correct reflexive pronoun. (P2I5-15738)

Thus, even though Pat is not overt about dealing with much of the grammar covered in

his classes, his awareness of linguistic issues informs both pedagogical and assessment choices.

Pat's knowledge of context, as will be shown in the following section, is another important factor

behind his teaching decisions.

5.2.5 Knowledge of Context

Pat's knowledge of context permeates many of his pedagogical choices. From the

physical space where he teaches, to the regulations and expectations of the Spanish program, to

the world outside the university; all of these elements inform his teaching. One example of Pat's

awareness of the classroom context comes in one of his attention gathering strategies.

My Puerto Rican mentor… the way he explained it to me was 'Just stand by the board, point at it and go ¡*Mira*! ¡*Mira*! ¡*Mira*!' [Look! Look! Look!], and don't stop until they police themselves and start paying attention. But that is like a last resource. […] During the summer I did [that]. Because it was a very elongated classroom in [building], and it was much longer and a little bit harder to grab everyone's attention at once. […] I have to go back in there with a tape measure to see exactly how long it was. But it felt like at least the distance between me and the back row of students in my room now… It felt like the distance might have been at least twice that.

In the previous excerpt we can see how Pat's knowledge of instruction, acquired as part

of his teaching certificate, is being applied and informed by his knowledge of the classroom

context. Another example of Pat's awareness of the classroom context and how it affects his

teaching decisions is his strategy to deal with a delayed entry into his 10:00am classroom.

> One factor that alters my performance in my first class compared to my second class (which takes place in the same classroom immediately after) is the instructor who uses the room before me. I prefer to enter my classroom ten minutes before class, start up the computer, and have all my PowerPoints and videos ready to go. However, the previous instructor consistently fails to finish up until 3 minutes before my class begins. […] Hence, the class has often already begun while I am still setting things up. In order to stall for time, I ask the students various questions such as "*¿qué día fue ayer*?" [what day was yesterday?] "*¿qué día es hoy*?" [what day is today?] "*¿qué día es mañana*" [what day is tomorrow?], "*¿qué tiempo hace hoy*?" [what's the weather like today?]. This strategy works fairly well in getting the students to talk. I still repeat it for the second class, but often move on to our video activities about a minute sooner. (P2J4-163)

Pat's knowledge of the context outside the university comes to the surface often during

class and during our conversations. His use of this knowledge in class is a conscious one and is

sometimes influenced by his own experience as a learner.

> Here I brought up the Iron Chef America host. I know he's a famous person related to food, so they can relate the two. I like making them think about things they already know. I know that when my professors mention a TV show or something with an eccentric person on it, it makes me smile. So, it'll grab their attention more. 'Now I know that I'm watching a guy who kind of looks like the host of Iron Chef America'. (P2I6[SR]-1589)

One of Pat's preferred routines is to pretend to be calling students on the phone to ask

them questions. He puts his hand to his ear, makes a ringing sound, and tells the target student

that he or she is getting a call. At this point, the student pretends to answer the call and they

proceed to have a short conversation. When I ask where this communication strategy came from,

he presents a perfect example of how his knowledge of context outside the university, as well as

his sense of humor, affect his practice and facilitates instruction.

> I think I first started using the telephone when we were going through the personal '*a*' in the spring semester, and nobody thought of using the personal '*a*' with a dog or a cat. And so then I used my telephone to call up PETA. So I was talking to PETA in Spanish and I told them PETA was coming to get them. (P2I6[SR]-21434)

Bringing in pop culture and humor to the classroom seems to be one of Pat's preferred strategies. "*Often I get the comment that the acting [in the textbook's videos] is cheese, but I have to remind them that you need expressive actors in this movie. 'If you get Colombian Keanu reeves, you won't understand him'*" (P2I4[SR]-11982). Another example of Pat's use of humor and his knowledge of context being combined in the classroom is his use of the acronym 'CIA' [Central Intelligence Agency], as it is pronounced in Spanish, to show the wrong pronunciation of the word '*silla*' (chair). He does not really stop to explain the joke. The reasoning behind this decision further reveals his knowledge of context outside the university, and its effect on Pat's pedagogical decisions.

> Like with any joke, some will probably get it and some won't. But then if I explain it too much it's not really funny anymore. Like Mark Twain said, 'dissecting a joke is like dissecting a frog: by the time you're done with it, it looks nothing like the original and it's of interest to very few people'. (P2I5-19145)

Regarding the context of the Spanish program, Pat shows considerable awareness of policies, requirements, and regulations. He has studied the documents made available to instructors, including GSTAs, by the program director, and bases many teaching and assessment decisions on the content of such documents. "*We frown upon direct translation, in the departmental manual*" (P2I3-1781). The departmental manual also helps justify his approach to presenting videos in the classroom.

> That's what the departmental manual said. As far as I know, I didn't see anything specific about videos, but with audio it says that students should just listen to it the first time and the second time they can look at any transcript. […] So, a) that's a prevision in the manual, and b) it just changes it up a little bit for the second time around. So that's why I do it that way. (P2I3-10915).

Pat's 'lecture-free' class style is highly influenced by the content of the meetings led by the program coordinator. "*That's at least my understanding of the coordination meetings. That*

the class is less for teaching, and more for making sure that they do activities and learn through

doing activities" (P2I4[SR]-921).

Pat sees the programs new policy of reducing DFW rates as resonating with the part of

his personality that is concerned with people, and with the personalized emails he sends students

regularly. "*I suppose I don't have much of a problem with it now being officially declared to be a*

part of my job. [...] Because I think that's the core of the policy anyway; to check up on them

more via email" (P2I5-13697).

Like Julio, Pat was exempt from taking the required foreign language teaching class for

GSTAs. He also does not collaborate much with fellow GSTAs in terms of sharing information

or materials, attributing only around 5% of his teaching decisions to the influence of other

GSTAs.

> There was one time when somebody sent me a series of photos that would have been useful for presenting the travel vocabulary. That was last fall, and I didn't really have the presence of mind to really think about how I would actually use that. I can kind of see how I would probably use that now. Occasionally people do share resources with me but I don't always feel like I can really put forth the mental effort to really figure out how to use it. (P2I7-3487)

Besides his perceived inability to make use of the materials shared by his fellow GSTAs,

part of the reasons for the lack of collaboration seems to stem from experiences during his first

semester as a GSTA.

> There were a couple of occasions when I asked other people for information and it turned out not to be correct. I mean they were trivial things, like the structure of quizzes or things like that, and it turned out not to be correct. I asked someone else about making copies of the syllabi, and they said 'yes, make copies of the syllabi' but then I was later reminded that those go on uLearn [online virtual classroom platform]. So I got the impression that… maybe I couldn't really get straight answers from other people about what I was supposed to do anyway. I realized later that that wasn't true, and by a series of unfortunate events I had just asked the wrong people about those things. So it resulted in me learning a lot of things that first semester. (P2I4[SR]-17131)

Despite these negative experiences, there are two practices that he accredits to what another GSTA shared with him also during his first semester in the program.

> He told me there are two things he does at the beginning of the semester. The first is that he wears a suit on the first day of class to intimidate, and the second is that he gives very difficult quizzes at the beginning to show them that this is not just… easy. […] I think that's a very important part… just getting them on their toes and letting them know that if they really want to be good a Spanish this is the class they need to take, but to be in this class they need to be prepared to work. (P2I3-2453)

According to Pat, his first semester was the most challenging, and he hopes to help improve the experience of new GSTAs. "*I kind of wish I had known that it was an option to observe somebody's class before I started here. So I went ahead and extended that invitation to a couple of people this semester, and one of them came*" (P2I3-5912). Even though one more GSTA later accepted Pat's invitation to observe his class, he still feels there is more to be gained from these class observations.

> I guess two people have come to observe me now. And that's good, but we haven't really had a time for discussion about it. I've asked them if they had any questions, but it's been maybe 3 minutes of talking about it between the two cases. So maybe there's room for a [more] structured way of doing that. (P2I7-7992)

Pat is hopeful that further opportunities for collaboration with other GSTAs will arise. In the meantime, his personal practical knowledge continues to be developed and informing of his teaching practice. Pat's experience as a GSTA has already played an important role in such development, and will likely continue to do so after graduation.

5.3 Pat's Future

Pat's goals for the future seem clear: to carry on teaching Spanish, and to continue improving his own language skills. In general, Pat's plans for what he would like to do after graduation are flexible, but his interest in language teaching remains at the center of his desired career path.

I think I'll apply to a few different things and see what happens. I might apply to a PhD program or two, but it probably is better if I go ahead and live in a Spanish-speaking country, because I can see that I still… I realize in some days especially how shaky my Spanish really is. I could be extremely critical of myself but I also feel it is time to take measures to do something about that.
NYP: Ok. So do you plan to teach Spanish sometime in the future?
I do. I definitely want to have a PhD is some field that will allow me to continue teaching Spanish. (P2I7-1792)

Pat is not very particular about where he would like to go. "*I've seen the flyer on Dr. [Name] door for programs for teaching in Chile and Spain. I think just for the heck of it I'll see what they say about Brazil too. […] Any country would be good, really*" (P2I6[SR]-19395). His interest in being immersed in the Spanish language among native speakers seems to come in part from what he considers his limited, 'shaky', Spanish. He uses his yet unattained mastery of Spanish gender agreement as an example.

Occasionally I still turn in papers that don't have it quite right. I think you can probably cut about 90% of those mistakes out in, I would say the first three years or so, but then there's always going to be a few more that either you are always unsure about like with '*agua*' [water] where you always have to consult the dictionary, or… I find that another reason that I also misuse the proper article is because I'll start to think that I'm going to say one noun and then I realize that I need to say another noun and that new noun is not masculine anymore.
NYP: Do you think you'll ever have complete mastery of it?
Probably not complete, but I think at least if I can move to a Spanish-speaking country after I graduate, I should be able to at least get it dependably 95% of the time, maybe. (P2I6[SR]-18693)

5.4   Chapter Summary

Pat's PPK has been greatly informed by his work as a GSTA. However, Pat's experience as a language teacher did not start with his first semester as a GSTA. The knowledge acquired as a student teacher during his undergraduate studies became part of his PPK prior to his GSTA work. His experiences as a language learner (e.g., apprenticeship of observation) are also integral to his PPK, along with the theoretical knowledge of linguistics, and language acquisition and teaching he has gathered in the academic context.

Despite his perceived limitations and fears regarding communicating with students, Pat's knowledge of students informs many of his teaching decisions inside and outside the classroom. He has demonstrated a strong interest not only in the students' performance in the class, but also in their attitudes toward the language. He wants them to have good memories about learning Spanish, just as he does.

Pat's knowledge of instruction is also central to his pedagogical choices and it's grounded both in theory and apprenticeship of observation, as well as his own teaching experience. His knowledge of subject matter allows him to strike a balance between covert and overt attention to grammar, permitting him to offer his introductory Spanish class as a truly communicative one.

Pat's knowledge of context takes up considerable space in Pat's PPK. His awareness of program policies and practices informs both his pedagogical choices and his assessment practices. His knowledge of context outside the university allows him to keep his class current and connected to the world outside the classroom. Even though he has had limited opportunities to collaborate with fellow GSTAs, he has shown initiative by opening his classroom to new GSTAs in search of some guidance and ideas. Finally, Pat hopes his future keeps him connected to language teaching. He also wishes to continue improving his language skills.

6   RESULTS: ANN

Along with Julio and Pat, Ann was considered an experienced GSTA during the period of data collection in the fall semester of 2012. At the time of her participation in the project, Ann was teaching two Spanish 1001 courses. In keeping with the structure of the participant chapters, Ann's narrative will be organized primarily with her own words. Section 6.1 presents a brief overview of Ann's background. Section 6.2 explores Ann's PPK in relation to the sub-categories previously discussed. Ann's plans for the future will be presented in section 6.3. Section 6.4 presents a summary chapter. Table 8 shows Ann's code assignations in order of frequency.

Table 8 Code Assignations in Ann's Data in Order of Frequency

Code	Number of Assignations	Percentage
Knowledge of Students	**237 (total)**	**38%**
Student-teacher interaction	53	
Student attitudes	46	
Student limitations	34	
Differences among students	33	
Student abilities	31	
Student learning	16	
Student-student interaction	15	
Student needs	5	
Student expectations	4	
Knowledge of Instruction	**128 (total)**	**20.4%**
Time management	29	
Knowledge of teaching materials	18	
Knowledge of teaching methodology	18	
Knowledge of assignments/activities	16	
Knowledge of assessment	14	
Planning	14	
Flexibility	11	
Knowledge of language acquisition/learning	8	
Knowledge of Self	**67 (total)**	**11%**
Limitations	30	
Improvement	16	
Personality	13	
Positive aspects	8	
Knowledge of Context	**42 (total)**	**6.7%**
Department/program context	22	

Peer collaboration	9	
Context outside the university	7	
Classroom context	4	
Knowledge of Subject Matter	**34 (total)**	**5.4%**
Linguistic knowledge	26	
Cultural knowledge	8	
Background	**24 (total)**	**3.8%**
Work experience	9	
Language learning background	7	
Apprenticeship of observation	3	
Academic background	2	
Learning of instruction	2	
Personal background	1	
Program support	**18 (total)**	**2.9%**
Program training	10	
General program support	8	
Influence of GTA Experience	**18**	**2.9%**
Knowledge of Purpose	**15**	**2.4%**
Language Use	**15**	**2.4%**
Frustrations with Teaching	**13**	**2.1%**
Teaching enjoyment	**11**	**1.8%**
Future	**2 (total)**	**0.3%**
Teaching-related future	1	
Academic future	1	
Non-teaching, professional future	0	
Personal future	0	
Current Goals	**1**	**0.2%**
Total Code Assignations	**625**	**100%**

6.1 Ann's Background

Ann was in her fourth semester as a GSTA at the time of the data collection. A 35-year-old native of San Antonio, Texas, and a single mother of three, Ann's interest in Spanish started early in her teenage years.

> I started studying it in the 7th grade as a survey course. I had German, Spanish, French, and Latin, and just liked Spanish the best so I picked it to focus on. And I think just I liked the teacher the best. And so I started in 8th grade full time, and I was doing like the… I don't know how it's called here… like the advanced class so I had accumulated a significant amount of credit by the time I started college so I just kept going with it. And it was just the thing that I enjoyed the most; my favorite subject. (P3I1-1999)

Ann not only liked her first Spanish instructor, she identified with him and seemed to develop an admiration for him as well.

> He was definitely like a top-notch teacher, and was really into what he did and it was just really fun. He learned the language as a second language as well, and I felt like he just made it so easy and so fun, and so accessible for us. […] I felt like he was just himself; like he wasn't putting on an act. It was just something that he enjoyed, and he wanted to give us the tools and opportunities to grasp it as he did. I've had other teachers that you just feel like you're in the theater. And then you have the other ones that you just feel they're just showing up to work… so you get the variety. But I just felt he was authentic and just genuinely interested in the subject, and that came through in the classes. So in that way I guess I try to imitate him. (P3I1-3297)

Ann completed her undergraduate studies as a Spanish Major. During that time she spent one summer in Spain as part of a study abroad program were she took translation and literature classes. And then, "*after I graduated I married a guy from Puerto Rico so we lived there for two years, and while I was there I took a year of… classes: Linguistics, and Puerto Rican literature, and Literary Theory. Not my favorite but it was a good experience*" (P3I1-2725).

During her time participating in the project, Ann was pursuing a master's degree in Spanish. Prior to being accepted as a GSTA in the Spanish program, she worked for two semesters as a Spanish tutor in the university's LARC. Her only formal training in language teaching was the required foreign language course most GSTAs in the program take during their first semester teaching. She describes her teacher training as "hands-on", having had previous experience as an ESL instructor and "*teaching Spanish more as an extracurricular activity*" (P3I1-1865). "*I've done more vocational teaching, to people who are learning the language as a hobby, not in an academic context*" (P3I7-6953). Interestingly, Ann attributes much of what she knows about teaching to her experience in a field unrelated to language instruction.

> I used to do event planning and marketing. We used to do professional association meetings, so we had to do PowerPoints for the whole program, how the whole meeting is going to go, what needs to be said. And the way that was set up for the clients, we had the intro, and then the reminder things like putting it in context: here's what happening today,

and here's what you need to keep in mind for the next meeting. So telling them what's relevant to them, keeping the information relevant to the students and making the class matter to them, and making them feel comfortable. Help them be in a place where there's information that could serve them or be interesting to them in some way; whether it's business, or personal. That chunk [of what I know about teaching] is from my own work experience. Like, how do you keep those people paying their personal dues? Because they want to come to the meetings. And why do they come to the meetings? Because they feel like it's relevant and interesting to them, and it serves them. So that's what I try to do. Because that's the biggest moneymaker: client retention. I want my students to be interested and excited about it. They might not be with their pompoms out, but at least they'll be off their phones while I'm talking, you know. (P3I3-7012)

In the previous excerpt, we find the first example of Ann's PPK as informing her teaching practice. Both her knowledge of context outside the university, and her knowledge of purpose are illustrated here. In the following section, Ann's PPK and its effect on her pedagogical choices will be further explored.

6.2   Ann's Personal Practical Knowledge

6.2.1   Knowledge of Self

Ann's knowledge of self seems to inform a very important aspect of her teaching style. She is keen on providing opportunities for practice where students make use of the language. This preference is derived from Ann's own learning style. "*I am a really hands-on kind of person; I learn things by doing them. You can tell me, tell me, tell me, but until I can make it my own, I can't apply it to myself*" (P3I3-7491).

As Ann reveals her knowledge of self, this part of her PPK seems to be mostly informed by her perceived limitations. Such tendency is an element shared in common between Ann and Julio. Ann's perceived issues with time management, one of the perceived limitations she shares with Julio, will be presented in the section devoted to her knowledge of instruction. Ann's self-critical nature comes to light even when reporting on the students' unsatisfactory behavior.

Today I felt like my biggest weakness was impatience. I think I'm pretty fair to the extent that I don't put everything on them. We had a cultural presentation today that was a couple of weeks overdue, about the US, and in that chapter we talked about the Hispanics in the US, because we're studying Spanish. And there were four students in the group presenting and none of them spoke about any Hispanics in the US or any Hispanic influence in the US. And I was disappointed and impatient with them. I'm glad they did the presentation in Spanish, and it was pretty well put together. And now I think, 'ok, I could have been more clear with my expectations, so I can't totally fault them for that'. But in my mind I was thinking, 'why would you not try to relate this to the subject of the class that you're in?' And I felt pretty impatient with them. Sometimes I feel like when I don't see the effort on their part, like they're just sitting there, saying they don't get it or they can't do it, but they aren't really coming to class or really trying, not using the resources they have and just complaining about it, that's when I get impatient. (P3I5-3474)

At times it seems to be hard for Ann to point out her own positive aspects. As she describes her first impressions upon seeing her teaching on video, she seems to detach herself from what she sees when pointing out any positive aspects, to then quickly bring the focus back to her perceived limitations.

I feel like when I see myself… If I didn't know me, I'd see this person that's really interested, and knowledgeable about the subject, and pretty passionate about it. And on the other hand I feel like there's definitely a lot of room for improvement on the admin part, like the organization, and with the classroom engagement. I need to wrap that up. (P3I4[SR]-10701)

Seeing her teaching on video for the first time seems to have had an impact on Ann. Her knowledge of self is not only informed by the images and qualities captured the video, but it then affects her pedagogical choices, with positive results.

Recently, I watched myself teaching on video and was impressed by my soft-spoken patience with my students. It looked to me like I was teaching elementary level students from the way that I addressed them. The implications that this has are that I may be keeping my students from reaching their full potential by expecting too little from them. After realizing this, I have made a concerted effort to increase my expectations of my students' in-class performance by assigning more challenging activities, which gives me the opportunity to correct their answers and work out misunderstandings or difficulties that arise. I have also seen an increase in the class' energy level as a result of the more difficult activities. (P3J5-826)

As we talked further about this insight into her teaching, Ann reveals the on-going nature of the personal changes it started.

> It's not on purpose. I don't go into the class thinking, 'oh, I'm going to talk to them like kindergarteners'. I don't think like that. It just happens. So because I watched the videos and I saw it in that specific instance, it really made me aware of it, and I have since then been trying to be more conscientious of how I address my students and my expectations of them, and not underestimate them, push them more. I feel good about that. And it's a work in progress, like I said, I didn't do it intentionally, so it's one of those things I have to press myself to become aware of when I'm in front of the class. (P3I7-20719)

Not all of Ann's realizations derived from watching her teaching on video are focused on her perceived limitations. On one occasion, the video presents a better image than the one she seems to have of her classroom demeanor.

> I just heard myself correcting someone right now, and I didn't feel as bad as I thought I was going to. Because 30 seconds before it popped up I was like, 'oh, this is when I corrected her' and I was like 'oh gosh!' but now I saw it and I did it in a nice way. I think where I pointed it out it was like I would on a PowerPoint. It didn't seem like I was trying to judge her like 'oh, you did that wrong'. (P3I4[SR]-12062)

Ann considers being a successful language learner to be her main strength as a language teacher. This positive part of her knowledge of self is one of the few she voices during the project.

> My biggest strength is that I went through it myself, and I know that it can be done. I guess I have gone through the ups and downs and the difficulties and the confusions, and just being on the other side of it… to not feel that anxiety anymore when speaking a foreign language, I think is a major accomplishment that I can share with them as a native speaker of English learning Spanish. (P3I5-2789)

During one of the observed classes, Ann projected, only for a few seconds, the answers to the worksheet the students are working on. She then removed the answers from the projector and proceeded to read out the answers to the class. As I inquire about these events, Ann provides another example of her knowledge of self evolving and further informing her teaching decisions. The new reasoning comes in the form of another limitation.

I wanted them to see the answers before we got started with the class, but then I took the answer key away because it was too messy. That was bad. My handwriting is pretty bad and they weren't getting it. I thought that I was helping them by putting up the answer key but then they couldn't read the answers. So I just resolved it by reading the answers out to them. I don't know if it would be better to just print out another sheet with the answers on it and just project that for like a minute or so, after they've already had the worksheet for five minutes. I don't know what the best solution for that is, but I think I'll try that. (P3I5-13937)

Ann's natural inclination for to be humble can also be illustrated in her description of what I would consider a good deed. On Election Day, she makes it a point to remind students of the importance of voting. When I try to complement her on that during our follow-up interview, she replies, "*I just reminded them to vote that's all. That was me just being me*" (P3I7-14321). As Ann reflects on her semester during our final interview, she draws on her knowledge of self to identify the possible reasons why she is not 100% satisfied.

I feel like it could have gone better. My energy level seems like it's been a little bit lower than normal, and I think it's just because of personal circumstances. Maybe because I've taught this level already so many times that, maybe I'm getting bored with it. I just came to that realization last week when I was applying for next semester. 'You know what? I think it's time to move on and branch out and try something different'. I've only ever taught this level. I feel like it could have gone better but I'm not totally dissatisfied with it. (P3I7-142)

Evidenced by most of the previous excerpts, even when talking about herself Ann's focus is on the students. The following is another example of a typical shift where she starts to reveal her knowledge of self, and then students take over as the focus of her comments.

I think my general classroom demeanor is more subdued. I don't see myself as an animated person. I would say more subdued than animated, but I do try to engage with [my students] and to definitely try to make [the language] available and accessible to them, and also give them the ownership, inspire them to take the ownership of it. And give them opportunities to build their own confidence in the subject. (P2I1-6821)

The following section explores Ann's knowledge of students and how it informs many of her pedagogical choices.

6.2.2 Knowledge of Students

As previously stated, Ann's students tend to serve as the focus of our conversations and of Ann's journal entries. 38% of the codes assigned to Ann's data are connected to her knowledge of students. Ann begins expanding her knowledge of students only a few minutes into her first class of the semester. Like Pat, she has the students write answers to a few identifying questions. "*Four or five questions I ask to get to know them: why are they taking that class, what do they want to get out of it, what grade do they hope to get, and tell me a little bit about themselves*" (P3I2-5821). From that short survey, Ann is able not only to add new information to her knowledge of students, but also to make certain pedagogical choices based on the answers given by the students.

> About 60% [of the students] are taking [the class] because it's a requirement and they need it for their major. Maybe like 5% are intending to be Spanish majors, and then the other remaining percent needs it for specific purposes like outside employment or they're going to use it for some specific intended purposes; like students that have Spanish speakers in the work context, or they want to travel. […] [I also] sometimes think about how I can approach a topic. Or maybe like in a role-play I put in a scenario that they've talked to me about. So if I know they like or don't like something I can mention that, or use that if I see something related to it news-wise I might bring that up in class… when I can. (P3I1-10994)

Ann also has students write their names in big letters on a piece of paper and to display that on their desks for the first couple of weeks of classes. This strategy not only informs her knowledge of students, but is at the same time informed by her existing knowledge of students, as gathered through her previous GSTA experience, and by her knowledge of language acquisition.

> My goal is to learn their names within like the first two weeks. Sometimes it doesn't happen but at least by the first three weeks I like to learn their names, because to have a one-on-one interaction with anyone… Life is about relationships, so I feel like if I can connect with them personally then it's going to make the language experience more meaningful to them. And whatever it turns out to be, I feel like if I establish that bond with them, then it's going to make it, not easier, but it may at least give them the

confidence that they need to feel like they can ask questions or clarify things, or at least know that the teacher believes that they can do it and is interested in their participation and them being in the class. (P3I2-4601)

From the start of the semester, Ann also begins to draw from her already existent knowledge of students in order to assess her new groups and identify possible ways to address their needs.

Their normal level of proficiency, I mean compared to what other students have come in with, feels a little lower. And I don't know if it's because they're sort of feeling me out or we're just getting used to each other. But I just feel there's some basic things, like basic information, basic skills sets that you expect [that I'm not seeing], and I feel a little nervous about that. Just some indicators that have popped up in class. And they may… in the next couple of classes I may start seeing that change. [Right now] I feel like my first class is a little more task-oriented, and a little bit more professional, like they like to work. […] I feel with the second one… I've gotten more emails from them, more hands up. Sort of like obstacles that they put in their path. […] 'Oh, I'm going to New York tomorrow so I'm not going to be able to do this' or 'oh, my parents have to buy the textbook for me so I haven't been able to get it' or 'oh, I have to make my [online homework] login, and I wasn't able to', and I sat with him after class and he did it. (P3I2-87)

Ann continues to identify differences among her classes, thus informing her knowledge of students, throughout the semester, particularly after the first major exam. The next three excerpts illustrate how, even though she continues to show dissatisfaction with her second class, she does not abandon the students who need her.

This class [the second one]… they did ok. They didn't do horrible, they didn't all bomb it. I think I had two Fs. I also had two Fs in the other class, but this one didn't have as many As. The curves were different. I had a lot more Bs in this class. The other one had more As. I don't think that's ever happened before; so many As on the first test. […] It may be a type of student thing. I think the groups are different. I don't know why, but this class is probably the laziest, rudest class that I've ever had. But I give them their grade reports. And I've talked to about 3 or 4 students already about what they can do to improve their grade. (P3I4[SR]-9912)

I try to accommodate the different levels, because I feel like my second class is at a more elementary level than my first class. So they always need more time and have more questions, especially about grammar, than my first class. So that takes some extra class time, but I want to make sure they get it. (P3I5-5397)

For the most part, like 85% of the students, are getting it. There's still a handful that I'm going to work with individually, or at least like in a smaller group during my office hours, or right before class. 20 minutes to see if we can work through this. Because they just don't seem to be getting it. (P3I7-1763)

One of Ann's preferred practices during the early days of the semester is to cover content from the preliminary chapter of the textbook, which is not included in the course's official calendar. The reasonings behind this practice also stem from Ann's knowledge of students gathered throughout her previous experience as a GSTA.

I do actually spend maybe 10 minutes in the first class, ten minutes in the second class, maybe 10 minutes into the third class on preliminary stuff; like alphabet, numbers, days, months, telling time. I feel like that lowers anxiety a little bit with the students and it feels like it puts us all on a level playing ground. Maybe that's just my idea, but I've done that and it seems to lower anxiety a little bit. Because I always get students, like a handful of students in the first weeks that say, 'I haven't had Spanish since my first year in high school' and how they don't remember any of it. So I go 'ok, I know, but it's in there somewhere so let's bring it back'. (P3I2-7391)

Ann's knowledge of students, and their preferences when it comes to finding partners for group work, is revealed in her strategy to form such groups. She uses a counting strategy where the students count out by numbers (e.g., 1-4), in Spanish, and work with other students who have the same number as theirs. Her previous experience as a GSTA is also evident in her reasoning. "*I do a lot of work in pairs and in small groups, and they always go with the same people. So it gets them out of their comfort zone a little bit. By counting, it puts them in other parts of the room to work with people they don't always work with*" (P3I2-12998). Ann will also periodically ask the students to stand up and move to a different desk. Her knowledge of students informs this strategy as well. "*I get them to move around, because they get too comfortable sitting in the same spot. They start falling asleep, or not paying attention and start talking about unrelated stuff*" (P3I4[SR]-7798).

Once in a while, Ann plays soft background Hispanic music while the students do group or individual work. Her reasonings regarding this practice reveal not only her knowledge of students, but also her knowledge of Hispanic culture.

> Anything to get them to wake up a little bit. And also it feels like it also relieves some anxiety. My experience has been that when I play the music very soft so they can still hear each other, and I also put the lyrics up so, if they feel like it they can look up from time to time and just look at it, it's always alleviated anxiety, or got them to ask a cultural question about the group, or music, or something they talked about. It's always been a positive experience, to get them a little bit more exposed to the culture and the language, and open their minds just a little bit more. I do this at least once a week. (P3I4[SR]-13469)

One of Ann's goals as a Spanish instructor is to establish connections with the students that will aid in relieving anxiety, and motivate them to seek the language beyond the classroom. As she reflects on this goal, her knowledge of students is further revealed.

> It's just a matter of finding the right entryway, the right point of interest that connects with them. […] I think for some people is that information or that point of interest that they just go, 'hmmm'; that just gets their attention. And then for others is just building the confidence to the level where they are playing a game or doing something that's low-pressure, and they gain this level of competence where they feel it's more accessible to them, that it's not so far away, and they get it and enjoy it. I've seen both of those situations happen. (P3I5-5991)

Another example of Ann's knowledge of students can be seen in her frustration regarding some of the students' attitudes regarding translation. Ann's knowledge of language acquisition is also exemplified in the following excerpt.

> It's truly frustrating when students will stop me in the middle of class and be like, "um… I have no idea hat you just said, but I think you said the cat crossed the street, and if that's what you said then the answer is… he went into the house". That really frustrates me when students just translate what's being said in class. And I tell them every single class for like the first several weeks that I don't expect them to understand everything. That I just expect like a percentage, like maybe 10% for them to get, and that I will make sure that they do know…. that I won't let them leave the class without knowing the essentials, what I need for them to know, the important stuff. So… it frustrates me when they put that expectation on themselves to understand every single thing, and it's not realistic. (P3I1-9419)

As an experienced GSTA, Ann has had a variety of students in her classroom, being able to expand her knowledge of students over time. She has also been able to create a mental catalogue of different types of students. The previous excerpt describes one of those student types, and the following reveals Ann's preferred type of student.

> I didn't think I had a favorite. And I thought it was not fair for me to have a favorite, but it happens. And I just realized, in the spring semester and in the summer too, I realized that I do. I had these students that… asked questions, that were really engaged, that didn't understand something and were not afraid that it may sound like a stupid question. And at first you think, 'oh no, stop interrupting the class' or 'here they go again'. At first I was thinking that, but as the semester evolved I thought, 'you know, I really enjoy having them in my class', and they were in the top 3% of the class. And even if they didn't get an A+ in the class I felt they were really interested and engaged, and put in 100% in the class. And even if they were running late that day, they still came to class; they really made the effort. […] The student that makes it happen. (P3I1-11529)

The previous excerpt illustrates how Ann's experience as a GSTA has had a considerable influence in her knowledge of students. In her reflection on what students' use of Spanish in the future will be, we see yet another example of Ann's awareness of the students.

> I know I have several [students], like five or six, that use it professionally or socially right now. So I feel like this class is sort of like a building block to assist them, but they are already on that road. I think this is going to help clarify any doubts they stumble upon on that road. So some are already using it. Some may have some exposure to it, but I don't think even half of them will pursue further studies, or want more fluency with the language, beyond the university requirements. (P3I5-8427)

Even though Ann's knowledge of students is the most prominent in her data, her knowledge of instruction comes to the surface often during our conversations and in her journal entries. The following section reveals Ann's insights regarding that aspect of her PPK.

6.2.3   Knowledge of Instruction

As previously stated, Ann's knowledge of instruction is revealed often during our conversations. In fact, it is the second most applied code to her data, with 20.4% of the code

assignations. Part of Ann's knowledge of instruction is revealed in her views regarding planning. Ann has clear goals for her class, but remains flexible in her teaching choices.

> Every class is a work in progress. I don't think that anything is etched in stone, so when I have a plan on the material I want to cover that day, and how I want everything to go… I can start off with that plan, but sometimes I have to re-chart the course depending on class reaction and class response, and what actually happens. (P3I2-8736)

One of Ann's preferred practices takes place every time the students are working on activities, whether individually or in groups. As the students work, Ann walks around the classroom checking on their progress and providing feedback as necessary. When she vocalizes her reasonings behind this practice, Ann's knowledge of instruction, knowledge of students and knowledge of purpose come to the surface.

> One, is because of pronunciation, because it gives me a little bit more of a lower ratio to speak to them; like on a one-on-one basis. 'I hear you reading this word. Here's how it's pronounced so let's work on that'. And it can also show me what mistakes they might be making, or what things I could bring up in front of the whole class. I want to make sure that they're doing the right thing, and to encourage them. (P3I2-10031)

In the previous excerpt Ann refers to another one of her pedagogical practices; call out the whole class' attention to point out something she considers relevant. For example, during the first class I observe, Ann, after walking around the classroom and assessing the students' group work, interrupted the activity to instruct everyone not to get stuck on a word, but that they should try to infer the meaning and move on. We get another glimpse into Ann's knowledge of instruction, knowledge of students, and knowledge of purpose as she elaborates on her reasonings regarding this practice

> In my mind, as I'm planning up the class, I think, 'ok they have done all of chapter one's assignments, which means they should know the stuff that we're doing, the dialogs and conversations, so I don't think they should have a problem with that', but again there's that nervousness I feel about their skill sets. So as I walk around I hear them getting hung up and start making these obstacles for themselves. 'I don't know what that word means'. And they get sidetracked onto something else. I feel like it's one way for me to bring them back onto the course and keep them [engaged]. Because my main goal is for them

to be practicing the model, and hearing Spanish, and practicing their pronunciation. (P3I2-8521)

As evidenced by the previous excerpts, Ann's knowledge of instruction informs several of her preferred practices throughout the semester. For example, she often does a brief review of a previous grammar point by eliciting student participation before presenting a new one. "*I need to engage them, and I need to make them feel comfortable and confident going into this new concept that we're going to talk about*" (P3I4[SR]-3098).

Another one of Ann's preferred teaching strategies is to have the students pick a topic, or a grammar point, and in groups prepare a brief presentation for their classmates.

> I thought this was a way to make them interact with the material and with the concept, and I always require them to make an original sentence that's not in the book. I feel like that really helps them to look at it and analyze it, to make sure they understand it before they are able to explain it to someone else. (P3I7-15759)

This semester in particular, Ann went a step further, and assigned countries to groups to carry out cultural presentations throughout the semester. When Ann provides a detailed description of this practice, it becomes evident that her knowledge of instruction (including her knowledge of teaching methodology and knowledge of assessment), knowledge of purpose, knowledge of subject matter, and knowledge of students permeate this practice. We can also see how it is informed by her previous experience as a GSTA.

> The past few semesters I have gotten more interested in assigning and giving the students more responsibility. […] And not only do they pay more attention when their classmates are explaining something but they hear a different point of view on it. And I might comment or clarify things, but it gives them a different way of relating to the material. And they are more invested in it, because they feel they have to understand it to be able to explain it to their classmates. So I've been assigning them, like in small groups, to explain different things to the class, and I have seen more participation and more investment. I think they are getting more interested. So this is the first time that I have done this with the '*Lecturas Culturales*' [cultural reading passages] in the chapters. I have typically glossed over them, and pull out highlights out of them, and maybe have quizzes on them to get students to read them. It feels like a chore, like homework for them. This semester I have been exploring different ways to bring this to them. I feel like

the meat and the substance of learning a language is through the culture so I really want them to be invested and interested, and get some exposure outside the book; like coming from their own personal interests. So I give them the opportunity to sign up for [and do a presentation about] each different chapter, a different country. […] That's going to be their participation grade. I feel like up until now I haven't had a really good measuring stick on participation because some people do participate in their own way, but they might be shy from really speaking out in class. […] I feel like they are going to be invested in this. It's 5% of their grade and it's a quantitative tool. (P3I2-14892)

As the cultural presentations take place throughout the semester, Ann shows some dissatisfaction in some of them, particularly the earlier ones. However, she is able to clarify some of her instructions so that subsequent presentations are better. As the semester progresses, she arrives at a solution to any possible miscommunication issues that may arise if she were to carry out this assignment in future semesters.

I have mixed feelings. […] I was glad that they had taken the initiative; I mean it is an assignment, but they had taken the initiative to dig and find the information that they did find. The bad feeling was, 'do they really know what they are talking about?' because that's all on the PowerPoint and they were reading off of it. And I didn't want the to do that. I told them it had to be in Spanish, but I didn't give them a specific example. And while I sat I remembered I said, 'keep it pretty simple', they probably don't understand what that means. So I'm going to have to work on that; clarify the guidelines a bit more. […] I think I blame myself more than them. I could have given them a better example of what I was expecting. I'm going to give them three or four paragraphs on what to do, or what not to do. And then I'll polish it out as it goes. […] I like the idea; I just need to work some things out. (P3I3-11687)

[The presentations today] were better. [They were] a lot more digestible. A lot simpler, and they actually knew what they were saying instead of just reading everything. (P3I4[SR]-8196)

If I do [assign these presentations next semester], I'll do the first one as an example and make clear what my expectations are. (P3I6[SR]-2530)

Ann also deals with the issue of language use in the classroom, that is, the use of Spanish versus English during lessons. Ann's class is conducted primarily in Spanish, with English being used for very specific purposes, such as explanations for particularly trick points of grammar. "*If I use English, it doesn't feel as overwhelming introducing a new grammar topic, and it helps save class time*" (P3I5-14562). Ann's knowledge of students, as well as her knowledge of

context in the form of what the program coordinator expects of his instructors, also inform her

use of English.

> I remember [the program coordinator] saying a lot of times in the orientation meetings 'always use Spanish in the class, except, sparingly, only when you are explaining grammar'. So I kind of take advantage of that. Like when I see the blank look on their face, I need to make sure they know what I'm saying. (P3I4[SR]-2791)

As mentioned earlier, one of Ann's reported struggles in her teaching practice is time

management, which also has an effect on her use of English in the classroom.

> [My students sometimes] complain I speak too much Spanish in the class, and I do speak it from the beginning, and that intimidates some students in the first couple of weeks. But even with that, you still have to spend time in English to explain grammar points to avoid overwhelming them, and also because of time! I can spend 20 minutes explaining something in Spanish or 5 minutes in English, and you have to use the time wisely. (P3I5-6894)

Throughout our conversations, and in several of her journal entries, Ann goes back to her

issues regarding time management. Watching her own teaching on video seems to have

confirmed Ann's concerns and has prompted her to make changes in her teaching practice.

> Something that affects my teaching, and this is something that I've noticed more and more, especially after watching the video, is my time management. So I've really been consciously planning out the classes and measuring out, assigning the class time more carefully, and really trying to stick to that. Sometimes I need to cut something off and move on, or just recasting something instead of discussing it and asking for examples. So I've been working on that these past few weeks. I don't remember having this feeling before, of not having enough time. I have been realizing it lately I guess because I have been letting the class, not get out of control, but taking more time than planned for things. (P3I5-5213)

Ann is able to identify some of the possible reasons why this seems to be a new struggle

for her. She also shares other changes she has made in the interest of making efficient use of

class time. "*I'm still adjusting back to having shorter, [three times a week], classes, after two*

semesters of having the twice a week classes. My class time does not seem like enough. I always

feel like I'm against the clock" (P3I4[SR]-14015).

I get there earlier and have everything set up in the order that I'm going got use it, all systems go. In my mind I realized after I saw the video that I was sort of compensating for these people that come in late and I was like, 'this is BS'. Now at whatever time class is […], after everything is ready to go, when it's time, I just start the class. Because I realized I was compensating. I didn't want to get started while people were still filtering in, like making this busy work. When I saw that I thought, 'that is dead time'. And the students that are there early are being penalized for it. So I'm being more proactive with that. (P3I5-10581)

Ann's final thoughts regarding her evolution as a GSTA seem to show her satisfaction with her improvement as a Spanish instructor. They also further reveal Ann's knowledge of instruction, as well as her knowledge of students.

My personal guidelines were a lot more rigid during my first couple semesters. And as I started relating to my students, I started really hearing what they were saying and understanding what to say to be able to reach them and to make them understand the concepts. I feel like I've been able to loosen up a little bit. It's been a little bit more intuitive to me lately. At first I felt like I was just going by the book, and I had to say this and this, and I had to do it this way, and it had all to be in Spanish, [and I did] really rigid quantitative assessment. And now I'm like, 'you know? Let's just go with it'. […] Now I adopted a more judicious use of the material. […] I think I'm more effective now. They're still at a 1001 level and do feel confident that I am exposing them sufficiently to the language, but it is also very important that they grasp these concepts. And if that needs to be in English, and they can take that away easier and grasp it in English, so be it. I didn't even allow for that possibility during my first one or two semesters. I just had to explain it and then circumvent and talk about it, and try to act it. And that's good for language, but […] it's one thing to expose them to the concept, and it's another thing when you only get 50 minutes and you have to get the whole class to understand this concept. (P3I7-12513)

Ann's thoughts on language use seem consistent not only with her knowledge of instruction, and her knowledge of context, but with her knowledge of subject matter. The following section further explores this portion of Ann's PPK.

6.2.4   Knowledge of Subject Matter

Even though among Ann's code assignations, only 5.4% are related to her knowledge of subject matter, she is able to articulate this knowledge, and how it affects her teaching practice, during our conversations. Part of what Ann knows about Spanish grammar structure seems to

have come from regular drills and repetition, particularly when it comes to verb conjugations. She in turn brings some of those practices to her classroom on a regular basis. After presenting new verb conjugations, she regularly divides the students into groups, assigns one verb to each group, and asks them to show how it's conjugated to the rest of the class and then use it in context. When I ask why she wants students to write down a conjugation she has just presented, her answer is very clear. "*Rote… Drill… I have shown it to them in three different ways; now I want them to write it. That's how it sticks*" (P3I4[SR]-8562). In every one of her classes I observe, Ann goes over verb conjugation with the students, even when verbs are not the focus of the lesson. Her previous experience as a tutor in the LARC plays a big role in the reasonings behind these practices.

> When I worked in the LARC I had like 2001 level students who did not how to conjugate a verb, and I was so pissed. And I'm sorry for the language that is being recorded, but I swore that there is not going to be a student that leaves my class that does not know how to conjugate a verb. And I know there is some backlash about the rote conjugation, the mechanics of it, how boring it is. I don't care. I learned that way, and I feel I have enough variety in the rest of my class to be able to compensate, so it's not like all worksheets and conjugations. I need them to know that chart and I need them to know how to conjugate a verb. If I can help it, over my dead body, they will not leave 1001 without knowing how to conjugate a verb, and the other principles of 1001, like gender and number agreement. […] And I feel sort of like it might be perceived like I'm babying them a bit, but they're going to learn that. I do bring it up every single class. […] And they're going to learn it, damn it! [Laughter]. They are not going to leave my class without knowing that. I'm not going to have a student going to the LARC, or going to 1002 and their teacher be like 'who in the heck did you have for 1001 that didn't teach you that?' (P3I2-11132)

> One example of Ann's efforts in helping students master Spanish verb conjugation

reflects her knowledge of this morphological element of the language, as well as her knowledge of assessment. It also reveals how her collaboration with other GSTAs has contributed to her teaching practice.

> I give them the verbs conjugated and ask them to give me the infinitive forms. That's from another GTA. It just makes sense because they need to… In context, especially on the test, they get these paragraphs where they have to conjugate infinitive verbs based on

the subjects in the paragraph, so it's kind of important for them to tell the difference between the verb endings. That's probably one the things I focus the most on. (P3I4[SR]-4443)

Another way in which Ann tries to get students interested in verbs, is by adding what she considers interesting information to her lesson. For example, she shares with students the etymological origin of some of the irregular '*yo*' (first person singular) forms in Spanish. These particular verb forms retain part of the Latin word for '*yo*', which is '*ego*'; a word that the students know. Ann's knowledge of subject matter and her knowledge of context outside the university are illustrated in her justification for using this strategy. Her tendency to focus on her perceived limitations comes to the surface as well.

> I love etymology and the history of languages and things like that. So if you can give them a bit more information to make it more interesting, or give it a little bit more depth, instead of this superficial '*yo quiero Taco Bell*' feeling, it's good. I don't know enough about this to talk about it too much, but just enough to give them some background. (P3I4[SR]-4921)

Despite Ann's apparent focus on verb conjugation, she does not neglect other grammatical content in her class. Her reflection on her new approach to cover direct object pronouns reflects her knowledge of subject matter, as well as her concern for the students' understanding of Spanish syntax.

> My first couple semesters, […] I was very concerned about insulting my students' intelligence, so I was afraid to ask them, 'do you know what a noun is?' But when I do ask basic questions like that and put everybody back on the ground level, it puts us all on common ground and it gives us a chance to walk up the steps together. […] I have to use that to build on it. 'Ok, so what's a pronoun? Now what is a direct object? Then what is a direct object pronoun? And what is the difference between subject and object pronouns?' Starting off from that base level gives you the opportunity to step up as a class. I felt like I had to take that approach with this because this is the most complex thing that we've done so far, so it's not the simple, 'ok, learn that'. (P3I7-19374)

Regarding the cultural component of her classes, Ann considers it an important element, but not the most important element, in her teaching. As she describes her perceived role as a

Spanish instructor, Ann's knowledge of subject matter, and her views regarding cultural versus

linguistic content, come to the surface.

> I take it upon myself to convey some mutually agreed upon principles of the Spanish
> language to a group of students, and in addition to that, expose them to the sounds of the
> language and different cultural components. And just leaving that open, because we cover
> from the US, to Panama, to [The] Dominican Republic, so there's a lot there, so we're
> kind of picking up some things. There's no way we can even try to talk about, or go in
> depth on, a country, its history and culture. But we can explore a couple of cultural
> elements. I think that kind of opens the door just a little bit for them to receive more
> cultural information. [But] I think that is part of it. I don't consider it to be the main part.
> I think the main part is drawing in those key fundamental concepts. Like the building
> blocks of the language, it's what I call them. And trying to make cognitive maps by them
> hearing the sound of the language, anticipating phrases or things that go together in
> certain contexts, getting something ready for them to build on later on. (P3I5-482)

Despite Ann's apparent bias toward linguistic content, she does not seem to neglect the

cultural aspects of her course. During one of the classes I observed, Ann showed a video of a

Latino comedian doing a stand-up comedy routine. The piece was in English, so instead of

having a linguistic focus, her showing of the video was intended to illustrate some of the cultural

information they were covering as part of that class session's chapter. Ann's knowledge of

Spanish culture is revealed in her reasonings behind the use of this particular video.

> It has relevance to what we're doing. It's an example of one of the passages that they
> summarized. And it's in pop culture, so it's something that's happening right now, or at
> least in the past five years. And it's happening here in the US. And that's not necessarily
> my motive for doing it; [it's also] just to break it up a little bit; to give them something
> they weren't expecting and that is relevant to the chapter. […] It's not going to appeal to
> everyone's sense of humor, but maybe half of the people might think that it was funny.
> And the other half might see it as an example of Latino stand-up comedy here, and of the
> topics that he touched on in his routine, like the family and the father and grandfather,
> and then the family get-togethers. It has to do with the chapter. (P3I2-14138)

The previous excerpt also illustrates Ann's knowledge of context outside the university.

In the following section, her reasonings regarding this part of Ann's PPK will be presented and

discussed.

6.2.5   Knowledge of Context

Ann's knowledge of context only garners 6.7% of the total code assignments in her data.

However, it seems to inform several of Ann's teaching practices. During one of the early classes

of the semester, Ann reviews telling time, a piece of content that is part of the preliminary

chapter in the textbook. As she shows a PowerPoint slide with different clock faces for students

to say what time it is, it becomes evident that most of the students are unfamiliar with analog

clocks, and she has to spend time explaining how to read time that is not digitally displayed.

Ann's knowledge of context comes to the surface as she reflects on this event later on, and seems

to inform one change in her teaching practice.

> It's definitely a sign of the generation gap. So maybe I'll have to do a PowerPoint with
> digital clocks now, because we all use digital clocks now. Analog clocks are no longer
> being used. They are becoming obsolete, so people don't really know the function of the
> second hand. We all know that, but for the students I think it's a sign of a generation gap
> and a lack of exposure to that kind of technology. (P3I2-6597)

Ann's knowledge of context outside the university comes to the surface as she tries to

motivate the students to seek further exposure to Spanish outside the classroom.

> I try to give them more outside exposure to the language, like websites for learning
> Spanish and maybe newspaper headlines, Pandora [radio], and just different music or
> news headlines, or Univision [Spanish language TV network]; I tell them to listen to it or
> watch it. Anything that can expose them to the language. Or the Spanish clubs or salsa
> clubs. Anything they can do outside of the classroom, I think it can be beneficial to them.
> (P3I1-15735)

Ann's previous experience as a Spanish tutor in the university's LARC informs her

knowledge of context regarding what this resource can do for students. Her understanding of the

benefits students can obtain by visiting the LARC is also permeated by her knowledge of

instruction.

> I definitely feel like the LARC is a great benefit for language students. I think it's another
> opportunity, like I told them, to get, not like a second opinion, but like an alternate
> explanation to something we might have covered in class. Or to ask what they don't want

to ask in front of the class, or getting confirmation on something they already understand. Just any amount of extra exposure they can get to the language, I think it's favorable to language students. (P3I2-2471)

The department's policy about reducing DFW grades among undergraduate students is another part of Ann's knowledge of context. Ann has a positive view of the policy and seems to be inspired by the policy in several pedagogical choices.

> I think I just try to incorporate it. I think it's very proactive and that it would benefit any program to be on the lookout for students. I think it's proactive. I keep that in mind while teaching. I always try to teach to the lowest common denominator. I always try to make it as accessible or as plain and transparent as possible. And when I'm grading I see students that are not getting those key concepts, I do single them out and talk to them one-on-one, and I give them concrete suggestions, and I tell them exactly what they need to work on. Sometimes they need to work with a tutor, or work more online with the workbook. I talk to them personally. I give out progress reports every couple of weeks, and I tell them 'where do you think that grade you get at the end of the semester comes from? I take this grade here and submit it. So if it's not good on here it's not going to be good on there. This is a zero, or this is low because you have missed this or that. You need to get on that. You can get an A or a B in this class, so you need to get that homework in to be able to make that happen, just set aside a few minutes to do it'. And that may sound pushy, but I really don't care. (P3I5-8896)

Unlike Julio and Pat, Ann has been able to rely on fellow GSTAs, not only for pedagogical ideas and as sounding boards for administrative issues, but also for building her bank of teaching materials. Even though the sharing of materials has been one-sided, with Ann being the beneficiary, she hopes for a more organized method for material exchange among GSTAs that would benefit everyone involved.

> Nobody has ever approached me, or even made a request for materials or anything, so I haven't really given mine to anybody. But I have asked other people for some and they've been kind enough to share theirs with me, and I've adapted them for my classes. […] This is my fourth semester teaching this level so I made for each chapter, folders of materials that I use to teach and to practice skills and grammar concepts. So if other people had those I think that would be… And I know that we have some stuff on uLearn, like a quiz bank and some study guides, and a couple PowerPoint things, but I didn't find it in a way that I was able to go and be like, 'ok I'm teaching present progressive and here's some stuff for that'. […] It was easier for me to find it other ways. […] But I definitely believe if everybody's stuff were organized in a way, like by chapter, by book, by level, that would be really helpful for somebody that just came in to the program to feel less intimidated, more capable. (P3I7-4512)

Ann's knowledge of the program's context is also illustrated as she shares some of her earlier struggles as a new GSTA. In the next two excerpts she further reveals how peer support has been beneficial to the development of her teaching practice.

> I didn't realize, after I did the orientation and I read through all the packet, what it was going to be like for grading, putting in the grades into Gradekeeper [department's chosen grade book software]. It was kind of, 'well, here's the subject and here's where your student lists are'. But I feel that might be addressed more proactively. I know there's a FAQ list, but I feel like I exhausted the preparation materials before I got into the program, and I did not really get into the administrative part. And most of it is very easy to use, but if you don't have someone that you can ask, 'hey, can you show me this? Do you have five minutes?'… Somebody might not feel like they can. I'm thinking about first semester [GSTAs] that don't really know anyone else, thinking, 'how the hell do I do this?', and not having the comfort to ask somebody. (P3I7-8472)

> When I started I was really nervous. I felt I had to have everything ready before the semester started, like all the PowerPoints with everything. And I kind of felt overwhelmed with everything; with my course load, with teaching, with learning how to use Gradekeeper and [the online homework site], and grading, and keeping up with everything, and doing my assignments… I felt really overwhelmed, and couple of GTAs offered me their PowerPoints. So I sort of looked through all of them and I picked some things from some and some things from others, and made my own, and added things to them that I found. That was a big help, just to feel not so far behind, not totally lost. Elena and [GSTA name] helped me with the PowerPoints. And Julio… came with this stack of stuff; […] some activities and work sheets. And he showed me on [the online homework site] where the resource guide was on how to use the site and the videos and the video scripts; different stuff. […] And then just hearing their challenges… even that helps too. It's an ongoing process. (P3I7-3489)

Interestingly, despite Julio's denial of having shared materials with other GSTAs, it is clear from Ann's account, that he has aided at least one fellow GSTA. Ann's knowledge of context, and her willingness to reach out to more experienced peers during her early days as a GSTA, have aided her teaching practice. Even though Ann has had limited formal training in language teaching, it is evident that her PPK is complex and multidimensional, and that it informs the reasonings behind her teaching practice. Her previous work experience, and most importantly, her experience as a GSTA seem to be two primary sources of Ann's PPK. In the

following section we will see how Ann's thoughts on her academic and professional future are

consistent with her passion for language teaching.

6.3   Ann's Future

Ann was set to graduate from the Spanish Master's program the semester following her

participation in the project. She intends to pursue doctoral studies and to continue serving as a

foreign language instructor. As she shares her plans for her academic future, Ann's love for

language teaching is evident.

> I'm looking for a program that involves Spanish and Portuguese and that would allow me
> to pursue film studies, from a cultural studies approach. So I'm looking at different
> programs that will let me do that. I would like to continue teaching. I want to teach in the
> future. It's more like film studies as a medium that is interesting to me; to be able to
> explore topics from a Latin American culture studies perspective, but not necessarily
> majoring in film studies. I would be probably collaborating with someone in the film
> studies department. So film as representative of culture and language, and bringing that to
> language teaching. I'm looking at… I'm just in the middle of researching different
> universities.
> *NYP: Ok. Do you think wherever you go you'll be a GTA?*
> I hope so. I enjoy teaching language and just feeling that you're contributing to
> someone's quality of life, and opening their minds to different things, giving them the
> resources to explore different parts of the world; different aspects of life around them.
> (P3I7-2231)

6.4   Chapter Summary

Even though Ann has an apparent lack of formal training in language teaching, she has

been able to draw from her academic, life, language-learning, and teaching experience, to build

her PPK. She sometimes focuses on her perceived limitations, but can recognize her successes as

a Spanish teacher. Students seem to be the most important element she considers as she makes

pedagogical choices, and thus her knowledge of students is prominent in her PPK.

Ann's knowledge of instruction may not contain much in the way of formal theory, but

it's been built by her appreciation for teaching and her experiences as a language learner and as a

GSTA. Her teaching goals are clear: expose the students to as much Spanish as possible, help them understand and master the basic features of the language, and prepare them for further language learning. She has an apparent bias in favor or direct grammar instruction that stems from her own language learning and her tutoring work.

Ann has been able to take advantage of collaborations with fellow GSTAs, but hopes for improvements in the way such collaboration takes place. Finally, Ann intends to remain in the academic world, more specifically, she hopes to pursue doctoral studies that will allow her to explore new facets of Hispanic culture. She also intends to continue teaching Spanish.

7 RESULTS: ELENA

Elena is the fourth and last of the project participants who was considered an experienced GSTA. In the fall semester of 2012 Elena had been teaching in the Spanish program as a GSTA for four semesters. At the time of her participation in the project, she was teaching two Spanish 2001 courses. Elena was the only participant in the project who was teaching a level other than 1001.

As with all participant chapters, Elena's narrative will be composed primarily of her own words. A brief overview of Elena's background will be presented in section 7.1. Section 7.2 explores Elena's PPK in relation to the sub-categories previously discussed. Section 7.3 presents Elena's plans for the future. Section 7.4 offers a brief summary of the findings in the chapter. Even though Elena's chapter is the fourth narrative to be presented as the fourth experienced GSTA, she was the last to join the project. Therefore, her participant number was P8. Elena's original participant number will be used in the excerpt identifiers. Table 9 presents Elena's code assignations in order of frequency.

Table 9 Code Assignations in Elena's Data in Order of Frequency

Code	Number of Assignations	Percentage
Knowledge of Students	**258 (total)**	**39%**
Student-teacher interaction	58	
Student attitudes	52	
Differences among students	51	
Student limitations	41	
Student abilities	24	
Student learning	16	
Student needs	10	
Student expectations	4	
Student-student interaction	2	
Knowledge of Instruction	**157 (total)**	**23.4%**
Knowledge of teaching resources	31	
Knowledge of assignments/activities	27	
Knowledge of teaching methodology	24	

Knowledge of assessment	23	
Time management	21	
Planning	14	
Flexibility	9	
Knowledge of language acquisition/learning	8	
Knowledge of Context	**45 (total)**	**6.7%**
Department/program context	27	
Peer collaboration	8	
Context outside the university	7	
Classroom context	3	
Knowledge of Subject Matter	**43 (total)**	**6.4%**
Linguistic knowledge	38	
Cultural knowledge	5	
Influence of GTA Experience	**42**	**6.3%**
Knowledge of Self	**36 (total)**	**5.3%**
Limitations	14	
Personality	10	
Positive aspects	9	
Improvement	3	
Background	**19 (total)**	**2.8%**
Language learning background	10	
Apprenticeship of observation	4	
Work experience	2	
Academic background	2	
Learning of instruction	1	
Personal background	0	
Teaching enjoyment	**18**	**2.7%**
Frustrations with Teaching	**13**	**1.9%**
Language Use	**10**	**1.5%**
Program support	**9 (total)**	**1.2%**
Program training	5	
General program support	4	
Knowledge of Purpose	**9**	**1.2%**
Future	**7 (total)**	**1%**
Teaching-related future	3	
Academic future	2	
Non-teaching, professional future	2	
Personal future	0	
Current Goals	**4**	**0.6%**
Total Code Assignations	**670**	**100%**

7.1   Elena's Background

At the time of her participation, Elena was 25 years old. A native of Atlanta, Georgia,

Elena's learning of Spanish started "*sort of by chance*" (P8I1-1097), and it didn't become her

path until high school.

> I started taking French in elementary school. We didn't have a choice. So I continued in middle school but the French classes were really full and the Spanish classes were really empty, and I was sick of French anyway, so I went to Spanish. I really didn't start getting into it until high school. I went to a high school where they had a performing arts program and I did that, but I realized that Spanish was what I really liked and enjoyed so I switched to the International Studies Magnet Program. (P8I1-1121)

Elena's undergraduate studies, even though somewhat unstable at first, were always

focused in Spanish.

> I went to [a private university] for a semester and a half [laughter], and then I went to [another private university] for one semester but I wasn't happy with their Spanish department. And Spanish was my major. And then I came here. And I stayed [laugher]. (P8I1-1813)

Elena had no prior teaching experience at the time she became a GSTA, except for some

informal one-on-one tutoring.

> [On the first day of class] I was super nervous. I remember that I made it a point to sit down because I didn't want to let them see me shaking if I was standing [Laughter] […] But I enjoyed it and I think the semester went pretty well. (P8I1-3465)

Like Ann, Elena's only formal training as a language teacher took place during the

Foreign Language-Teaching course, a requirement for GSTAs in the program. She completed a

General Linguistics course during her undergraduate studies. "*I remember the teacher was a*

GTA […] I enjoyed that class, and I took it over the summer. I think that was my last undergrad

semester" (P8I1-2287).

General Linguistics was not the only class Elena took during her undergraduate studies

that was taught by a GTA. Some of her undergraduate instructors had an impact on her current

teaching practices.

I learned certain things that they did like… I'm pretty sure she was a GTA, she taught a Global Issues class and she used PowerPoints every day for her lesson plan, and she would post them online afterward. So that's what I do. And one of my… my instructor for English 1001 was a GTA and I just remember liking her because she was… firm and, you know, she taught us a lot, but she was also kind of funny and fun. So I try to be like that with my students. (P8I1-2793)

At the time of the project Elena was pursuing a master's in Spanish, while also taking the

necessary classes and exams to become a certified translator and interpreter. She is the only one

of the experienced participants whose focus is not on language teaching. Her work as a GSTA

stemmed from necessity rather than vocation.

I knew that I wanted to do the translation and interpretation certificate and I knew that it would be difficult for me to pay for that. […] I was interested in the MA too, but I ultimately I wanted to do translation and interpretation. So I knew that if I did the assistantship, that would pay for my tuition and I could still pay for the translation and interpretation classes. (P8I1-92)

Despite the fact that language teaching is not Elena's first career choice, she sees her

work as a GSTA as a positive.

I love the experience, and also I feel like it helps my translation, because I learn little nuances about the language that I might have learned before but in another way. By teaching it I can see where a lot of people make mistakes, or get confused, so if I see that, in a translation I know to avoid it. I like teaching people. I feel like I do an OK job [laughter]. I want people to leave my class feeling like they learned something but they also had a decent time. They weren't just bored out of their minds [laughter]. (P8I1-12139)

In the previous excerpt we take a first glance at Elena's PPK. The following section

further explores her PPK and its effect on her pedagogical choices.

7.2   Elena's Personal Practical Knowledge

7.2.1   Knowledge of Self

Only 5.4% of the codes applied to Elena's data are connected to her knowledge of self.

However, her awareness of her own personality guides the overall mood of her class. "*I have a*

pretty decent sense of humor" (P8I2-12119).

> I feel like a lot of it also just comes from my personality. […] I like to do something
> that's fun, or that makes [the students] interact with each other in an interesting way. I
> feel like that's me, and I feel like they enjoy it more. It feels more natural to do
> something like that. (P8I3-4487)

Elena has an easy laugh and finds humor in many situations. She describes her classroom

behavior as "*relaxed but informative*" (P8I1-3908). Her sense of humor also guides some of her

pedagogic choices. "*I like this practice because it's kind of silly. It has a nice amount of humor.*

And that's why I went over it in detail. I wanted to make sure they understood because I wanted

them to get the humor" (P8I6[SR]-9461). Many of her examples bend toward the humorous, and

in her explanation of the reasonings behind them, she also reveals some of her knowledge of

students. "*I'm not sure if they remember the funny ones better. I think especially if it's a little*

funny or mean they might remember that better because they think, 'I might need to say that

someday' [Laughter]" (P8I5-10531).

As she talks about what she considers her strengths as a Spanish instructor, Elena's sense

of humor and her knowledge of self are further revealed.

> I think [one of my strengths is] my creativity, because I try to make things fun, or at least
> interesting. And if there's a game or a little activity, I try to make things fun. Especially if
> I don't like any of the activities in the book, I'll make one of my own. […] So, my
> creativity, and my… perfectionism. I know they don't always like that but I think it
> makes me a good teacher [Laughter]. (P8I5-1758)

Despite her self-report of feeling nervous in the classroom when she first started teaching,

Elena now feels "*pretty comfortable*" (P8I3-5246) as a Spanish instructor. However, she admits

still experiencing some self-doubt regarding her classroom composure. "*I always feel very weird when I'm just kind of waiting for them to finish [an activity] and it doesn't seem like anybody needs my help. I just get really aware of myself*" (P8I4[SR]-8410). She also believes that the fact that she is not a native speaker of Spanish puts her at a small disadvantage. "*99% of the time I do, but sometimes I don't know a term. Like when they ask me, 'how do you say this?' sometimes I don't know. Or sometimes I know, but I just can't think of it at the moment*" (P8I5-2341).

Elena strives to be friendly and approachable to students. "*I try to be available for them before and after class, and during my office hours. Or try to respond to their emails pretty fast… and be there to answer questions*" (P8I1-6892). "*I like for them to be able to talk to me. […] I know that makes a difference; just having a nice professor*" (P8I5-1362). These excerpts reveal some of Elena's knowledge of self and also her focus on students. Elena's knowledge of students is further explored in the following section.

7.2.2   *Knowledge of Students*

All of the project participants thus far have had a majority of code assignations related to their knowledge of students. Elena has the highest rate of these codes. 39% of Elena's code assignations are connected to her knowledge of students. One reason for this high percentage stems from the fact that Elena is teaching two classes of the same level, back to back, and she frequently points out differences between the two student groups.

> My 11 o'clock class is a lot more crowded, because I do have 30 students in that class. So sometimes every single seat is full. The 10 o'clock class is a little bit smaller, which is nice. But I notice there's also a more even mix of boys and girls in the 11 o'clock, whereas in the 10 o'clock there's maybe 3 or 4 boys. (P8I2-726)

> I'll just say right off the bat that today I don't know what was going on with my 11 o'clock class. They were annoying me [laughter]. I like it to some extent when they are talkative because that means they're interested and I like the give-and-take, but when I want to move on, let's move on. I don't want five people at once to be talking. Sometimes they're like that, but usually not. They just have their moments. And it's

usually that class. My 10 o'clock is a little bit smaller, maybe because it's earlier, and they're more chill. (P8I3-5792)

I liked the way [the activity] went in my 10 o'clock class. We were able to joke a lot and have fun with it. With my 11 o'clock class it went a lot faster. They didn't see as much humor in it I guess. […] I think my 10 o'clock took a bit more advantage of it. My 11 o'clock, sometimes they seem to be in a mood where they don't want to do too much. They just seem kind of blah. [Laughter] It also seems like they pick up on things faster. So I like the fact that I get more questions, and we go into more detail in my 10 o'clock class. I like when they ask questions because they're interested and trying to learn. But my other class, even though they don't ask as many questions, they seem to do as well. So they seem to naturally understand things better for whatever reason. (P8I7-7399)

Even as she comments on how students feel about her, Elena brings up the differences between the two classes. Her knowledge of context is also illustrated in the following reflection.

I'm not really sure about this semester. Normally I think they like me in general, but I feel like there's such a big difference sometimes between my 10 o'clock class and my 11 o'clock class. My 10 o'clock class, they always ask a ton of questions and they seem more active. They seem to be a little more receptive to me in general. My 11 o'clock class is a little blander. [Laughter] I think also they still like me because I had someone ask me today what class I'm going to be teaching next semester. So I think in general they like me, but that's not a situation where everybody likes you. So I'm sure some people may have issues with me. (P8I5-962)

Elena's knowledge of students includes differences not only between the two classes, but also among individual students. She is observant not only of their knowledge of Spanish or performance in the class, but also of their behavior, which can guide her decisions about how to help particular students. The next three excerpts refer to three different students.

He loves to ask me questions. The guy with the hat. […] I like him because I know for a fact that if he doesn't understand he'll ask a question. And some people may pretend to understand, so I like him because he'll go, 'wait. I'm confused'. I get the feeling he is very interested in Spanish. […] I just feel like he tries to get a really detailed grip of the language. Good for him! It makes me think he's very interested. He probably gets a bit more of my time than the rest. I'm willing to help anybody who asks… he just happens to ask more. (P8I4[SR]-6676)

[There's one student] who participates, but it seems like there's a lot of times also where he's doing the I'm-trying-to-text-under-my-desk thing. And he doesn't always bring his book to class, or other things he may need. And he knows Spanish; he's really good at Spanish. So it frustrates me… But he did talk to me on Monday, 'my participation grade

is not where I want it to be. What can I do?' So I gave him several suggestions on that. (P8I4[SR]-10551)

I like that kid. He cracks me up. But he's always attentive and he asks good questions too. He's like the right combination of silly and studious [Laughter]. (P8I6[SR]-9029)

Elena's experience as a GSTA seems to be a primary source of her knowledge of

students. In turn, this knowledge informs critical elements of her teaching practice, for example,

when it comes to giving instructions in class.

One of the things that I learned very early on [is that] you are going to have to repeat yourself. They will not follow instructions the first time every time. You are going to have to make things extra, extra, EXTRA clear. And then make them even more clear, so that they will do what you want them to do. I would explain things once and if they had questions I would be surprised. Like, 'well, I explained this already, and I don't understand what the problem is'. Or if people wouldn't do what I said, I'd be like, 'why?'. Now I *tell* them, I *email* them, I put an announcement on *uLearn*, I put it on the *PowerPoint*, and I *remind* them verbally [laughter], when I want them to do something. (P8I3-2741)

The influence of Elena's GSTA experience on her knowledge of students is further

exemplified in her description of her favorite, and least favorite, type of student below. Her

knowledge of self is also evident in her reflection.

[I like] the ones that I know are… um… that I can see myself a little bit in [laughter]. The ones that are a bit over-achievers, a little perfectionist; the ones that try really hard. And even if they aren't any of those things, mostly the ones I like are the ones who are really interested. Even if they don't have a great grade in the class, but they try and I can see that they want to learn… that's the type of student that I like. [I don't like] the ones that don't try, don't do what they're supposed to do, and somehow blame me for it [laughter]. (P8I1-6051)

Elena's knowledge of students is also illustrated as she reflects on students' expectations

for enrolling in Spanish classes.

Most of the time they need to fulfill a requirement. I know that some people are actually interested in the language. Especially more in the 2000 level, but they still may be doing it for a requirement. I think a lot of times, unfortunately, by the end of [Spanish] 2002 people expect to be fluent, or maybe even before that, so I think their expectations are a little off from the reality. (P8I1-5417)

At the 2000 level in the Spanish program, the reading component becomes more extensive. The textbook presents more frequent, longer, and more complex, reading passages than the text used at the 1000 level. Elena's most common strategy to reviewing the readings in the textbook is to have students volunteer to read out loud, followed by either a brief discussion, or a reading comprehension activity. This preferred strategy is influenced by Elena's knowledge of students as gathered during her GSTA experience.

> I like reading together out loud because it forces them to read. If I assign it as homework, even if I do give them a quiz, I feel like they don't always read it or they don't understand it that well. So I like reading it in class because I like hearing where they are pronunciation-wise too. And I feel like if they have a question about the text, it's more likely that they will ask when I'm in class, versus if there was a word they don't understand when reading on their own, they would just forget about it, or something like that. (P8I3-12461)

For the writing component of the class, four assignments called '*Redacción*' [written essay], where the students write a 100-120-word essay about a particular topic, are assigned throughout the semester. Elena is very specific in her instructions for these assignments. Instead of just indicating a topic, she requests specific structures and/or vocabulary to be used, and provides several questions and examples. The reasonings behind this teaching practice are informed by Elena's knowledge of students and her experience as a GSTA.

> I know that if I didn't ask them to use reflexive verbs, they would probably try to get around it. When I was teaching 1001 I told them that they were throwing a party and they were supposed to give instructions to other people, and I wanted them to use the subjunctive, but they would just say, '*necesitas bla*' [you need to blah], or something like that. They technically did what I said so I can't get mad [laughter]. I find that if I give them questions, it sort of guides them along. If I tell them 'tell me what you day is like, use reflexive verbs', then they might be like, 'well, what do you want me to say?' The more questions and examples I put in there, the more I think that guides them. (P8I2-8285)

Elena's knowledge of students is informed not only by her experience in the classroom, but also by the feedback she receives in the form of teacher evaluations. One of her preferred practices is an example of such influence.

> I like to give them a little quiet time to ask questions [after I finish explaining something]. I used to not [do this]. I used to be like, '¿*Preguntas*? [Questions?] ¿No? OK'. I think I did that my first semester teaching and somebody said in my evaluations that I went too fast. And sometimes I know it takes a while to think how to formulate a question, whether it's in English or Spanish, 'I know I'm confused, but what do I want to ask?' So usually I give that little pause time because there's a hand that slowly rises up, and I want to give the hand time [laughter]. And even sometimes after the pause, I don't see any hands and start to move on and then, 'but wait!' [laughter]. (P8I4[SR]-2726)

In a somewhat similar strategy, Elena shows her knowledge of students regarding the time it may take them to complete an activity. She reflects on the reasonings behind the strategy as she watches the first videotaped class.

> If I say, '*un minuto más*' [one more minute], and I hear 'nooooo!' [Laughter], then I know I need to give them more time. I think later I said it, and somebody was like, 'wait!' I don't generally like to hold up the class for one person, but I know if one person says it, then there's probably at least a couple other people who are thinking, 'wait!'. (P8I4[SR]-10058)

One of Elena's concerns is that some students seem to disregard the importance of the online assignments that are part of the class requirements.

> It's disappointing every semester whenever I'm grading the [online homework], I'll look and, 'oh wow! This person is not even registered online yet. I don't know how they think they're going to pass the class without even doing the online homework. But, 'oh well, here's your pretty grade of zero. Moving on! [Laughter] I'm planning on handing out a progress report to them so that they have an idea. (P8I3-7142)

Around the mid-point of the semester, it is suggested during a department meeting for the instructors to take their classes to the LARC to complete online homework during a class period. Even though originally puzzled by the suggestion, "*that sort of defeats the purpose to me because they are supposed to do it on their own*" (P8I4[SR]-15318), upon further reflection, Elena decides to give it a try, and even take it a step further.

I'm trying to reserve the LARC for a day. In general they are doing pretty well with the online activities, but there's people [sic] that haven't done any. […] So if I reserve the LARC, even for the people who do their homework on time, if they have questions, I feel like I can help them. And for the people who haven't done any, I think it will be a help to them to sort of light a fire under them. No excuse now. So I'm toying with the idea of giving them more incentive. I might say I'm doing a competition between my two classes to see which one gets the higher average in the next chapter. (P8I4[SR]-16081)

After the LARC session, Elena is satisfied with the experience and considers repeating it

the following semester. She hopes to take better advantage of the opportunity next time, but is

content with the results this semester.

I would like to do it earlier in the semester. I didn't know that was an option. And I didn't know it would be a good idea, otherwise I would have done it sooner. But yeah, I hated that we waited until we got to chapter 4. […] [I think it was good] especially for the people who hadn't even registered online. […] When we're going to the LARC and I tell them it's specifically for doing the online homework and they know that I'm going to be walking around, they think 'ok, fine. I really have to do it'. I actually saw a couple of people registering for the first time, but I thought, 'better late than never'. (P8I7-10672)

As evidenced by Elena's words in this section, her knowledge of students guides many of

her pedagogical decisions. In the following section, we see how her knowledge of instruction

contributes to Elena's teaching practice.

7.2.3   Knowledge of Instruction

Elena's knowledge of instruction follows her knowledge of students as the second most-

commonly applied family of codes to her data, with 23.4% of the total code assignations. Her

description of a typical successful lesson gives us a first glance at her knowledge of instruction.

A successful lesson for me would be one in which… I can communicate the material in a way that they understand easily. They can -whatever I'm trying to teach- they can replicate it easily. Also I like lessons that can combine different kinds of activities like speaking and listening, or writing. So if I can somehow combine all those into one lesson plan, that's good for me. (P8I1-10287)

As she already mentioned, Elena uses PowerPoints for every class session. "*I do the*

PowerPoints every day. And… I generally present the material and then have them practice it.

And I make sure that if there are any questions I can answer them. I guess that's the general idea" (P8I1-9424). The PowerPoints contain the plan for the day, the lesson of the day, including examples, and the related practice. The practice will either consist of an activity she created, or the page and activity number of an activity in the book. "*I don't always like the practice in the book so sometimes I make up my own*" (P8I1-11512). Elena's preference for using PowerPoints is informed by her knowledge of instruction, as well as her knowledge of self and knowledge of students.

> I did try writing things on the board my first semester, but I make mistakes and… It takes more time to write and erase, write and erase. But if there is a PowerPoint I can go over it several times, and correct any mistakes. And I like that I can post it online afterwards. I think [the students] like that sort of safety net. If they didn't understand the first time they can go back and look at my PowerPoints. And sometimes it helps them study for the test too. (P8I1-10891)

During one of the classes I observe, there is one content slide that does not have examples, and a number students request she provide some, which she does. When I later ask her about her thoughts during a situation like that one, her answer reveals her knowledge of instruction and its expanding nature.

> I love it. I like when they ask questions. I like when they ask for examples. […] I urge them to ask for examples. I feel like the more examples they have the easier it is for them to understand. And I probably should have put examples, but I thought these were terms they already know, so I thought it would be overkill if I did that. The other content I thought was new for them, so that's why I did more examples with those. I'll just make sure to add examples to that slide next semester. (P8I2-3991)

Elena's students seem to respond to her encouragement to ask questions, and do so on a regular basis. However, Elena does not answer every question. She sometimes just indicates that the answer involves content they have yet to cover, and that they will get to that in the future. Elena's reasonings regarding this teaching decision illustrate her knowledge of instruction, as well as her knowledge of students and knowledge of self.

I like to answer any question that I can but I know that if I… I feel like I have a tendency to go into much detail, and then we get off track. […] So I try to make sure they stick to the topic, 'I'm sure we're going to talk about this later, so if you have questions later, then that's fine'. I don't want us to derail too much. And I also don't want to confuse them, because sometimes just by giving them more information than they need at once, I think that confuses them. And I learned that from experience. Before I would go, 'well, in the subjunctive, blah blah'. So I learned from experience that when I do that too much I get all those confused looks [Laughter]. (P8I2-9992)

Elena's knowledge of instruction is also revealed by her use of resources such as the

PowerPoints and the LARC. She takes advantage of the textbook materials, including the

cultural videos that accompany it. Her previous experience as a GSTA has influenced her use of

this teaching resource.

Last semester I would show the video once, but now I like to show it twice, because I like to see how much they can pick up just listening and watching, and how much more they can pick up with the subtitles. So, some of the videos I think are kind of cheesy, especially the introduction at the beginning, […] but a lot of times they do bring up interesting conversation points. I think I show all of them in class. (P8I3-10112)

Like Julio and Ann, Elena sometimes struggles with time management issues. Her main

reason for such difficulties is very similar to what Ann expressed during our conversations.

Elena is adjusting to a shorter class period.

It's a bit of an adjustment for me this semester, because I've taught the Monday, Wednesday, Friday classes before, but last semester I taught a Tuesday, Thursday class. So it's hard for me to remember to shrink things down a little bit to fit the 50-minute lesson plan. And I feel I'm doing a good job, but sometimes I'm like, 'oops!' [Laughter]. (P8I1-8924)

Elena's flexibility and knowledge of instruction allow her to make teaching decisions that

not only save her class time, but also help her be consistent in the two classes she is teaching. "*If

it's something that can easily be carried over into the next class, I usually don't mind. I'll just

say, 'we'll finish this off Monday'*" (P8I2-6517).

I had another activity planned, but I'm going to do that on Friday. I didn't have enough time with my 10 o'clock class. I was going to do the other activity in the book about Cortez because I like that activity too. But I realized with my 10 o'clock class that we weren't going to have enough time to do both, and this one was shorter. I remember

looking at my watch and realizing we just had five minutes, so I picked the shorter one. For this class I did the same activity even though they finished a bit earlier. I like to keep my classes consistent. It's mostly for me. I don't want to get confused with which class got to do what. [Laughter] I also feel it's better for people who may be absent. If they come in and we're starting at number five on the activity they'd go, 'what?' If we start fresh then they don't feel like they're starting something in the middle. (P8I4[SR]-19895)

During one of the classes I observe, Elena goes over the answers of a quiz she is handing back, and reviews the structure covered on the quiz. She even has volunteers come up to the board and write down correct answers and explain their thought process as they do. When I later ask if this is a common practice, her answer reveals her knowledge of students, and her knowledge of instruction in the form of knowledge of assessment, knowledge of time management, and knowledge of teaching resources.

I think it will depend on the quiz. Some of my quizzes are just on the readings, especially in the 2000 level. And sometimes I know they do badly on the quiz just because they didn't read. So me going over it in class won't really benefit them that much, if they don't even know what I'm talking about. So with those I have no trouble just posting the answers online. For the ones that deal more with grammar, I would like to go over them in class, but usually there's no time. If it's something that I feel people made mistakes on that they should really look at, then when I post them online I try to emphasize it more. I'll post an announcement on uLearn and remind them in class, 'go take a look at the answers for quiz four'. Today we just happened to have enough time for this. So I took the chance. (P8I7-13892)

In her last journal entry, Elena reiterates the positive aspects of this pedagogical decision. Elena's knowledge of students is also illustrated in her reflection. "*I think they appreciated going over it and I felt more comfortable because I don't think many ever look at the quiz answers online. […] I'm pleased because I think it definitely helped them*" (P8J5-1757).

Elena considers assessment to be an important part of her job as a GSTA. She pays particular attention to preparing students for the three departmental exams stipulated in the class syllabus. As she describes her main strategy for preparing students for the tests, her knowledge of instruction and her knowledge of students are revealed.

I'll make a practice test. I put the whole thing on uLearn, but in class we don't have time to go ever every section, but I basically make… I call it like a twin of the test, because the instructions are the same, and the answers of course are different, I'm not going to put in word for word, but the basic structure is the same. I'll probably pick the three or four sections that I think they'll have the most trouble with and we'll go over those. And I'll explain the format of the exam, answer any questions they may have.
NYP: Do you put listening and reading sections on there as well?
Yeah. The listening I do in class, or if they don't want to do that section, then I would record it and then post it on uLearn. But I think I'm just going to do it in class because I think they get over confident with the listening. It's what I've realized. Especially in the 2000 level they go, 'oh yeah, I got it. It's fine', but then when I grade the test I'm like, 'no. We're practicing this next time'. And I just make it up. I write something and then read it out. (P8I3-16726)

During our first interview, Elena talks about her use of Spanish versus English in the

classroom.

Mostly I teach in Spanish. I even teach grammar in Spanish even though [the program coordinator] says maybe we shouldn't. […] I'll throw in some English if I feel they're not understanding, or it may come out accidentally without thinking about it, but I do speak mostly Spanish. Like 85-90% Spanish. (P8I1-9614)

After that first interview, I notice early in observations that Elena's PowerPoints tend to

have English translations for all the examples in them. When I ask about what she considers to

be the benefits of this teaching decision, her answer reveals the developing nature of her

knowledge of instruction.

I want them to understand the meaning of what I'm showing them instead of just showing them the word and let them figure out what it means. [In the textbook] they get a lot of the words in Spanish and in English, so when I put that in the PowerPoint I don't feel like I'm doing anything wrong. I don't feel it's translating necessarily. I mean, I do sometimes, in the examples, if I want them to focus on the nuances of meaning. But it's not often that I give them a sentence and say 'ok, write what it means in Spanish' or 'tell me how you say this in English'. (P8I2-3215)

Despite her initial defense of the previous teaching practice, during subsequent

observations, I notice that there are no more English translations in Elena's PowerPoints. Her

reflections regarding that practice, prompted by my earlier question, have prompted changes in

some of Elena's teaching choices.

I've been trying to not include English in my PowerPoints as much. Because I want them… I don't think I included it a lot before, but especially for the vocabulary… It's already in English in the book, so there's no need for me to put it like that in the PowerPoint. And a lot of that is stuff they should know anyway. So, since I re-use a lot of the PowerPoints from last semester, I'm deleting that. And I've been trying to steer them more toward speaking out things by context clues, and it seems like they've gotten better. I hadn't really thought about what I did before as translation. You got me thinking about that. (P8I5-9514)

The knowledge of subject matter that Elena articulates during our conversations and in her journals is primarily linked to Spanish syntax and morphology. However, she makes room in her teaching for cultural aspects of the language. In the following section Elena's knowledge of subject matter is discussed.

7.2.4   Knowledge of Subject Matter

Elena seems to be very knowledgeable of the grammar content featured in the courses she teaches and, unlike Pat, teaches it overtly. Most students' questions are grammar-related and her answers, as do her lectures and explanations, seem to help students gain an understanding of grammar and usage rules. "*I'm a stickler for accents. Usually, I go, 'this is the word with the accent. If you write it without the accent it's a different word'. It's not just incorrect; it means something different*" (P8I6[SR]-8215).

Elena's knowledge of subject matter allows her to establish connections between grammatical structures that help students comprehend new content and cement previous knowledge.

I'm going into the indirect object pronouns, but I start by reviewing direct objects. It's something I've done a lot. If we're talking about a subject that's related to another subject, especially if it's something we've covered in class before, then I like them to know that they're related somehow. Sometimes I think with the pronouns it can also be slightly confusing, but I also feel like it's also good to see there's a clear difference between the '*lo*' [him] and '*la*' [her] and the '*le*' [to him/her]. So I think it helps them compare the two things. It's also sort of a reminder for things we've already talked about. (P8I4[SR]-16512)

Elena's linguistic knowledge of Spanish and her ability to establish connections between different grammatical structures are illustrated in her explanation of indirect object pronouns. Her knowledge of instruction is also evident, along with her satisfaction whenever she succeeds in helping students attain a better grasp of the language.

> I usually tell them that the pronoun is necessary, and if they want to clarify they can add '*a*' [to] whomever. That helps them see it clearer. I don't want them to leave out the pronoun. […] Then whenever I'm going over where to put the pronoun I like to use the same verb consistently, that way they focus on the pronoun and not the verb. Like for this one I used '*decir*' [to tell]. […] And I tell them every, every, every time, whenever we cover pronouns, 'they go either before these, or after these', because they always forget. So I told them, 'by the end of the semester you're going to have this memorized because I'm going to beat it into your head' [Laughter] So when we went over the reflexives, I did it; when we were going over direct objects, I did it. So that's why they remember it; better each time. So I'm happy to see that they remember. (P8I4[SR]-19261)

For Elena, it is important that students gain a good grasp of the technical complexities of the grammatical content being covered in class, even if it means taking extra time for further explanation whenever she senses student uncertainty. The following excerpt reveals Elena's knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of students, and knowledge of instruction.

> There was a girl in my 10 o'clock class who, especially when I got to the slide where we got to '*mí*' and '*ti*' [prepositional object pronoun in the first and second person singular respectively], she wasn't getting that you don't always need to say '*a*' [to] whomever or '*para*' [for] whomever. She thought you needed to say that, and was like, 'so what's the point of having a pronoun if you always have to say who it is?' 'Well 'cause you don't have to' [laughter]. We spent a while on that, and especially because one of the options in the activity was '*Esto es para me*' ['this is for me', using an indirect object pronoun instead of a prepositional object pronoun], and I think some people didn't understand why that wasn't correct. They know the 'me' is an object pronoun, so they didn't understand why that wasn't right. And then they were like, 'so that's only with '*para*'?' 'No. It's with other prepositions too'. So I was trying to remember all of them, and finally I just said, 'let me write them on the board', so I did that. And I think that helped people because they could remember, 'so it goes after this, and this, and this'. (P8I4[SR]-17060)

Elena understands that some structures are more difficult for students to master.

"*Informal commands are tough for them*" (P8I6[SR]-3247). Also, as a non-native speaker of

Spanish, Elena can relate to the students' experience as they try to understand the complexities and variations of Spanish grammar. As she covers formal and informal commands, students' surprised reactions to a particular form brings her own learning experience to the surface, along with her knowledge of subject matter.

> When I showed them the '*vosotros*' form [second person singular used only in Spain], they were like, 'what?!' [Laughter] I know how they feel. When I was in high school, two of my Spanish teachers were from Spain. So we did practice more with '*vosotros*'. Since I've been out of high school I have not used it again, so I think that's what it feels like to them. 'That's a word??' [Laughter] And it is a funny-looking conjugation every time. I mean, it looks nothing like the rest of them. I think last semester on a quiz I asked them, 'and now, for extra credit, do one with '*vosotros*' [Laughter]. Not many did. (P8I6[SR]-8433)

Elena is happy with the students' performance with the Spanish subjunctive this semester. However, based on her own experience as a Spanish learner, she understands that they will have limitations regarding that structure beyond their time in her class, and that such limitations are normal.

> I think they have a pretty good sense of it, but even now there are still certain parts of the subjunctive they have to think about. For certain sentences I know I'm still like, 'would I make that subjunctive? Or would I leave it in the indicative? I'm not really sure. I feel it could go either way'. Especially if I hear a native speaker say something either in subjunctive or not in subjunctive when I feel like they should, then I'm like, 'wait, what happened there?' [Laughter] I know it took me years to even feel remotely comfortable using subjunctive. And somebody asked me that in my 2002 class last semester, and I told them. (P8I7-6752)

Elena's sense of humor allows her to appreciate the students' funny remarks regarding the way certain Spanish words sound. She has expanded her knowledge of subject matter to include these 'funny' words, and takes advantage of that knowledge to help improve students' pronunciation skills.

> They always think that '*as*' ending is so funny! Students have very dirty minds sometimes. [Laughter] It's the same thing in the preterit when you get to '*poner*' [to put/place] and start out with '*puse*' [first person singular form]. I hadn't realized there was anything funny there until they started to laugh! [Laughter] And in 1001 when you get to '*oyes*' [you hear] they go, 'oh, like oh yes!' Sometimes I just joke with them, like

in the subjunctive of '*ser*' [to be], and I tell them, not 'sea or sean' [pronounces English words with same spelling] [Laughter]. (P8I6[SR]-7213)

As previously stated, despite Elena's apparent focus on the linguistic features of Spanish,

students are regularly exposed to cultural information in the classroom.

I like doing the short readings on the cultural information. Especially if it's a quote from a person –I mean they're probably not even real- but I like [the students] to get what would be a different perspective on the cultural theme of the chapter. (P8I6[SR]-5600)

Sometimes Elena's 50-minute class session prevents her from explicitly focusing on

cultural information. However, she finds different ways to expose students to different aspects of

Hispanic culture. Her cultural knowledge and her knowledge of instruction are revealed in the

following excerpt.

This activity was repetitive, so I didn't like that part too much. But I liked that it is actually instructions on how to dance salsa. I wanted to have time to actually dance in class, but we didn't have time. Maybe at the end of the chapter we can come back to this. I think it would be fun. And music and dancing are such an important part of Hispanic culture. (P8I6[SR]-4239)

Elena also likes to bring real-life sources of cultural information that are not included in

her official class materials, and that are targeted to the type of students she meets in class.

Today we read the part about the different famous Hispanic people, so we talked about Salma Hyek and Gabriel García Bernal. I showed them the trailer for the Science of Sleep. A lot of them didn't know the movie but seemed interested afterwards. And it was a trailer in Spanish. (P8I1-8671)

Elena is particularly proud of activities she creates that combine cultural and linguistic

information. For example, after showing a cultural video on different cities in Spain, Elena

projects a blank map of the country and asks the students to help her mark the geographical areas

where the cities in the video are located.

That one I just came up with last semester. […] I realized, we talked about all these places in Spain, but they don't know where they are, so it might help to situate these things on a map. And I can get them to show me, I can get volunteers. It was hard to find a blank map of Spain; one without labels. I figured it would also help them with

remembering the cardinal directions like '*este*' [east], '*oeste*' [west]. And [laughter] they used to have a little trouble with that, but it was good practice. (P8I3-10784)

Just as Elena has been able to construct her knowledge of instruction throughout her experience as a GSTA, she has gathered contextual information that informs her teaching practice. Elena's knowledge of context is explored in the following section.

7.2.5   Knowledge of Context

One day during the semester, the desks in Elena's classroom are arranged in a semi-circle by the time she arrives; likely left that way by the students in the previous class. Since the students in her class do not seem to mind the new arrangement, she decides not to waste class time having them return the desks to a row formation, and they remain in a semi-circle. A few weeks later, this has become the permanent seating arrangement in Elena's classes. She starts taking advantage of this change in her classroom context by using the center space as a way to sometimes move closer to the students while lecturing and as they do individual or pair work. As we talk about it for the first time, she mentions another advantage of the new sitting arrangement, illustrating her knowledge of the classroom context.

> They were really good at participating in the reading today. Some days they're just like, 'cricket, cricket, cricket', but today they were… I feel like the circle makes them more willing to participate. It was set up like that one day and we had a reading in class, and people were always volunteering so that was nice. (P8I6[SR]-954)

Elena's knowledge of context outside the university is illustrated in her reflections regarding the students' need for exposure to the language beyond the classroom. Even though she feels such exposure is not something most students actively seek, she finds there are other, though subtle, ways in which students can be exposed to Spanish outside the classroom.

> I know people are exposed anyway and don't even realize it. I mean, Atlanta has a big Spanish-speaking population so even if you're not seeking it out, if you overhear a conversation in Spanish; that counts. (P8I5-7763)

As mentioned in the section about Elena's knowledge of students, one of her frustrations with teaching is due to unrealistic expectations that some students bring to their own learning of Spanish. Her knowledge of context outside the university allows her to find reasons behind these expectations.

> It is frustrating… I feel like people in general don't understand how learning a foreign language works. Especially with things in the market[place] now people think it will be fast and easy, but that is not really the case. Like in the commercials. Just in general people think that language is a simple equation. This word equals this word ever and forever. No exceptions. But you know language is culture and cultures aren't math equations that you can just… you know…. parallel to each other. So part of my job is getting that across to my students. (P8I1-4869)

Regarding her collaboration with fellow GSTAs, Elena seems to appreciate having a good, collaborative relationship with her peers.

> Sometimes I get ideas from them. Or I'll share my ideas with them. If nothing else, it's great to talk and hear other people's funny stories. And we do ask each other a lot of questions; especially if we are unclear about something. So they're a great resource. (P8I3-2395)

When it comes to exchanging materials with other GSTAs, Elena's experience seems to be similar to the other experienced GSTAs that participated in the project, such as Julio, Pat and Ann.

> I have [exchanged materials], but not much. A lot of times I give more than I receive. [Laughter] I don't think that's intentional, just the way it works out. I've gotten like a quiz, or a '*Redacción*' topic or something from other GTAs. Mostly, I make my own stuff. (P8I7-1972)

Elena's knowledge of the context of the Spanish program is evident in many of our exchanges and her journal entries. She understands the department has particular educational goals and expectations regarding its GSTAs. However, she has her own educational goals regarding the students she meets in class and feels free to work toward fulfilling them.

> I feel like the idea in our department is to be more of a coach, or them interacting in Spanish, and also to expose them to Spanish. I do that; especially the exposure to Spanish. But I feel like my role is more to help them understand aspects of grammar

because in a perfect world they would read the book before class and make sure they understand everything and then come to class already ready. But since I know some parts of grammar are more difficult than others, we usually end up… I explain them in class and we practice them. I guess my role is to expose them and teach them grammar, and whenever I can I also try and throw in any cultural facts that I know. I think they like that. (P8I5-268)

I don't know if there's a particular [teaching] style that is promoted. I feel like there're so many of us we all have to have different styles. As long as we get the information across accurately… I think that's what matters. I don't feel like [the program coordinator] is telling us how to teach. He's just giving us guidelines and telling us what to teach.
NYP: So you feel free enough to do what you feel works best?
Yeah. (P8I1-7236)

As mentioned in the data analysis section, Elena was the only GSTA in the project who had any substantial comments on the analyzed data samples that were sent to them for review for purposes of member checking. Her only comment was in reference to the previous excerpt.

I don't know if it matters, since it's sort of after the fact, but I don't feel like this anymore. I'm not teaching there this semester, but I was there last semester as a Part-Time Instructor and I definitely feel NOW that there is a very particular way that we're supposed to be teaching. I feel like there's so much pressure to lower DFW's and to meet expectations set forth by supposedly objective studies done. The professor-to-professor observations [started during the semester subsequent to the project] I think were a big part of that. (Incidentally, as a recently-graduated, not full-time professor, but also not GTA, I was *observed* but was not given the opportunity to observe anyone, like any of the newer GTA's. I didn't particularly like that). Again, don't know if this is of any consequence, but I just wanted to add that in. (P8-comment on word file of analyzed data)

Even though Elena has much stronger feelings after our conversations about the expectations of the program toward its instructors, she still felt a certain amount of pressure during the time she participated in the project. She makes changes in her assessment policies due to that pressure.

There was a student from my 10:00 class who comes to me in the middle of my 11:00 and explains he forgot to turn on his alarm. Another student had a similar excuse. If it were entirely up to me, I wouldn't have given those students make-ups, but since the department is more concerned about D's, F's, & W's, if I gave them a zero for 15% of their grade… But, just so they wouldn't get off Scott-free either, I allowed them a make-

up but counted it as late, so they will only receive 85% credit. I believe another GTA suggested this to me once and it seems like a good compromise. (P8J2-994)

As we discuss her feelings about the department's policy to reduce DFWs, Elena reveals

her dissatisfaction with the policy, and her knowledge of department/program context as well as

her knowledge of context outside the university. She also shares the sometimes-failed efforts she

makes to keep up with the policy.

> I understand it, but I don't like it. And I'm sure in every profession there's some sort of quotas on things that you have to try to do or try to avoid, and if you have too much of this or too little of this that means you're supposedly doing something wrong. I just hate that that's pretty much our only barometer, because people withdraw or get bad grades for so many different reasons. […] My 11 o'clock class started with 30 and now there are 24, so six people [withdrew] from one class. I've never had that many people drop. There were a couple of students who had medical issues at the beginning of the semester and missed a lot of class (a girl who had wrist surgery, and a girl with pneumonia). I did speak to the others and emailed them. I encouraged them to come talk to me during my office hours; that if they were willing to work with me, then I would work with them. A lot of those people just ended up dropping after they initially said, 'yeah, I'm going to try to do this'. And there were a couple of people I didn't expect to drop and never even told me why they did, but there're usually a couple of those every semester. They were all Ws. (P8I5-4279)

Part of what Elena does not like about the DFW policy is that, for her, it seems to cater

too much to the students and exempts them from many of what she considers to be the

responsibilities involved in being a college student. She also feels that it adds to instructor

workload unnecessarily. Another example of this concern was the department's suggestion to

take students to the LARC during class time so they could get started on homework.

> I don't like having to hold people's hand so much for things, because I feel like our students are kind of cuddled in a way and they are college students, so they shouldn't be. They should have more responsibility. And it's not all of them; some of them do what they are supposed to do. But there are others who don't do what they're supposed to do, and instead letting them sink or swim on their own, it seems like they are pushing us more and more to reach out to them or offer them help. It's that part that's a bit annoying. Sometimes you can see the benefits of if, but I feel like it's just an extra step that we have to take, and we shouldn't necessarily have to. (P8I5-3457)

Despite the extra work, Elena considers the six Ws in one class to be her only disappointment during the semester. However, she does not believe the situation to be her fault, and is satisfied with what she was able to achieve with her remaining students. "*I think it was a weird coincidence. […] And overall I feel pretty good with the survivors [laughter]*" (P8I7-412). The following section presents Elena's plans for the future after graduation.

7.3   Elena's Future

Elena was set to graduate, both from the Spanish MA program and the Translation and Interpretation Certificate, the semester following her participation in the project. As mentioned in the section regarding Elena's background, language teaching is not what she plans as her primary career path.

> I want to translate and interpret. I like teaching in this context. I wouldn't want to teach in high school or elementary school. […] I would want to get a doctorate maybe later, but for now… I mean translating and interpreting have been my thing for a while now so that's really my focus. […] I feel like I might try to, if they had a part-time position here, maybe I'd like to take that, and then maybe translate and interpret on the side. But it's not what I want to do with my life at this moment. I still enjoy it a lot. I can see me doing it again in the future definitely. (P8I7-626)

Elena is appreciative of her experience as a GSTA, and understands that in the current job market having teaching experience is valuable. "*I like the fact that now I have some experience, so if I can't find jobs interpreting or translating, I can find jobs teaching*" (P8I1-912)

7.4   Chapter Summary

Elena's case completes the group of four experienced GSTAs participating in the project. She shares some of the struggles of her peers, such as language use and time management issues, and she has been able to include her personal sense of humor as part of her teaching practice.

Some parts of Elena's personal practical knowledge seem to be a result of her experience as a GSTA. Many of her pedagogical decisions are informed by what she has learned from her

GSTA experiences. Other parts come from her prior experiences as a language learner. In addition, it is evident that Elena's PPK is still in development, as exemplified by the change of mind regarding her use of English in her PowerPoints. Elena's reasonings and opinions regarding the Spanish program are strong, and they impact several of her more important teaching practices. However, she is able to remain positive and enjoy her GSTA experience.

Finally, even though Elena's plans for the future are not focused on language teaching, she reported that she considers her GSTA experience to have been beneficial, and she keeps open the possibility that she may return to the language classroom in the future.

8   RESULTS: MARY

Mary is the first of the project participants who was considered an inexperienced GSTA. The fall semester of 2012 was Mary's first semester as a GSTA in the Spanish program. At the time of her participation in the project, Mary was teaching one Spanish 1001 course. In keeping with the structure of the participant chapters, Mary's narrative will be presented primarily in her own words. Section 8.1 presents a brief overview of Mary's background. Section 8.2 explores Mary's PPK in relation to the sub-categories previously discussed. Mary's plans for the future will be presented in section 8.3. And section 8.4 presents a chapter summary. Table 10 shows Mary's code assignations in order of frequency.

Table 10 Code Assignations in Mary's Data in Order of Frequency

Code	Number of Assignations	Percentage
Knowledge of Students	**259 (total)**	**35.5%**
Student-teacher interaction	55	
Student attitudes	48	
Student abilities	42	
Differences among students	40	
Student limitations	38	
Student learning	20	
Student-student interaction	8	
Student needs	6	
Student expectations	2	
Knowledge of Instruction	**200 (total)**	**27.5%**
Knowledge of teaching resources	63	
Knowledge of assignments/activities	34	
Knowledge of teaching methodology	33	
Time management	23	
Knowledge of assessment	17	
Planning	14	
Flexibility	9	
Knowledge of language acquisition/learning	7	
Knowledge of Self	**67 (total)**	**9.3%**
Limitations	35	
Improvement	13	
Positive aspects	11	
Personality	8	

Knowledge of Context	**50 (total)**	**6.8%**
Department/program context	22	
Peer collaboration	15	
Context outside the university	9	
Classroom context	4	
Knowledge of Subject Matter	**39 (total)**	**5.3%**
Linguistic knowledge	27	
Cultural knowledge	12	
Frustrations with Teaching	**24**	**3.3%**
Teaching enjoyment	**20**	**2.7%**
Knowledge of Purpose	**16**	**2.2%**
Language Use	**15**	**2%**
Program support	**13 (total)**	**1.2%**
Program training	9	
General program support	4	
Background	**12 (total)**	**1.8%**
Language learning background	4	
Work experience	3	
Academic background	2	
Apprenticeship of observation	1	
Learning of instruction	1	
Personal background	1	
Influence of GSTA Experience	**11**	**1.5%**
Future	**7 (total)**	**0.9%**
Teaching-related future	5	
Academic future	1	
Non-teaching, professional future	1	
Personal future	0	
Current Goals	**0**	**0%**
Total Code Assignations	**733**	**100%**

8.1 Mary's Background

Mary was born and raised in Georgia, and was 26 years old in the fall of 2012. Her

relationship with Spanish started at an early age.

> Probably at about age nine or ten I started going to Mexico every summer with my
> family; mostly starting out with mission trips. We would go a week or two at time and I
> just kind of picked it up. So I was learning it informally most of my life, and then in high
> school I tested in to start at Spanish 4, and then, luckily for me I'm from Gwinnett and I
> went to a school that had a large heritage and native speaker population so they had AP
> [advanced placement] Spanish. (P4I1-1658)

After graduating high school, Mary decided to major in Spanish for her undergraduate studies. After transferring from the first state university she attended, "*I didn't have a very good experience*" (P4I1-2743), she became an undergraduate student in the program where she now works as a GSTA. However, she started at a much higher level than the 1001 class she currently teaches.

> When I came here they did take my credits and I had taken AP Spanish. I tested with [the program coordinator] to exempt the advanced grammar course, but there are 500 questions in the exam to exempt it, and I missed the passing grade by one or two questions. But it was actually really nice. I was frustrated at the time but I am glad I took the class because I learned a lot. (P4I1-2798)

During her undergraduate studies, Mary decided to also complete a concentration in business, and minor in French. She also did volunteer work as an ESL instructor. Mary considers those earlier experiences as a beginning level language learner and as a language instructor to have been important in preparing her for her work as a GSTA.

> I was a student of Spanish but never a Spanish 1001 student or anything like that. So as far as struggling as a new learner of a foreign language, my experience as a French student helped me. I also volunteered with the Latin American association teaching English. So in a way it's quite a bit different, but it has taught me to get a background in that kind of approach. (P4I1-1163)

As Mary describes her experience as an ESL instructor, we can see how her PPK was already beginning to be constructed.

> It was really inspiring and also very challenging. And the challenges there are a lot different than what you may see here. A lot of the students there are working and they're taking the time out from their day and come in the evening. But there are also a lot of students that have not had a lot of education as a young person. So it's really challenging in some ways, like teaching English concepts that they've never learned in Spanish or in their native language. (P4I1-3621)

Despite her interest in language teaching, and a suggestion to become a master's student and a GSTA by the department chair, Mary's incursion into the GSTA world did not begin right after obtaining her undergraduate degree.

I decided to work for a while and I got my translation certificate here at [the university]. I decided to apply last year for the master's program. It seemed like a good opportunity obviously financially, but the main attraction for me is that I'd been interested in teaching and it seemed like a good opportunity to gain some experience. (P4I1-236)

Mary's only formal training as a language teacher was the required foreign language teaching class for GSTAs she was taking while participating in the project. She took one general linguistics class during her undergraduate studies, but no education classes. However, she has sought training from other sources.

I've enjoyed some of the free workshops that they offer at the Latin American association. I've found those to be pretty helpful. Also, some of the stuff that my mom has passed along to me. She's a teacher as well, and she has her master's and her specialist degree in different approaches in education. She's not a foreign language teacher but she has extensive materials. So that's a bit informal because I have not taken a class with her but… I read the materials and learn from them. (P4I1-3172)

In the following section we will continue to see how Mary's personal, academic, and language-learning backgrounds have informed her PPK and, in turn, how her PPK affects her teaching practice.

8.2   Mary's Personal Practical Knowledge

8.2.1   Knowledge of Self

9.3% of the codes applied to Mary's data were connected to her knowledge of self, the majority of which were related to her perceived limitations as a new GSTA and as a non-native speaker of Spanish. However, in reference to her personality and demeanor in the classroom, Mary has a positive image of herself. "*I think that I've so far been able to strike a balance between being open and friendly but not being too informal*" (P4I1-4369). Similarly, the image she believes the students have of their instructor is a positive one.

I think they see me somewhat casually; as very approachable. But I've been thinking about that as the semester goes on. I think it's partly the dynamic, not only the fact that I'm new. Once I had established a good dynamic with this current set of people, once

they knew me, I feel the respect was there. So I don't have to be overly strict or formal with them. I don't feel that the fact that I'm a bit casual has threatened their respect or attitude towards me. Sometimes I think I should be a little more formal in some cases, but I like I have an open, approachable, relationship with them. It seems to be working ok. (P4I5-588)

One example of Mary's 'casualness' in the classroom is the fact that the students address her using the familiar 'tú' [second person singular] form, which is traditionally not appropriate in the Spanish classroom. "*I told them a few times [to use the formal form]. I guess I should be meaner to them about it, but it doesn't bother me that much*" (P4I4[SR]-1699). Also, students who arrive late to class do not seem to affect Mary's mood or rhythm in the classroom. Later in the semester however, she begins identifying the situation as a problem.

It doesn't bother me so much, like a pet peeve that I know people have. But there are some students that come late all the time. I mark them as tardy. I didn't so much at the beginning but I started doing it more because it was happening a lot with some students. And I told them that was hurting their grade. (P4I6[SR]-3064)

Mary also seems to be aware of her strengths as a Spanish teacher, and of how her background and personality benefit her teaching practice.

I think I'm strong in my own comprehension of what I'm teaching. And I feel I have a good mix of understanding Spanish and understanding the English native-speaker side. I think that's a benefit in some ways. And I guess I would say that the fact that I look at it more like I want to help them than being the leader or putting myself at the top all the time is also a strength. (P4I5-1297)

However, as mentioned earlier, most of Mary's insights into her knowledge of self focus on what she sees as her limitations. In several of our conversations and even in her journal entries, Mary points out her 'errors'. "*I made an error writing the names of the family in the family tree, and a student noticed, which is fine, because the student was paying attention and understanding. But it's still an error*" (P4I3-10061). Her awareness of these perceived weaknesses are part of her knowledge of self. As Mary expands on what she considers her

'errors', some of them echo Pat's description of his own struggles as a non-native speaker of Spanish. Mary's knowledge of subject matter and knowledge of students are illustrated as well.

> Sometimes what I do in Spanish is, even if I know the correct way of saying something, if I'm not clear in my head, I'll use the wrong article. I start out not thinking what I'm going to say and then have to immediately correct myself. […] And a few things that I've noticed that just aren't the best way… maybe not necessarily an error, but not a clear way. Like one time during an activity I was thinking, 'let's go to number one, and number two, and so forth', but I was saying, '*la número uno; la número dos*' ['number one; number two' with a feminine article before a masculine noun, which is regularly incorrect in Spanish]. In my head I was thinking, '*la pregunta número uno*' ['question number one', correct use of feminine article and noun]. But that's not what the students are getting from me; they're hearing something very confusing. I shouldn't say that. […] If you're talking to a native speaker you don't have to think of those things, but in the classroom it's not ok. They don't know what I mean. (P4I3-8603)

As we get ready to watch Mary's second video-recorded class, she is already anticipating another 'error' she made during the class. She later reflects on the nature of this perceived weakness and further reveals her knowledge of self, as well as her knowledge of students.

> I think I had an error on the PowerPoint. I can't remember what it was but I remember thinking, 'oh crap!' a bit after I said it. Maybe we'll see it. […] I think my error was around here somewhere. And at the moment I didn't notice it. It's weird how I don't notice things like that sometimes. Sometimes I catch myself, and start changing what I was going to say in the middle of a sentence. They probably don't notice it, but it's still bad. Like in the end, if they start picking up things, it can probably make them more confused. Sometimes I do speak too fast, and then I make pronunciation errors. But in any case I should not speak that fast to them. (P4I6[SR]-196)

For Mary, her main weaknesses are "*the lack of experience for sure*" (P4I5-1702), and, to a lesser degree, the fact that she is not a native speaker of the language. Even though, as she previously mentioned, she recognizes the benefits of understanding the students' perspective as learners, the latter weakness is part of her knowledge of self. "*Sometimes I don't know the word that someone is looking for; few cases where I can't remember. I know I've heard the word before but a native speaker is going to have it right there much faster than I can*" (P4I5-1827). Mary also identifies other personality traits as limitations in her teaching.

I always have little notes for myself for what to cover, but I end up never looking at them. But that's just in general, even when I'm doing a presentation, I don't like looking down at notes too much. But I need to get better at it because there are little things I'll forget to mention. (P4I6[SR]-8087)

Despite her inclination toward pointing out perceived limitations, Mary is aware of her improvements as her first semester as a GSTA progresses. She knows that her skills as a Spanish instructor are a work in progress. And she understands that, limitations and difficulties aside, she has had successes.

Now that I feel a lot more comfortable teaching, I feel more confident trying different things and requiring more of the students. I think I'm doing an okay job this semester, but I definitely have ideas of how to improve and change for next year. I still wish I could have better preparation for the grammar lessons, but it's hard to come up with different methods without much experience and with a really busy schedule. Hopefully I can keep improving my styles and using activities that keep the students engaged and help them use the lessons to improve their skills. I'm so ready for the semester to be over! I'm looking forward to starting my second semester with what I've learned this year. (P4J5-1071)

8.2.2   Knowledge of Students

As is the case with the experienced GSTAs in the project, Mary's knowledge of students receives the majority of the codes applied to her data with 35% of the total code assignations. And also similarly to her experienced colleagues, Mary begins building her knowledge of the current students early in the semester by learning their names within the first two weeks of classes. As Mary articulates the benefits to this practice, we can see how her knowledge of students is beginning to include not only their names, but also positive and negative behavior.

It helps a lot, because I immediately see the ones who want to participate and I can interact with the people who don't necessarily participate on their own. And it helps with attendance. The first classes I was calling their names because I didn't know them, and then I tried the writing-your-name-on-a-paper thing, just to show you're here. But already I had a student writing their friend's name. Luckily, by then I knew for sure that person wasn't there. So I'm glad I can catch that kind of thing.(P4I2-1968)

Another similarity between Mary and the experienced participants in the project is the regular use of PowerPoints. Mary's are loaded with images and they do not have any English in them. Her knowledge of students and knowledge of language acquisition are evidenced in her justification for her PowerPoint design choices.

> [I prefer] associating the Spanish word with the concept as opposed to doing the translation, or like a lecture-based kind of class. I think for American students, their attention span would work a little bit better, and they might remember [the vocabulary] better by just associating the concept to the Spanish word. (P4I1-10997)

Mary's knowledge of students and knowledge of instruction are also reflected in some of her pedagogical choices and in the flexibility to adjust her teaching strategies to what she knows about the students' previous knowledge.

> I'm presenting direct objects. Sometimes I start with a little comparison to English, but this time I did that more than usual, because I think the idea of direct object, some students aren't really too aware of them if they haven't taken English classes or grammar classes. They can use it correctly, but they don't know what it is. (P4I6[SR]-5220)

As the semester progresses, Mary continues to expand her knowledge of students based on their performance in different assignments and assessments. This becomes evident as she shares her impressions on the students' quiz grades. "*Definitely I could see the correlation between the students who were doing the outside work, like the online homework, and the quiz grades*" (P4I2-1502). Mary's knowledge of students is also expanding to include several types of students, along with the frustrations that come from the realization of the not-ideal types.

> I do not like giving out the low scores when I know they're based on something the student could improve easily. It's really frustrating. It's one thing when there's a student who's struggling and not being able to get it, but then there's the other student who is not putting forward the effort. (P4I5-2157)

Despite the frustrations, Mary keeps a positive attitude toward students in general and stays focused on their progress. She is able to identify problems and make changes to help them improve their class performance.

I think they are doing pretty well overall. I feel a lot better today after grading a lot of stuff and upgrading my grade book. I like the progress that some of them have made. Last week I was feeling like, 'they're not coming. They're kind of getting sick of it'. I didn't know if I wasn't keeping them engaged, but I feel it's bouncing back. Now the thing is to see how they do on the second test. There's a few that I think their participation and everything has gone way up since the first test, and they struggled really bad on it, so we'll see. I'm planning on reviewing more. Like having a practice test. So I'm really hoping that will help them a lot. (P4I5-12231)

During the fourth class observation, I notice that Mary engages in conversation with

students who arrive early to class, which was not an occurrence I witnessed in earlier classes. As

we later talk about this change, Mary's reflection reveals the evolving nature of her knowledge

of students.

I think it's happening more now. I think every class kind of has its own dynamic, and I have a lot of journalism students, so they seem very inquisitive in general. So they seem to be more curious about cultural information or things like that. I think it's really good. We talk about things that I wouldn't have had time to tell them about during class. (P4I5-8572)

Throughout the semester, Mary's knowledge of students continues to expand to include

teaching practices that better suit the students' personalities.

I do put them to work in pairs a lot, because they participate really well that way. Obviously there's some English going on, but I think it's pretty effective for them. I think it keeps them awake a little more. And some of them that are too shy to answer, even if I were to do this as a class, they wouldn't answer, but in pairs they do it. I know they are going to make mistakes, but they are practicing. Also I think it helps their comprehension to listen to other people, and not just me. (P4I4[SR]-10028)

Mary is also becoming more aware of students' limitations in relation to the expectations

of the materials and the departmental tests. Her expanding knowledge of students and knowledge

of instruction inform teaching decisions that seek to help students overcome their limitations.

Mary also continues to point out her own perceived limitations.

Sometimes they get caught up on the activities in the book. Like they have a hard time understanding what to do. I wish I could think of more outside things every time. Sometimes I call on them and they get caught up on this little thing that wasn't really the main skill they were learning. […] It's almost like a test-taking skill, because they get

these kinds of activities in the tests. It's not like they can't conjugate the verbs or something like that; it's that they can't understand the format they're in. Like the words with the slashes to form sentences. Sometimes, even the best students have trouble understanding what they're supposed to do with those. So I try to do them in class to anticipate the test. Because it's frustrating to me when they don't get it because of the format, not because of the content. (P4I4[SR]-14175)

Mary's knowledge of students also includes differences among the students' performance in particular assignments, and their behavior in the class. She is appreciative of their improvement, and aware of their struggles.

I'm handing back the first draft of their writing assignment. They did really well. I was really happy. I think they improved a lot compared to the first one. Some of the ones that had only completed half of it the first time completed it, even if they had what I would consider some major errors. For example there's one student that, whenever we're doing activities conjugates the verbs, but when he's writing he always leaves them in the infinitive. But he had 60 words [the minimum], and even though there were infinitives, all of the other stuff was a lot closer. And I had one student who got 100. I tried to look at it like five times, 'it can't be 100', but I couldn't find any errors. He should have probably been moved, but his attendance is so poor, that by the time I realized he could have… and he still has a low grade overall, because of attendance and missed assignments. (P4I4[SR]-358)

Mary's attention to individual students informs her knowledge of students. Her decisions as to how to best help struggling students are guided by what she is learning about their personal situation, her knowledge of content matter, her knowledge of context outside the university, and her knowledge of self.

I'm really struggling with that student. […] She wants my advice on how to do better in the class, but she doesn't seem to want to take it. This is the first time she's talked to me in person about her issues. It's tricky because, based on what she told me today, she kind of threw me off. I'm hoping she's not going to expect special treatment because she's sharing her problems with me. Not that I don't want to help her, but I'm not sure… I think she's like the people that want to lose weight but don't want to do the work. I think also her problem is the time commitment. […] She thinks she's extremely behind, but really the work she's missed, like online, it's only chapter one. In that way I think I can convince her that it won't take as much time as she thinks to catch up. I also told her I could help her during my office hours. (P4I2-2699)

There is one student in Mary's class that who become a particular challenge for her. As we watch a video of one of her classes, Mary's thoughts go to the problems the student has presented thus far, and the ups and downs of his performance and attitude in the class. She also reflects on the decisions she has made based on her knowledge of this particular student, her knowledge of context, and her knowledge of instruction in the form of knowledge of assessment and knowledge of resources.

> That student, I asked him to come see me in my office, so hopefully he will come this week. That's the second time that day his phone rings, and today it was three times. I've been getting tired of that. And he's been struggling a lot. I think he might need something like remedial help, not like we have that. But he was going to the LARC on a regular basis. I know because I had talked with some of the tutors there. I don't know if he's still going. He was considering dropping the class with a W, and he was like, 'I really don't want to drop it because I have to take this class', and I told him, 'you can do it if you keep making the effort, you keep going to the LARC, you can come to my office anytime'. He had a really good attitude up until the mid-point, so I was totally willing to let him come to my office every week if he wanted. Because he was doing everything, like the workbook stuff, he was getting 100 on that. But now… he didn't do well on the second test, even though I did that study session, which he came to. But he was absent twice that week before the test, and some of the stuff that was on the test was only introduced that week. […] And then since then he's been coming in late, his phone's been ringing. […] It's really hard for me. I'm going to talk to him. Maybe something's going on in his personal life. But it's frustrating because I feel he's going to blame me, you know, 'I wanted to drop your class, and then you told me…' And I'm thinking, 'yeah, I told you I was going to help you but you just went and well… screwed yourself' [laughter]. And I told him he needed to work hard. (P4I6[SR]-9625)

Despite the challenges Mary faces with some of the students, she is able to appreciate the successes of those who overcome difficulties and do well. Mary's awareness of these students also informs her knowledge of students.

> This student had taken the class before, and I think she had poor attendance and didn't do her workbook. The way she told me at the beginning was like, 'I already took this class but I failed it because I didn't work hard enough'. For me though, she has been a great student. She does everything ahead of time. She's about to graduate. Sometimes she gets things a little quicker but I still think she's on the right level. She's not ahead. (P4I4[SR]-10546)

Mary's first semester as a GSTA presented her with challenges and victories regarding the students in her class. She has been able to expand her knowledge of students through her experience and such knowledge has informed important teaching decisions. In the following section her knowledge of instruction is explored.

8.2.3   *Knowledge of Instruction*

27.5% of the total codes assigned to Mary's interview and journal data are connected to her knowledge of instruction, making it the second most applied family of codes in her data. As a first-semester GSTA, Mary's knowledge of instruction is primarily informed by the teaching materials, her own experiences as a learner, her brief teaching experience in ESL, and the experiences she starts accumulating during her first semester as a GSTA. Her initial challenges were related to her early unfamiliarity with the teaching resources.

> I was surprised how much time and confusion… I wasn't expecting it to the extent… like the textbook and the workbook and all the stuff like that. It threw me off a little bit in the first week. And also wanting to feel super-prepared for everything and I was prepared for the lesson, but some of the questions they came to me with about the online stuff… I didn't want to seem 'new' so it was kind of frustrating. It seemed very confusing to the students. But now it's ok for most of them. (P4I1-5456)

Mary's awareness of her lack of teaching experience is evident in many of our conversations and in her journal entries. Important foundations to her knowledge of instruction are being built throughout the semester. She is trying to overcome the challenges, and to find what pedagogical practices work for her. And as we learned in the previous section, her knowledge of students is also being developed.

> I found so far [that it helps] to keep repeating things in different ways; trying to think of any cognates that I can use, rephrasing things. And I have been using PowerPoints as well. It helps having the words up there that I'm finding they're not catching, maybe I'm saying it too quickly, but I can go back and point at what I'm saying. Also switching up the activities. And that's one thing that I'm hoping to do more. It's hard starting out without much experience, but also it's good for me in a way as a new instructor that it's so set in stone [by the program] what we need to cover in the materials. But I find it

challenging to not be boring and follow page by page in the book, and to take advantage of the exercises. I find the students seem to enjoy some of them, like the group work or pair work, as opposed to just having me call them by name, which I've been doing as well so I can interact with students who are not eager to share their information. (P4I1-7121)

Another teaching practice that Mary adopts early on is to have the students orally repeat

after her as she presents new vocabulary. In her explanation of this strategy to go over

vocabulary, Mary's language learning background and her knowledge of self seem to be the

sources of this portion of her knowledge of instruction.

> I've kind of varied between what I think works best. Like instead of saying [all the words] at once, I have them repeat. But also I sometimes have them just repeat a hard word, like something with several syllables. Or if I've heard them saying it incorrectly, then I'll ask them to repeat it. […] [I think it helps with] pronunciation, and to understand a bit about the language. Like we've been over the diphthongs. So being able to point them out. […]
> *NYP: Was that the way you learned Spanish?*
> Yes. And even to the extent that our teacher wasn't even always the one saying the words. He would have like a tape there, which would say each word really slowly a few times and we repeated each time.
> *NYP: Did you find that helpful?*
> Somewhat. It was helpful for pronunciation, but I think it's hard for me to compare myself to them [i.e., the current students], because I was actively interested in acquiring the language and really trying very hard. (P4I2-7211)

Even though most of Mary's class is conducted in Spanish, she uses English for specific

purposes. "*With some of the grammar introductions I'm relying a lot on English for the concepts*

and relating them to something that they know in English. Like, 'are you familiar with personal

pronouns in English? What are they?'" (P4I1-4996). Once the grammar introduction ends, she

relies on different techniques to avoid translation as much as possible, for example when it

comes to answering a student's question about what the meaning of the word 'alto' (tall).

> I usually default to try to explain it. In this case fortunately it was a question about something we had just covered, and I had pictures there [in the PowerPoint] to help me. It would have been a lot harder for me if I didn't. So I usually will always explain it, hopefully I can act it out or use images to help. […] Sometimes I just ask another student if it's something I can make a little bit obvious by someone else answering the question

correctly. If we had a really tall student, I could ask them, 'are you tall or short?' And then I can ask the same to a short student. But then at that point if I tried it and it's still not clicking, or especially if it's a question that's not the main focus, I'll go ahead and just give them the answer in English. (P4I2-11213)

Mary's first semester teaching Spanish is challenging for her. Her limited experience and knowledge of instruction make it difficult sometimes to make effective use of the textbook, and provide opportunities for practice.

Some days I think it goes really well. And then sometimes, like today, I had a lot of trouble with gaging the time it is going to take to go ever different things. […] Today for example we were introducing the adjectives for the first time, and the book has no exercises provided until they reach the verbs part, which is the second part. So we were using verbs in a basic way today. Like, 'what is this person like?' But not really going into depth like, 'what are you like?' So things like that. I struggle just with the way the content is broken up sometimes. Or being creative enough to create more opportunities for interaction without them needing too much more vocabulary or skills that we haven't covered yet. (P4I2-268)

Distributing the class content and assignments in manageable ways for the students is another one of Mary's challenges as a first-time GSTA. Early in the semester she feels restricted by the class syllabus but does not feel confident enough in her knowledge of instruction to make the changes she would consider effective.

I wish somebody had warned me about the certain days that are important in the syllabus and there's way too much. There's no way you can cover it. And then the next day or a few days later they only list one activity, or it's pretty basic. So I feel like for this chapter 2 that we just covered, they had several items that we were supposed to cover regarding adjectives and use of adjectives, on the same day they had their writing assignment in class. So, the time was restricted, and I felt that the students were a little sort of drained just from the writing, so I don't think they got a lot of what we covered that day. And we were rushed. And later, right before the test we ended up with plenty of time. We were able to go back and review some things, but I think I could have structured it a little different? (P4I3-6582)

As the semester progresses, Mary stills struggles with the way the material is presented in the textbook. However, her increased knowledge of instruction and knowledge of subject matter

allow her to make modifications to the presentation of content that are also informed by the

knowledge of students she has been expanding throughout the semester.

> A few times I felt there was something just out of order or kind of omitted. […] [For example], I understand why the book kind of breaks the use of [direct and indirect object] pronouns. And then have an indirect and direct object pronoun section in chapter eight, but since we don't cover chapter eight in my class, they're assuming that the students won't try to create this sentence on their own, so I did mention it. I made just one slide with the main points and gave them some examples, but I just put at the top, '*más en capítulo 8*' [more in chapter 8]. And I said, 'look, this isn't going to be in your test, but if you were creating a sentence with these I don't want you to start doing it incorrectly until someone tells you later'. […] And that has changed thorough the semester a lot, because as I was starting, I was pacing my lesson and even my slides pretty much based on the book. Like if it was a grammar lesson with like five different points they make in the book, I would make five slides with those points. But as we went on I realized some of them to me didn't need to be separated, or some of them weren't like a whole separate thing, whereas some things should have been mentioned more. So I've kind of gone more like adapting it than I was at the beginning. (P4I7-17915)

Mary understands that her experience as a Spanish instructor is only beginning. Her

knowledge of instruction is in its early stages of development and will continue to expand in the

future. However, she is content with her performance and looks forward to being able to apply

what she has learned this semester to the next.

> I just feel like there's a lot more to learn about teaching to make the class go smoother. Overall I feel pretty good with how the class is going for being [sic] just starting out. But there are definitely things I need to improve on; like having better questions to ask them; being able to think off the top of my head different things to incorporate to help them come to the realizations they need to make, or to make use of their knowledge a little bit more. […] Next semester I think I'll have a little more background like, 'what's the typical thing they're going to think of to ask?' It's hard sometimes when you're trying to anticipate what they are going to ask about. Like I looked up the word for guitar pick because the guy in the video I showed had one, but nobody asked. I still told them, though [Laughter]. (P4I4[SR]-149)

In this section we explored Mary's developing knowledge of instruction, and were able to

see how it, along with her knowledge of subject matter, guided important pedagogical decisions.

In the following section we will take a more in-depth look at Mary's knowledge of subject matter

and how it informs her teaching practice.

8.2.4 Knowledge of Subject Matter

Despite Mary's inexperience as a Spanish teacher, she is able to articulate her knowledge of subject matter throughout our conversations and in her reflexive journal entries. She not only demonstrates her understanding of the linguistic and cultural aspects of the language, but she can also discern how deep she should go in the presentation of those aspects. For example, during one of the classes I observe, one student asks what the Spanish word for 'funny' is. Mary mentions a few options, but ultimately only wrote one of them on the board for the student to use. Even though she is not completely certain of having made the right pedagogical choice, her reasonings behind such a choice illustrate Mary's knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of students, and knowledge of context.

> I decided that '*cómico*' [funny, comical] was the one choice, partly because I know that that's the first one that appears in the materials usually in Spanish class. And then I guess… sometimes a teacher can overwhelm a student with, 'well, there are six different ways you can say 'funny', depending on what kind of 'funny' you mean'. In that case I was just trying to encourage him to keep talking. So if gave him one way to say something quickly, then he'll be able to use it. But it is hard. I kind of question myself on that. If I had a one-on-one, I would have probably have asked him 'what kind of funny do you mean?' (P4I2-10161)

As a first-time GSTA, Mary's knowledge of the cultural and linguistic aspects of Spanish covered in the class is expanding to include information about the level of difficulty that different concepts and grammar structures may present to the students. Her concerns regarding an up-coming exam and the students' level of preparedness illustrate her knowledge of subject matter.

> There's one thing they might have trouble with which is one of the readings [on the test]. And we did talk about the differences in the seasons in the northern hemisphere versus the southern hemisphere, but those concepts can be hard for somebody who is familiar with the concept. And in that reading some of my students can completely miss those questions. And then the present progressive tense, which is very useful and not too complicated, is not on the test at all. But with '*ser*' versus '*estar*' [two forms of the verb 'to be'], which I think is very important, they just got the meat of the lesson today. And

the test is so soon. If I had gotten the test earlier, I would have put '*ser*' versus '*estar*' way ahead in the class order, and talked about it every single class. (P4I5-13103)

Mary's reflection on her experience teaching direct object pronouns further illustrates the expanding nature of her knowledge of subject matter and her knowledge of students.

At first I think they were really lost, but I think they caught on when we did the examples. And today I did a quick review and one exercise, and they got them. So I was pleased with that. I was afraid this was going to be a little tough for them, but I think the idea is harder than the implementation of it. It will probably [be even] harder when we get to indirect objects and I ask them to identify the parts of speech in a long sentence. This really wasn't too hard for them. (P4I6[SR]-6182)

Mary's journal entries often bring up her successes in sharing cultural information with students. They also show her efforts to bring Spanish culture to them in a way that is interesting and engaging. The next two excerpts from journal entries illustrate Mary's knowledge of subject matter and her knowledge of instruction. They also show her increasing satisfaction with some of her pedagogical choices.

I have found the students to be very responsive to videos about cultural topics covered in the books. I shared a good video from YouTube, and just described it to them in Spanish with the audio on mute. I was pleasantly surprised at their interest level, and I feel like I connected with them more than if I would've used the video's audio. (P4J1-1582)

I've been able to incorporate some of the cultural lessons by showing related images and using my own improvised explanations in Spanish of facts and information about the countries. It seems like the students can understand me better and ask more questions when I do that, as opposed to showing the cultural videos provided by the textbook company. (P4J2-1892)

As she reflects on her strategies regarding questions about cultural information, Mary's perceived limitations are evident. However, her knowledge of subject matter and knowledge of instruction allow her to provide satisfactory answers, even if they come at a later time.

It can be hard if you don't know the answer. Luckily I haven't got to too much outside of what I know about, because we covered the US, and now Mexico, which I'm mostly familiar with compared to the other countries. But I need to be honest with them if I don't know the answer. I'll try to prepare as much as I can in advance, but then I would just let

them know, 'I don't know, but I think it may be this, or we can find out and I'll let you know next class'. (P4I2-12201)

During one of the classes I observe, Mary asks the students, in Spanish, if they could name examples of Mexican music. One of the students suggests Salsa as a possible answer, (which is actually incorrect). However, Mary does not correct the student's answer. In the reasonings behind that decision, Mary's knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of instruction and knowledge of students are revealed.

> Even then I was questioning myself, 'should I spend the time?' In that case I was happy he kind of connected the two because the book kind of mentioned the origins of salsa when we went over the US; that it's also popular in the US. And I had shown them a video of salsa dancers. I should have probably let him know more, or I could have just kind of paused. Usually with vocab errors I just kind of rephrase it correctly. I could have said, 'nowadays they do dance salsa in Mexico, even though it's not from Mexico'. I just want to engage the students a little more, because I found at first they were so reluctant to speak –and at least he understood what I was asking-. I would hate to say, 'no, that's wrong' when they get the nerve to participate. (P4I2-12856)

As mentioned earlier, Mary is also a certified translator. She had been working in the field for two years by the time she began her work as a GSTA, and continues to do so part-time while pursuing her master's degree. She considers such experience to have greatly informed her knowledge of subject matter, and to affect how she perceives the information in the class materials.

> As a project manager I don't translate but I review everything. So especially I look at style, and in general I notice a lot more things. Even things with the textbook turn me crazy. Like, 'why did they do this? These are not '*modismos*'[idioms]. Why is the book saying '*modismos*'?' '*Modismo*' is an expression that the words in it do not tell you the definition. And then all the expressions that they give are not '*modismos*'; they're not idioms. […] In my PowerPoint and the way I was saying it, I kept saying '*expresiones*' [expressions]. (P4I4[SR]-3270)

It is evident from the previous excerpt that Mary's knowledge of subject matter allows her to make pedagogical decisions that can sometimes contradict the class materials. It also allows her to identify missing information she considers important.

Usually I don't tell give them extra vocab, but I thought this was huge because the book doesn't give them the word for toilet. They have it in the teaching materials, but not in the student ones. And the other problem, their main word for bedroom is '*alcoba*'. They don't say '*cuarto*' which is more general, but they do have like at the bottom of the page '*dormitorio*' and '*habitacion*' [all four Spanish terms in this excerpt are variations of the word 'bedroom']. I find that a little weird. I wouldn't have chosen '*alcoba*' as my main choice. I thought maybe as a non-native speaker, the people I've been exposed to maybe weren't the norm, but I looked it up in the dictionary. According to Oxford, the word '*alcoba*' could be a bedroom in a sexual reference. So things like that are weird to me. (P4I4[SR]-5568)

The previous excerpt also illustrates how Mary's knowledge of subject matter is complemented by her knowledge of context. In the following section we further explore Mary's knowledge of context and how it permeates her teaching practice.

8.2.5   *Knowledge of Context*

In both the interview and journal data, Mary's knowledge of context seems to be focused on that of the Spanish program and the people in it. As a matter of fact, with Mary we first notice a trend among the inexperienced GSTAs in the project that differs greatly from the experienced group: peer collaboration. Whereas the latter group's collaboration with fellow GSTAs is somewhat limited and sporadic, the members of the inexperienced group seem to rely on their colleagues much more. The trend begins to emerge early in Mary's teaching practice. As she comments on a song she uses successfully to illustrate the vocabulary of family relations, we find the first of many references to the collaborative nature of the new GSTAs' relationship. "*The vocab [in the song] is perfect. I had heard the song before. They use it as like a public service announcement on the radio. But a friend of mine, who is also a GTA, pointed out that it's perfect for that '*familia*' [family] vocab*" (P4I2-4217).

Although Mary does not make reference to how the collaboration began (we will learn that from Margarita in the following chapter), she describes the benefits and dynamics of her relationship with her fellow GSTAs.

They've been really helpful for ideas of what topics to give them for writing assignments. A lot of questions… like 'how much time do they get for re-write it? How do you set up your grade book for grading the online homework?' They are helpful for some of the logistics; like giving back assignments and things like that. I've been sharing materials with the other GTAs who are just starting. We have a lot more interaction. Mostly, it's extra things. Like a few videos that some of the girls [other new GSTAs] have found. We share the study guide. And we all have so far been very much working alone with our lesson plans, but some of the images, or other things we use in class to show, we share a lot. Like the video that my class loved, which I found on YouTube about the cliff divers in Acapulco. […] I recommended it to some of the other new GTAs. (P4I3-5492)

Despite the fact that she still creates most of her materials, such as PowerPoints, Mary finds the collaboration with other new GSTAs to be "*extremely beneficial*" (P4I5-16475). She believes that the help she has received from them has improved her experience as a first-time Spanish instructor. The same can be said about her knowledge of instruction.

Every time I didn't have enough time to prepare materials… or there's been a lot of cases when I've wanted to do a different activity form the one in the book, and someone has something they'd either prepared or found, or they had a good idea. That's helped me a lot. I don't always use other people's materials, and for the most part, we're making our own lesson plans and PowerPoints, but it's helped a lot considering the time issues. (P4I5-16463)

As the semester progresses, the collaborative work between the new GSTAs evolves from just exchanging materials to sometimes working together in the creation of materials to be shared among them. "*Margarita and I made the practice test that we're going to use*" (P4I5-15321). And even though she does not make use of all the materials her fellow GSTAs share, she is able to obtain ideas that she can later discuss with them. The following excerpt is an example of Mary's knowledge of context, in the form of her knowledge of her colleagues' teaching materials, informing her teaching practice.

[One] thing I struggle with is spending too much time introducing the concepts myself. There've been other times where that has worked out a lot better, with shorter concepts. This one [direct object pronouns] I kind of knew was going to take longer just to introduce the idea of it. If I could get them to prepare ahead of time it probably would help. I've been meaning to talk about that with Lula [another new GSTA]. I don't know how she does her class, I've never observed it, but I know a lot of times on her

PowerPoints when she shares them it'll say, 'homework for the weekend: read whatever pages for Monday'. So that might be something good to try. (P4I6[SR]-14572)

It is evident from our conversations that the collaboration among the new GSTAs is far from one-sided. As much as she gets from her peers, Mary also gives back; even when she feels somewhat guilty about the nature of some of her contributions. Mary's knowledge of context, knowledge of subject matter and knowledge of self are all illustrated in her reflection.

> I find that I'm so anal [laughter], because I'm a translator, so I notice every little thing. I've been questioning that a lot during the last few weeks since we share so much stuff now. I'm always thinking, 'am I sounding rude to correct them?', because I send the stuff back with 'I found these changes'. But my conscience… I can't just let that misspelling in the worksheet or the misused word to make it to the students. I have trained myself to be like that, so I'm pointing those things out or changing them for them. And we are open enough for that I think. Hopefully they take it well. I worry sometimes that it comes off kind of snobby, but I can't help myself [laughter]. (P4I5-15485)

Even though the collaboration described thus far is mainly among new GSTAs, Mary has benefited from the collaborative nature of experienced GSTAs, specifically Pat. Mary is one of the two GSTAs who have observed Pat's class. As she recalls her experience as an observer, Mary points out Pat's use of the transcripts for the cultural videos as a pedagogical tool, and the reasons why she would like to try that. She also finds a teaching strategy they have in common.

> I haven't done it, but I think it would be a good idea. Because he was having them read along with the script and highlight or mark each time the heard certain verbs. Like they were covering '*saber*' [to know]. He does the PowerPoints in edit mode a lot too. (P4I6[SR]-4082)

Mary's knowledge of context also includes the support she receives from the Spanish program, both from the program coordinator and the materials available to GSTAs, and also from the required foreign language teaching class she is taking this semester. From the latter, she is hoping to receive information to help fill what she considers important gaps in her knowledge of instruction. As she expands on her perception of the class, she is able to point out its benefits, and the expectations the class has yet to meet.

So far it has been helpful to a certain extent. I think mainly the professor has been taking a lot of time to ask us what we think is working for us and the things we've been struggling with in our classes, so he can give us ideas on how to handle tough situations. And also a few times he has given us ideas as far as activities to work with. My only frustration so far is that pretty much all materials available to me, including in that class, they have plenty of great examples of how to incorporate interesting activities with vocabulary, which I don't find very hard to do. I've been able to, I think, do different activities. The main thing I've been struggling with is incorporating the grammar lessons in different ways. (P4I3-125)

Even though Mary is not getting the help she desires regarding the teaching of grammar, she identifies several teaching practices she has adopted which have come from the foreign language teaching class. Mary's knowledge of instruction is informed by such practices.

[I learn about] incorporating more questions for the students as I go along, instead of just giving them the answer each time; using more images in the PowerPoint, which is usually what I do; and come up and write things on the board, and to use the images to make connections on the board, or things like that. Oh, and he also gave us a great idea in class about how to incorporate the cultural lessons more, partly for the timely constraints. Sometimes we just had to have them read at home, which we weren't able to really test. So he had this suggestion to incorporate a few true/false questions in some of our quizzes. So I did a few of those on a quiz. (P4I3-1138)

Early in the semester, Mary's knowledge of context regarding important policies of the Spanish seems clear. "*The department tells us not to translate*" (P4I2-6859). And she seems to have an understanding of the department's expectations of its instructors. "*I think [they expect me] to successfully impart the skills and knowledge to the students. Not be too boring of an instructor. Just to help them be successful in their later Spanish courses, I think*" (P4I1-12832). However, as the semester progresses, she begins to struggle with her understanding of such expectations.

I have struggled with the balance between including interesting and interactive activities, which are encouraged by [the professor in the GTA class] and seem to strengthen the students speaking and listening skills, and teaching to the test since some grammar points and general concepts seem to confuse the students if I don't spend enough time on them in class. It can be frustrating since it seems like we get conflicting information from the department. (P4J2-893)

The resources available to the Spanish instructors in the department are also part of Mary's knowledge of context. She has not found some of these materials to be all that helpful to her teaching practice.

> I know we do have some things available through the uLearn site. But for things like quizzes, there were like two or three, and they were all on the same topic. There were three examples from like the first quiz that you would make for 1001, but they were from the old textbook, I think. (P4I7-3367)

The department's policy to reduce grades of D, F, and W among students has taken a toll on Mary. This portion of her knowledge of context not only affects Mary's teaching practice, but also her feelings toward the Spanish program.

> It's really, really stressful. I find it really disheartening. I understand that they have it, and I think it's important to keep track of that kind of thing, you know, especially over time, if there's a trend they can see with a teacher. But in a way it's really unfair. In the last few weeks I've felt really overwhelmed with it because I had three Ws, and there's one student who stopped coming to class very early. She didn't even take the first exam, so she had like a 17% class average. She never replied to my emails but then never dropped the class. I was really stressed about that, but then in the last meeting we had with [the program coordinator], he basically said 'once you send them two emails it's almost like the school would rather they get an F than a W'. I also have several students who were right on the line, with like a C-, or a D+, that could get worse if they keep missing classes, or missing homework. […] There's one student that could have been placed in a higher-level class, but his performance has been so poor, missed so many classes and assignments, that he's getting a D. So it's a little unfair if they see his D as my lack of teaching skills. I don't know what else to do. I've spoken with him, emailed him. It is really sad. Honestly, the last few weeks have been really frustrating and stressful for me. (P4I5-5688)

Despite her negative feelings in relation to that particular policy, Mary does not feel abandoned by the department, especially by the program coordinator. She explains that she appreciates his support in general and particularly in dealing with a difficult situation with one student.

> [The program coordinator] I find really helpful. It's great that he is really approachable. I've never been a master's student before, but I think the program here, they are very open. I feel as a new student that I have support. I had an issue with one of my students for the first re-write. […] On the first day of the semester I had gone over the cheating

policy, and even mentioned the problems with using Google. I had specifically mentioned that in connection to the re-write. But when I got hers back, it was like leaps and bounds ahead of what she had done in class; with more complex verb tenses, which a 1001 student shouldn't know. So it was clear to me that either she had had major help, or she had used Google. So I asked [the coordinator] his opinion on how to handle it. […] I didn't want to just say, 'you cheated. I'm not going to grade this', but I asked her to come speak to me in my office. He said that was probably a good idea, and to ask her how she went about doing the assignment: 'where did you find the verbs? Can you tell me what this means here? How did you do this part?' so I think that it went a lot smoother than it would have if I just had to guess what to do, so it felt pretty good to have his guidance. (P4I3-3162)

Compared to that of her experienced counterparts, Mary's personal practical knowledge is still in its beginning stages of development. However, and in spite of her struggles as a new GSTA, she considers her first attempt at teaching Spanish to be a positive one. "*There's definitively things I need to improve on, but I am pretty happy for my first semester*"(P4I7-125). She also believes that, even after only one semester, her skills as a Spanish instructor have improved.

I'm a lot more comfortable, so I can think more clearly… and just the experience of anticipating a little bit more. [I have a better understanding of] the pace to go, and things to expect them to be catching on quickly, or the things that will be more difficult for them. I'm also a little better at answering questions that come up as I am introducing something. (P4I7-9589)

8.3   Mary's Future

Mary's plans for the future start much earlier than with what happens after graduation. She is focused on enhancing her language teaching skills, and has specific ideas on how to achieve that. "*I'm going to take more education and language teaching classes… That's really what I would like to do to keep improving. And also I would like to keep observing more in the next couple semesters*" (P4I7-10057).

Mary hopes to pursue a career in language teaching after completing her graduate studies. Her first experience as a GSTA has influenced her plans for her professional and academic future.

> I am really considering teaching uh, but I am not really sure exactly what level yet. I'm thinking I will probably get my certificate the K through 12 certificate, but I am not sure really. My other thought is to go teach English. I think I am going to apply to go teach English in Mexico.
> *NYP: Do you think you are going to make a career teaching?*
> I think so. I didn't think that before, but I like it a lot. […] I've been doing translation and I do like it, but I think that for me it might be best to kind of do that on the side. (P4I7-538)

8.4   Chapter Summary

Mary's own experiences when she was a beginning level Spanish learner were quite different than the one the students in her class are going through. Her summers in Mexico provided an exposure to the language that motivated her to pursue Spanish as her career, either as a translator or a language instructor.

Mary's first semester teaching Spanish is challenging for her. As a first-time GSTA, she struggles with the challenges of language teaching in a new context without the benefits of familiarity with the context, the materials, the content, and the students. Mary's personal practical knowledge is in its early stages of development, and out of all of the participants so far, she seems to show the most growth throughout the observed semester.

With Mary, we begin to recognize a trend of peer collaboration that differs from what the more veteran participants have experienced. Though she is negatively affected by departmental policy (i.e., the pressure to reduce DFW grades), she appreciates and counts on the support of the people in the program. Mary's first experience as a GSTA has shifted her professional plans since she now says she is thinking about pursuing a career in language teaching, as opposed to translation exclusively.

9   RESULTS: MARGARITA

Like Mary, Margarita was teaching for the first time as a GSTA in the Spanish program during the fall semester of 2012. At the time of her participation in the project, Margarita was teaching one Spanish 1001 course. However, while all other participants in the project were teaching 50-minute sessions three times a week, Margarita was teaching a 75-minute session twice a week. Margarita was also the only participant in the project to teach what is considered an early evening class, which met from 5:30pm to 7:15pm. As with all other participant chapters, Margarita's narrative will be composed primarily in her own words. Section 9.1 presents an overview of Margarita's background. Section 9.2 explores Margarita's PPK in relation to the sub-categories previously discussed. Margarita's plans for the future will be presented in section 9.3. And section 9.4 presents a summary of the findings in the chapter. Table 11 shows Margarita's code assignations in order of frequency.

Table 11 Code Assignations in Margarita's Data in Order of Frequency

Code	Number of Assignations	Percentage
Knowledge of Students	**225 (total)**	**32.1%**
Student-teacher interaction	57	
Student attitudes	56	
Differences among students	36	
Student limitations	33	
Student abilities	18	
Student learning	10	
Student expectations	8	
Student needs	5	
Student-student interaction	2	
Knowledge of Instruction	**178 (total)**	**25.3%**
Knowledge of teaching resources	37	
Time management	32	
Knowledge of assignments/activities	31	

Knowledge of teaching methodology	23	
Flexibility	18	
Knowledge of assessment	16	
Knowledge of language acquisition/learning	11	
Planning	10	
Knowledge of Self	**67 (total)**	**9.5%**
Limitations	45	
Positive aspects	15	
Personality	17	
Improvement	10	
Knowledge of Context	**65 (total)**	**9.3%**
Department/program context	30	
Peer collaboration	20	
Context outside the university	12	
Classroom context	3	
Program support	**32 (total)**	**4.6%**
Program training	22	
General program support	10	
Knowledge of Subject Matter	**31 (total)**	**4.4%**
Linguistic knowledge	22	
Cultural knowledge	9	
Background	**28 (total)**	**4%**
Work experience	10	
Academic background	9	
Language learning background	4	
Personal background	3	
Apprenticeship of observation	2	
Learning of instruction	0	
Frustrations with Teaching	**18**	**2.6%**
Knowledge of Purpose	**17**	**2.4%**
Influence of GTA Experience	**16**	**2.2%**
Teaching enjoyment	**13**	**1.8%**
Language Use	**6**	**0.9%**
Future	**4 (total)**	**0.6%**
Non-teaching, professional future	2	
Teaching-related future	1	
Academic future	1	
Personal future	0	
Current Goals	**2**	**0.3%**
Total Code Assignations	**702**	**100%**

9.1   Margarita's Background

Margarita was born in Atlanta and raised in Venezuela by a Spanish mother and a

Venezuelan father. At the time of her participation in the project, she was 29 years old, and in

her first year in law school. Margarita was the only one of the participants not pursuing graduate

studies in Spanish or Education. Her relationship with Spanish is complex and a significant part

of her identity

> I lived in Atlanta until I was three and a half years old. And then my parents moved back
> to Venezuela and I was there until 17. I also travelled to Spain because my mother is
> from Spain, so I spent a ton of time there. Hence sometime I have a Spanish accent,
> which my students last night pointed out: 'why do you say that like that? That's not the
> way people in Latin America say that'. So I explained that I do have a lot of that, you
> know. In fact people in Venezuela used to make fun of my accent whenever I came back
> from Spain. So at 17 I moved to The States and I started going to college here, but I
> actually did a year of high school here in Atlanta. And then I went back to Venezuela for
> six months and then came back here and stayed for a long time
> *NYP: So what do you consider to be your first language?*
> Spanish. I was listening to Spanish at home since I was born, but I think what happened
> was my mother took classes [at this university], so I think it has a day care service where
> my mother dropped me off every morning. […] So I got a lot of English at the day care,
> but at home it has always been all-Spanish. (P5I1-7142)

Margarita's experience as a language instructor began in Venezuela. "*When I was in*

Venezuela I taught English; one-on-one tutoring, and very small groups, so that was my true

beginning" (P5I1-1798). In the US, she began her undergraduate studies, and continued

expanding her teaching experience, as a math major.

> I was a math tutor. I was good at math, I was a math major back then, taking higher-level
> math classes so I tutored Calculus one and two. […] I was then hired by the language lab
> as a Spanish tutor. […] I was one of four of five Spanish tutors. And I basically had to
> grab the Spanish 101 book and just digest it all, and teach anybody who came through or
> answer questions; help any student who came to the lab, and I was really active in that.
> […]. And it was pretty neat because I had to teach myself how to teach Spanish. I learned
> that way a lot… because even though I learned what the subjunctive was in high school it
> didn't really click until I had to teach it and I was like, 'holy cow!' (P5I1-2434)

Margarita later transferred colleges, eventually changed her major to international affairs, and continued working as a Spanish tutor. "*I became a Spanish tutor for the athletic association. So once again I had these one-on-one classes, but sometimes I had bigger groups, like three or four people, and they were all football players so it was pretty interesting*" (P5I1-2991). After completing her undergraduate studies, Margarita returned to Venezuela, where she intended to work in the international affairs field.

> I went to Venezuela for ten months and was looking for a job. And they were offering me jobs that had good titles but offered little money. So my mother said, 'hey, if you want some translations to make money you can take some of my clients'. And translations pay really well. And then I started going to conferences, and there was more of the international affairs feeling which was what I went to school for. […] I was doing some dance training and eventually I taught dance classes. It was flexible so I could train during the day and I could work at night and on the weekends. But after that I came back to The States and I did my master's. And while I was doing my master's, I started teaching [salsa] dance lessons for a studio here in Atlanta. […] It was a challenge in a different way because it's difficult, you know. […] I was training six or eight hours a day and I wasn't learning how to teach dance. It's just different. It's like speaking Spanish and being able to teach Spanish; not the same. (P5I1-3682)

Margarita's translation work continued while completing her master's degree in international affairs, and it remained uninterrupted even during her participation in the project. She also worked as a certified court interpreter during her first semester in law school and as a GSTA. It was not Margarita's original intention to become a GSTA, but she is happy to have the opportunity.

> When I was accepted to the college of law I met with the admissions director there and we were talking about GRAs [graduate research assistantships] in the College of Law. Turns out you cannot have one if you're a first year student, but I told her that I was a translator and interpreter and she told me to go to the Translation and Interpretation department and ask them if they could give me a GRA. So I called them and they said they didn't do that, but they told me to go to the department of Modern and Classical Languages and ask them. They gave me [the program coordinator's] email address, and I emailed him and then came to meet with him. I showed him my resume and said this is what I've done as far as teaching. For a living I'm a translator and interpreter; can I get a GRA with you? And he said, 'we don't gave GRAs we have GTAs' and he said to just wait. He explained to me that it's all about priorities and that the people who work at the

Spanish program come first, then the people working on PhDs, and then the MA students and if there's anything left, they grab people from other programs at the university. But he said, 'we'll probably grab you because we have a pretty big need'. So I waited and then got the news. And it's great. I love teaching. (P5I1-125)

In the following section, Margarita's love of teaching and the challenges of a new teaching context become evident. We will see how Margarita's PPK expands and adapts as her first semester as a GSTA progresses, and how it informs her teaching practice.

9.2 Margarita's Personal Practical Knowledge

9.2.1 Knowledge of Self

Out of the total codes assigned to Margarita's data, 9.5% were connected to her knowledge of self. Despite the low percentage, Margarita's knowledge of self comes to the surface with clarity in our conversations and in her journal entries. She is aware of how what she considers her strengths as a Spanish instructor benefit her practice and the students in her class.

I think I'm very lively and energetic; that kind of keeps them awake. It's a later class. It starts at 5:30, so a lot of them are sort of winding down. And I think my personality can perk them up a little bit. I think being a native speaker is definitely a strength. And I think I have a lot of prior knowledge of the language because I have tutored Spanish previously and extensively. […] It's amazing the things I know because of that prior experience. Today something came up and I was like, 'well that's a conjunction'. If I hadn't tutored Spanish I probably wouldn't know what a conjunction is, because when you grow up with the language you don't learn stuff like that. (P5I5-809)

Margarita is also aware of the kind of image she wants to portray to the students. "*I always tell them, 'I'm a native speaker. I know exactly how this is said, even if I can't give you the correct grammatical rule'. […] I'm nice and everything, but they know when push comes to shove, I am the instructor*" (P5I6[SR]-8170). She also seems to have a clear understanding of the kind of relationship she hopes to achieve with them. Her knowledge of self and her knowledge of purpose are evident in her words.

I think [it's important to] show students that you care about them that it's not only a job where you show up, teach, and bye-see-you-next-class. I think if you show that human side, you know, that's so important, so basic, and it's so often forgotten. I try hard for that part of me to show all the time. If you can show that, you'd have a different kind of rapport; you can do more. (P5I1-11847)

Margarita makes extensive use of gestures while teaching. During our first stimulated recall interview, she showed surprise as to the extent of her gesticulation in the classroom. However, during the second stimulated recall interview, her knowledge of self helps her come to terms with her use of gestures. "*I think last time I was a bit surprised by how many gestures I used. But I think I normally use a lot of gestures, even outside the classroom. It's part of my personality. And I don't think it's negative*" (P5I6[SR]-5274).

As she reflects on the ways to motivate students to learn, Margarita's knowledge of self comes to the surface. Her experience as a learner informs her beliefs regarding student motivation.

The teacher may be just a great instructor, and not all students are going to like him or her. But then there's always going to be students that think, 'I want to learn more'. That happens to me as a student. There's stuff that I don't think I would like, but then I love the professor and then I really like the stuff. So this assumption is based on my own experience. If you're dull and slow, and not very assertive and not very perky, then students are not going to be very motivated. And if you don't know the concepts and the material, if you're a disorganized mess, then that's going to hurt the students' motivation. (P4I5-5478)

Margarita's personal experience as a learner also informs teaching decisions regarding student assessment, even when the response from the students is not a positive one.

I gave my students their first quiz this week. I think the general feeling was that it was too hard, which is actually good because when I was a student the professors that I appreciated the most were the ones that were the hardest. Of course that's not how you feel at the very beginning, but afterwards you realized that you've learned the most. so I don't mind that. (P5I2-76)

Another example of the influence of Margarita's knowledge of self, and particularly her experience as a learner, on her teaching practice comes in the manner in which she chooses to

review after a test. She opts for a strategy that would be effective for her as a learner, even though it consumes more class time. "*I missed about 30% of my class going over the exam and the review. […] I just wanted to take the time to write out the answers on the board. I mean, that works for me because I'm a visual learner*" (P5I6[SR]-10837).

Margarita's knowledge of self further informs her teaching practice in how she responds to students' requests for help with low scores as well as missing and late assignments. She gives much of herself to the students, but has high expectations of them in return.

> I will help them as much as I can if they prove to me that they're working; that they're showing effort. If they're slacking off and they don't show me that effort and that work, I'm not going to do anything for them. I'll go to battle for a student who's doing their best and is still struggling maybe, like they're not getting it. I'll do anything and everything I can to help them, but if they're not working, no. (P5I2-7012)

Margarita also shows awareness of what she considers her weaknesses. Despite her extensive tutoring experience, she understands that the context of the Spanish classroom at the university level is one that she is entering for the first time. Her knowledge of self and her knowledge of context come to the surface in her reflection.

> My main weakness is definitely that this is my first semester teaching. […] I'm learning as I go often times. So it's not only content-wise, but also psychologically; I don't think I have the expertise or the experience of someone who's been teaching at the college level for many years. I think it takes experience to really know how to handle these types of students. *(P5I5-1793)*

While Margarita 'learns as she goes', she faces different challenges, which will be presented in the following sections. Her knowledge of self and her previous experience as a dancer, provide her with the understanding that those challenges can become apparent to the students.

> I need to learn how to hide my 'dang!' moments better, because you're there in the spotlight. And I'm used to being in the spotlight because I used to do dance performances. And it wasn't just 25 students; it was hundreds of people. But it was three minutes, four minutes; not an hour and 15 minutes. And it's something I rehearsed so

much. Now there are so many things going on, and they're so easy to miss. So you live and learn [laughter]. (P5I3-17589)

One of the challenges Margarita faces as a GSTA is the complexity of keeping track of students' grades. She is aware of her limitations in this area and, in part, relies on the students to catch possible errors.

> There's so many [assignments]. It's just like numbers and numbers and numbers, and I feel like the possibility for error increases. Sometimes I've caught myself saying, 'why is she getting that grade? She should not be getting a low grade', and then I go back and it's like, 'oh, snap! I messed up this grade here'. And I'm sure I catch it sometimes but not always. So I feel that if they're not checking, if it's purely on me, there are going to be errors. (P5I5-5013)

After seeing her teaching on video for the first time, Margarita reflected on her demeanor in the classroom. The developing nature of her knowledge of self becomes evident as she reflects on her observation and the changes she has made in her teaching practice.

> I didn't see myself as being so secure when they asked me questions about some things. And that's got nothing to do with knowing the answer; it's just the way you portray yourself. And I think I saw something like that. I didn't think, 'she looks like she's about to break down', but I did notice some of that, and I thought that was not the way my students should perceive me. I should be more assertive, and more secure. And in fact, it came up in the class, that I didn't know an answer, and I said, 'yeah. I don't know the answer, so I'll get back to you'. I think previously, I would have tried to answer, but it would have shown that I didn't know. So now I think there's a change in my demeanor as far as that goes. (P5I5-14478)

Despite her resolution to be more assertive in the classroom, Margarita does not shy away from opportunities to bring past linguistic errors to the classroom. "*They thought that term, 'agua con gas' [carbonated water] was so funny! So I told them, when I first got to the US, I used to say 'water with gas', and everybody would laugh at me [Laughter]*" (P5I6[SR]-6438). Her goal to be approachable to the students is clear in one of her final reflections at the end of the project.

> I want them to see me more as just another person, and not the instructor. And that's what I've been trying to do from the very beginning. I've always told them, 'I'm a student like you guys are'. And I understand that causes a little bit of authority problems, because they see me and I look young and I behave very young. But I think I've achieved a

balance between letting them know that I'm just a student and understand what they're going through, and letting them know that I call the shots in this game, and they have to follow me. (P5I7-14678)

Margarita's relationship with the students in her class is the focus of the following section as her knowledge of students is explored. The influence of such knowledge in Margarita's teaching practice will also be discussed.

9.2.2 Knowledge of Students

As has been the case with all the participants in the project thus far, Margarita's knowledge of students received the majority of the codes assigned to her data, with 32.1% of the total codes. During the first class observation, I notice that Margarita already knows most students' names, and that she has re-named some of them with Hispanic names. We later talk about her strategy to learn the students' names, and she reveals the reasonings behind re-naming some of them.

> I asked them to have nametags, and I also had one for me, because that's just my way of learning their names. And I think by now I know 90% of their names. […] And the re-naming thing was because some of them have names that I have a hard time pronouncing or remembering. Like the one guy I named '*José*', I think he name is [name], and it's like an African name I don't really know how to roll. And this girl, her name is spelled funny, and I don't want to mispronounce it, so we changed her name too [Laughter]. Because we do it together. I say, 'hey, throw names at me', and we pick one. But it's only the two of them right now. I may have to pick one for another girl. They just laugh about it. Every time I call them by their Spanish nickname they laugh. I don't know what's going on through their mind, but it's definitely not something bad. (P5I2-16187)

As the semester progresses, it becomes apparent that there are students coming in late to class regularly. During our first stimulated recall session, Margarita reveals her thoughts regarding the tardiness situation as she sees several students come in late to class in the video. Margarita's knowledge of students and knowledge of self come to the surface.

> Not everybody, but I think a lot of them work, which is why they're taking an evening class. And I get it. I was late to class for the first time this semester because I had an

urgent translation to turn in, and the client needed it; it was a press release, and it had to go out, and I had to turn it in. I'm on the same boat. (P5I4[SR]-11061)

Margarita's knowledge of students affects her teaching practice in her choice of practice exercises and how such exercises are implemented. As the semester progresses, she becomes aware of the students' limitations, and is able to make use of her newly acquired knowledge to better suit their needs. The developing nature of Margarita's knowledge of students is evident in her reasonings.

> We've done a couple of these exercises before; where they have the columns of info to make their own sentences. And I think these are great because they really make the students think. But I have to model the first sentence, because there are still people who don't know what to do with them. […] I almost feel like I should have done this [the modeling] at the very beginning of the semester, and I don't think I ever did. I think I just assumed that they could and would read the instructions and know what to do. (P5I4[SR]-7222)

The effects of Margarita's expanding knowledge of students are also revealed in a teaching practice that she begins to implement during the second month of the semester: Any time Margarita calls out a page number in the book for information or practice, she writes the number on the board.

> I don't know if they don't understand me sometimes or if they just don't want to move quickly. Because I say, '*página tal, página tal*' [page such, page such], and it's been 10-15 seconds and they're just looking at me. They haven't moved a finger. I think part of it is they're dragging their feet, and sometimes they just don't understand me. Sometimes I think I just speak fast, and I have to slow myself down. But I repeat. I don't know… (P5I4[SR]-12185)

Margarita's developing knowledge of students informs her on what to do, and also what not to do. One of Margarita's journal entries reveals another example of her 'learning as she goes' experience in the classroom as a first-semester GSTA.

> I gave one extra point to everyone that showed up on Halloween with some kind of costume or hat or shirt for the occasion. I didn't announce in the previous class I would do that and some students complained, and one said she didn't celebrate Halloween. I'm not sure if it was a good idea… (P5J4-1121)

Margarita shows great interest in receiving feedback from the students in her class. In two separate points in the semester, she requests written comments regarding the class. What she learns from such comments becomes part of her knowledge of students and, in turn, informs different pedagogical choices.

> I asked them to write one thing they liked about the class and one thing they didn't like about the class. […] It seems they really like the videos. I think they've been really good: lots of conjugation videos, and cultural videos, so they really like that. I've been doing a lot of pair exercises and they seem tired of them. I think I did four or five last class, and now they're like, 'we don't want to do this anymore'. They feel a bit at a loss; not sure if they're doing the exercises right. In their comments they said, 'we want to make sure we're doing it right, and we want more interaction with you'. So that's why this class was mostly me interacting with them. (P5I4[SR]-921)

In regards to the use of videos in the classroom, Margarita further reveals her knowledge of students as she describes their reaction to the videos.

> I think they enjoy them. I think they laugh. I think some of them sing. And I think that's so neat. […] And I also try to get them motivated to go on YouTube and look for more videos, because they need to. They're used to searching for useless things, so they may as well search for useful things [Laughter]. I think they're a great teaching tool. (P5I5-15721)

As she continues to interact with the students and expand her knowledge of them, Margarita is able to form an idea of what their use of Spanish will be in the future.

> A couple of them have told me that they want to do study abroad programs, and they want to travel. And I always try to get them excited about it. 'Latin America is so gorgeous! You guys have to go!' So I think they'll use it for that. Some of them work in restaurants, so they'll use it for work. Some of them will just never use it, and get out of my class and feel so glad to be done with the Spanish thing. (P5I5-9863)

Margarita's knowledge of students also includes knowledge of individual members of her class. She knows some of their history with Spanish and is aware of their language skills. She is also able to identify changes in particular students, and make recommendations based on their individual needs.

This student usually participates more. I think… I don't want to speculate but I think this is the second time she's shown up in class where I could tell she was under the effect of something, or maybe she just hadn't slept the night before, or something. She doesn't have the book. She took 1001 last semester and dropped it. But she is good. She knows. You can tell in her writing and her assignments. […] Tonight… I could tell when she walked in. She had a different semblance [outward appearance]; a different mood. And a few weeks back when I ask her about the book, she said, 'I don't have money'. I told her she had to at least buy the code for $50 to do the online work and that's what she did. And we just had a homework assignment based on the book, and I think she went to the LARC and did it because she turned it in. I had recommended that, so I think she's doing that. (P5I4[SR]-8200)

Throughout our conversations and in her journal entries, it becomes evident that there is one particular student who has become a serious problem for Margarita. Mona (pseudonym) undergoes a transformation from interested to trouble student in a span of a few weeks. The first reference to Mona's behavior, and Margarita's concern takes place during our third interview. Margarita's developing knowledge of students allows her to identify parts of her response to Mona's actions that she later regrets.

Spanish does not come easy for her, but boy does she try! […] She's really interested in the class and always participates; always has a very positive attitude. So I called her to the front a couple of times [for an activity] and she was not responding; she was looking down. And when I went closer I noticed that she was texting. […] She had the worst attitude I've seen from most other students. So I knew something was wrong when I brought her to the front. And when I looked at her face, her eyes were swollen. In hindsight, I shouldn't have done what I did. I asked her how she was doing and I told her, 'you used to be very nice, and I know something is wrong', but I did it in front of the class. I wish I hadn't because it felt like I was putting her on the spot in front of everybody, which was not my intention. I was genuinely concerned. And she was not going to tell me anything in front of the class. So I should have waited and asked her after class. (P5I3-18296)

Mona's behavior continued to deteriorate, and Margarita resorts to meeting with her after one class session. Though Margarita's intentions may have been good, the results of the meeting are not positive. Margarita summarizes the events in one of her journal entries.

I met with a student who had been disrespectful and had a negative attitude in class, and during the meeting she lost her temper, screamed and yelled at me, stumped and punched

her fist. I referred her to [program coordinator] and [department chair] and she is under warning now. (P5J3-1171)

In a subsequent meeting, Margarita shares more details of her interaction with Mona during the meeting. Through Margarita's self-doubt and hurt feelings resulting from this exchange, her knowledge of students comes to the surface.

> She told me I haven't taught her anything. She said that. 'You've taught me nothing!' And I said, 'what do you mean?' 'I've learned nothing with you'. She says she goes home and she googles everything and tries to learn on her own because I don't teach her anything. So I wish I could teach her more; I just don't have the time. I do what I can.
> *NYP: Do you agree with what she said?*
> No! Absolutely not! But I do know that they want more explanations, and they want more practice with me. (P5I4[SR]-4731)

The situation with Mona eventually improves, and even though Margarita's perception of the student does not return to what it was at the start of the semester, what she learns from the experience becomes part of her knowledge of students.

> She was put on probation. Basically if she does anything else that's disrespectful I can dismiss her from the class period. The first class [after the meeting], she still had that attitude, but I think she's doing better. But the other problem is that she's failing, […] and I honestly don't want to have that conversation with her. I mean, I'm nice. I work with students. I will go the extra mile with them. But that girl… she lost that privilege with me. And it's a privilege; it's not a right that she has, and it's not a duty that I have. It's a default position. You have to do something pretty big to lose that privilege. And she did. She crossed the line. […] I don't think I handled it badly but, you know, hindsight is 20-20, so you're always going to say, 'I should have done this' or 'I shouldn't have done this'. But now that it's happened, now I know what do to in that case, and I will do things differently. (P5I5-17299)

Despite the negative experience with Mona, Margarita is satisfied with the dynamics she has achieved with the students in her class. Through her interest in their feedback, she has been able to expand her knowledge of students and apply it to her practice. The result is a positive one.

> I think registration for next semester started this week, so I thought it was very sweet that some of them asked me what I was teaching next semester. The professor in the GTA class said, 'that's a good sign; that they want to take another class with you'. […] I had a

bunch of them just ask me, 'are you going to teach 1002? We want to take it with you'. And I said, 'well, I'm not planning on teaching 1002, I'm planning on teaching 1001', and one of them said, 'well, I'm taking whatever class you're teaching, as long as it has videos in it' [Laughter]. So apparently they like that. I showed two videos last class. (P5I6[SR]-5505)

During her first semester as a GSTA, Margarita's knowledge of students has expanded and adapted based on her experiences as a first-time instructor. And she has been able to apply that knowledge to improve her teaching practice. In the following section we see a similar pattern regarding her knowledge of instruction.

9.2.3   *Knowledge of Instruction*

25.3% of the total codes assignations in Margarita's data were related to her knowledge of instruction, making it the second most-applied family of codes. Similar to her knowledge of students, Margarita's knowledge of instruction, as applied to Spanish-teaching at the college level, is in its early stages of development. However, she is able to voice an understanding of her role in the classroom.

I think my role has different elements and one of them is to explain concepts to them, whether it's grammar, or whether it's culture… meaning, semantics, I guess is what I'm saying. And also to expose them to what somebody who's a native Spanish speaker, who grew up in Latin America, or of Hispanic descent… How somebody like that behaves like, talks like, is like. (P5I5-426)

Margarita's knowledge of instruction, in the form of knowledge of language acquisition, is exposed as she reflects on how students learn best. It is also evident how such knowledge affects pedagogical choices. "*They definitely learn best when they're having fun, feel relaxed, let their guards down, feel they're not going to be judged or criticized. And I correct them too, when something is wrong, but I try to do it in the gentlest way possible*" (P5I1-18591). The expanding nature of her knowledge of instruction comes to the surface as she reflects on the types of activities that seem to work best.

I've realized there has to be a balance. There have to be pair exercises where they talk all the time, and there have to be exercises where one of them is replying and I'm correcting, or I'm saying it's right. I think what happened was that up until this class they were doing all pair exercises, and they were growing tired of them. And then this class was like 100% me. So from now on it's going to be a mixture. Maybe there'll be just some pair exercises. Or maybe I'll do one example for them, which I haven't been doing. So maybe I'll do one example and I'll have them work in pairs. (P5I4[SR]-6127)

Margarita's knowledge of instruction, though still in development, is secure enough to

override departmental guidelines. As she justifies her use of translation in one of her lessons

during our first stimulated recall interview, Margarita reveals the effects of her knowledge of

instruction and knowledge of students.

I know I'm translating there and I know I should not be doing that, but I want to make sure that the few minutes they have with me they get exactly what that means. […] Like that part right there, I think is crucial, because a lot of them are like, 'well how do you know it's 'ellos'? [they]'. They never know who the subject is, because in real life you don't use [subject] pronouns [in Spanish]. So for me to be able to go in depth into the text, and extricate the conjugations and explain to them where they come from, I think that's just essential. […] I think that they go into these exercises and they just don't know what's going on. They are just lost. It's not that they get the conjugation wrong. So I know they need this. They should get this from going down to the LARC and work with the tutors, but a lot of them don't. So it's just part of my teaching. (P5I4[SR]-10255)

Margarita's knowledge of instruction allows her to question, to a certain extent, the goals

of the Spanish program. She reflects on what a successful speaker of Spanish is capable of doing

in contrast to what she believes is expected of students in the program.

A successful Spanish speaker is one who can use a reduced amount of vocabulary and grammar concepts and do marvels with it, do many different things with it. I think we're going more for greater quantity of concepts and vocabulary. That's what we test on the exams. […] I'm thinking if we wanted successful Spanish speakers, then there should be much more speaking. There should be a lot more listening and speaking exercises. And they listen to me speaking Spanish for at least 60-70% of the class but it's different. […] They're learning to get a good grade in the exam. That doesn't test how well they can speak. If anything it tests how well they can listen and read, and how well they can memorize verb conjugations and vocabulary, which all contribute to the final goal. I just don't think that that's the most effective way to get them to speak. But speaking is the hardest and the last thing people can do. (P5I5-7463)

As she mentioned earlier, one of Margarita's preferred teaching practices is to show different types of short videos (1-3 minutes) in the classroom. This is an early practice as she makes mention of it in her first journal entry. "*I showed videos for the first time and they liked them. I showed about 4 of them. I believe it was effective and they heard a different accent and profited from the visuals + audio input. I will continue to use videos as I find them*" (P5J1-1541). During a subsequent interview, Margarita reveals the origins of the practice, the process behind it, how her knowledge of instruction informs it, and what she hopes the students will gain from it.

> It came up in the GTA class that people were showing videos and the students were very responsive. […] So I was like, 'you know, it works for me. And everybody streams videos nowadays. And it's a nice change of pace for them. And they get to listen'. So I've been looking for videos ever since. And if any video that I find is good, then I showed them. And they're short. If there's one that's like five minutes I'll show just half of it. […] For the countries I want to show them videos. Because every country has a tourism office that puts out those videos, and they can get the students excited about going to those places. 'Maybe I want to study abroad there'. I can't evaluate how much they get from the videos. What the professor in the GTA class says is, people learn differently; some people learn by hearing, other people learn by seeing, and other people learn by doing. And the videos combine listening and seeing, so that's why I think they're good. And at least the students are listening to other accents, and rhythms and intonations. I just cross my fingers that they do get something out of it. And if they don't, it's not a significant amount of time either. I usually show one or two videos in each class. (P5I3-19495)

Margarita's use of Spanish in the classroom illustrates her knowledge of instruction, knowledge of students, knowledge of purpose, and knowledge of subject matter. She believes that it is sometimes necessary to use English in class and is able to describe the reasonings behind such belief.

> I think it's very dependent on the class. The first class you saw, we had a quiz and we had an *Escritura* [writing assignment], and maybe like a heavy grammar concept. So that was mainly English. The second class was more content, like vocabulary. So whenever I do something like that, or basic grammar concepts, I do all of that in Spanish. Today for example, was another English-heavy class because we had the exam and all the instructions and questions were in English. And then we did a grammar concept that I

wanted to introduce in English, because it was demonstrative adjectives and pronouns, and people usually get confused with those. And in most cases, they don't know English grammar, so you have to start from the very beginning with them. So for that I did English. And then I switched to vocabulary, and that was all Spanish. […] So it's really class-dependent. […] When I get into the direct and indirect object pronouns, that's going to be in English. Those really hard concepts are in English. (P5I3-21319)

One of Margarita's most successful strategies to achieve student engagement in the class is a modified version of the television game show Jeopardy where students perform different linguistic acts (i.e. conjugate verbs, provide the Spanish word for an object in a picture, modify a noun to match a particular gender and/or number, etc.) in order to obtain points for their team. Even though it was not Margarita's original idea, "*another GTA came up with it*" (P5I4[SR]-2808), she is able to take advantage of the strategy and maximize its potential. "*I added a bit to it. Like going to the board and ask for more conjugations*" (P5I4[SR]-2847). Margarita is satisfied with the strategy, "*I thought it was just a fun game and it was different*" (P5I4[SR]-2882), and is able to apply her knowledge of students and knowledge of instruction to a second installment of the game.

They loved it. They were very engaged and competitive and participated a lot. They asked for it again so I did it a second time but I worked on getting all the members in the teams to contribute to the answer, as opposed to just the member who knows the most, before they raised their hands. (P5J3-841)

Margarita's knowledge of instruction is also illustrated in the flexibility to adjust her planning based on class time and student response. Her knowledge of purpose can be seen as well in her reflection while watching the first video-recorded class.

"Here I just decided to play a video because they were falling asleep. […] I could see their eyelids just closing. […] I was running so late that was going to skip it, but then I saw their faces and I was like, 'I just got to throw something at them that will wake them up'. (P5I4[SR]-15329)

The previous excerpt brings forward one of the issues with which Margarita struggles most during her first semester as a GSTA; time management. Class time does not seem to fit all

the elements in her planning, and she shows concern regarding the work the students are asked to

complete at home.

> The one thing that's really… been challenging is the amount of time. I'm basically skipping -not skipping over sections- but just assigning them as homework, because I can't cover them in class. I just don't have enough time. And I know they're not reading them at home. (P5I2-1478)

Even though she plans her lessons in detail, Margarita's knowledge of instruction seems

to not take into account an important variable while planning: student questions.

> I was planning on doing two book exercises completely; like all the items. And then I was planning on doing four online exercises. I couldn't finish the textbook exercises, and I only got to two online exercises, because there's not enough time. And they ask questions, which is good, but that means I just can't cover as much as I want to with them. […] My lesson plan has the starting time and the ending time for everything. I think that was number 3 of like 8, and I'm like 'holy snap! I'm late! I should be done with this exercise and the next textbook exercise' [laughter], so I was trying to keep myself in check. But I was running late from the get go because of all the questions at the beginning. (P5I4[SR]-4406)

As she mentioned earlier, Margarita's first-time teaching experience contained a number

of what she calls 'dang!' moments, where something goes wrong in class. She seems to have

particular trouble with quiz design and implementation during the earlier stages of the semester.

Even though she puts the responsibility on her shoulders, she believes she would have benefited

from more departmental guidance in designing quiz 1.

> I want to assume responsibility for not having read thoroughly the directions for creating quizzes, because I missed something important. I missed that I had to tell them what each question was worth, and I didn't do that. I created the quiz, and I was like, 'ok, when they turn it in I'll just give them a grade based on the overall performance'. I just feel I don't have a lot of guidance for grading, but the again I messed up because I didn't read the instruction and I didn't put down whatever a question was worth. (P5I2-632)

For quiz 2, Margarita also seems to run into some difficulty. After students have already

began to work on the quiz, Margarita interrupts them to point out that they should be answering

in full sentences, and to do a brief review of an important verb. After the interruption, students

resumed their work. As she reflects on her actions, Margarita reveals the developing nature of

her knowledge of instruction.

> Two things. First I should have written on the quiz that it was full sentences, which I didn't. So that was my bad. And second, I wanted to go over that. I wanted to give them a little hand before the quiz, but I didn't write it on my lesson plan and I forgot. I wanted to do that right before the quiz. I wanted to go over '*hay*' [Spanish verb which means there is/there are]. We covered that, for sure, but I didn't harp on it. So I just wanted it to be fresh in their brains before they took the quiz but I forgot. So [those were] two things that were on me. That's why I interrupted them. I thought that was bad; I didn't want to interrupt them, but I thought, 'well, it's better that I interrupt them and tell them this'. Because when I walked around a lot of people were not writing full sentences, and I was like, 'dang!' I was making up for my mistakes, basically. (P5I2-7991)

Margarita's 'learning-as-she-goes' experience expands to other assignments. For

example, for the first writing assignment she overlooked one of the parameters set by the

program. However, immediately after realizing what she did differently, she justifies her version

based on her knowledge of instruction and knowledge of students.

> What I did is I gave them three topics and told them to pick one of them. […] And a couple of them asked in class, 'can we mix them up?' and I said, 'yeah, of course. Feel free to use as much as you can of what we've covered, which is basically these three things'. But then in the GTA class yesterday, one of the GTAs said, 'they had to prepare for the three topics, and when they showed up in class I told them to write about one'. […] But I don't want to do that, because it feels like it's a trick exercise. Because if you prepared the most for the other two, then you're screwed. I'm not here to trick them, or to set them up. I'm here to facilitate their learning. And if they can write an essay on one topic, or two, or three, and they can remember enough to come to class and put it on a piece of paper, that's what I want. So I don't think I'm going to clarify that. I just think I'm going to keep doing it the way I'm doing it. I feel like I'm still testing them, evaluating them without setting them up for failure. *(P5I2-13255)*

Despite her original reasoning, Margarita later consults her fellow GSTAs on the

prescribed procedure for the assignment. "*Because when I did it the first time… I didn't do it the*

way it's usually done. So I wrote to them and asked them, 'how do you guys do it?'" (P5I3-

4588). Based on her experiences with the first quizzes and the writing assignment, Margarita

reflects on the changes she feels need to be made in her teaching practice. She also shows

concern regarding the transition and how the students will respond to the changes.

> I think I have to tweak something. I think I was more lenient during this first month than I'm going to be from now on. I've realized that uniformity and consistency are very important, but I don't know how I'm going to do that transition. Like with the first *Escritura* [writing assignment], because of the way I did it, which was wrong, it was easier, and now it's going to be a little harder. The same happened with quiz 1. It turned out it was 120 points so it was very easy for them to get somewhere in the 90s. If I had done it correctly a lot of them would have scored in the 80s. So because of my mistakes they've benefitted as far as grades go. It doesn't mean they're not learning the content, I just feel that the class is going to get a little harder now that I finally know how things work [laughter]. And I've learned by trial and error, which is unfair to them. Often times I tell them, 'this is my first time doing this, so I have to ask'. (P5I3-7872)

Once Margarita applies what she learned from her fellow GSTAs regarding the writing

assignment, she is relieved by the results and the students' reaction. Margarita's knowledge of

instruction is being informed by her experiences, both positive and negative, as a new Spanish

instructor.

> I changed the format to match what the department wanted, so I give them the three topics and I chose the one they write about in class. I thought they were going to get lower grades than they actually got. Some of them got super low grades, but a lot of them did fine. I did give them the easiest topic, but they still didn't know which one they were going to get. And they didn't complain. (P5I6[SR]-13886)

Even though Margarita continues to have other 'dang!' moments throughout the

semester, she is able to identify the issues and improve her teaching practice. In the following

excerpt, Margarita shares some of her mishaps, and reflects on what she is learning from them.

Her knowledge of context, in the form of peer collaboration and departmental context, is also

revealed in her reflection.

> That listening practice was shared by another GTA. And I should have read that too because… well… I think it was fine but it had words in there that we haven't covered. […] I think it was fine in general; maybe it was just a bit of a surprise factor for me. And I made copies for everybody, though for some reason I was short one, and I gave mine to one of the students. And then I was like, 'dang! She has the script'. So it was lack of preparation. And [the program coordinator] has said it many times, 'the only mistake you

are going to make is not being prepared' [Laughter]. And I know, I know. But I spent all of this Saturday working on this class; like grading and creating the PowerPoint. […] So it's not that I'm spending too little time in the class. It's that I'm spending a lot of time in this class, but there are things I don't know. But now I'm learning. I know how to better invest my time. (P5I3-16244)

During our final interview, Margarita reflects on her experience as a new GSTA thus far.

Despite having a difficult start, she has been able to incorporate her experiences into her

knowledge of instruction. She believes she has made positive changes in her teaching practice,

especially her planning.

[The semester] is going better for me because I'm more used to the dynamic, and the routine, and the grading, and the assignments. Nothing is really new for me anymore, except for the content that I'm teaching, I guess. And that's a lot easier. And also I'm not spending as much time planning. […] Before I used to research so much, and look for like the perfect this, or the perfect that. Now it's like, 'ok. I have two and a half hours to make my PowerPoint, create exercises, grade, send emails'. I'm more efficient. I think I'm getting to the meat of it. (P5I7-78)

As she shares what she believes has been the best part of the semester, she clearly

illustrates how her knowledge of instruction and knowledge of students have expanded and

developed during her first semester as a GSTA. Despite her difficulties, Margarita thinks the

experience has been satisfactory for her.

I think the best part has been learning how to handle the students; learning how to be in command. And transmit the concepts in a fun, enticing way. Right now, that we're learning direct and indirect object pronouns, and it's complicated, I think it gives me a lot of satisfaction to break it down for them and see how I can make easier something they thought was going to be impossible to learn. Isn't that the whole point of teaching? (P5I7-1844)

Margarita's knowledge of subject matter is also illustrated in the previous excerpt. In the

following section that area of Margarita's PPK is further explored, as well as its effects on her

teaching choices.

9.2.4 Knowledge of Subject Matter

Only 4.4% of the total codes assigned to Margarita's data are connected to her knowledge

of subject matter. However, Margarita shows confidence in her knowledge of Spanish

linguistics. She is particularly confident in her handling of the grammar content of her class. As

she mentioned earlier, she credits this part of her knowledge of subject matter not to her status as

a native speaker, but to her experience as a Spanish tutor.

> Fortunately, because I've tutored so much in Spanish, and I've tutored different levels, mostly 1001 to 2002, I have a lot of that basic and intermediate grammar knowledge. I don't recall everything of course, especially with the more advanced stuff. But I know exactly when something is a direct object pronoun but looks like something else and they get confused. I know the grammatical nuances of little words. So my background allows me to help them. If I don't know something I usually just tell them, 'it's something you're going to learn in the future'. But I use that phrase even when I know what's going on. I just want them to know that they don't need to worry about it. (P5I2-20512)

The previous excerpt also illustrates how Margarita's knowledge of subject matter

informs teaching choices. The following is also a clear example of Margarita's teaching practice

as informed by her knowledge of Spanish grammar, specifically the distinction between the

verbs 'ser' and 'estar', the two forms the verb 'to be' can take in Spanish. Margarita's struggles

with time management are also illustrated in her account of a post-test review.

> I just want to drill that a bit more. In this case, especially '*ser*' and '*estar*', because we didn't do a whole lot on that, and I feel like that's important. I could have taken a lot longer and actually go over every answer, and say every reason why it was '*ser*' or '*estar*', but it already took longer than I had planned. […] I like giving them this little phrase to memorize. It's like a mnemonic devise: 'to say how you feel and where you are, use '*estar*''. It's something they can go to during a test and be like, 'I am here, so '*estar*''. And I told them, 'if you get anything out of this class, you should get that, because it will take you far'. They're probably not going to learn all the uses of '*ser*' and '*estar*' but they can memorize that phrase. (P5I6[SR]-1255)

Part of the same review included other verbs, and the conjugation errors students made

during the test. She is able to draw from her knowledge of students as well as her knowledge of

subject matter to point out the elements that needed to be reviewed in class.

I wanted to point out the conjugations and go over like common errors on the test. Because that was something that stood out; using the conjugation from the wrong verb. A lot of them, even the better students, messed that up. But I think what happened is we used '*pedir*' [to ask for] and '*pensar*' [to think] a lot more than we did '*perder*' [to lose], so they defaulted to those conjugations. I wrote out on the board the ones that were in the fill-in-the-blanks section because I wanted them to see the correct spelling. Some of them are still making errors with the vowels in stem-changing verbs. (P5I6[SR]-2465)

Margarita's knowledge of both Spanish and English linguistics informs some of her pedagogical choices. She is also able to draw from her knowledge of students as she navigates the intricacies of irregular Spanish adjectives and adverbs.

I wanted to go over the difference between '*bueno*' [good] and '*bien*' [well]. We had covered '*mucho*' [much/a lot] and '*poco*' [a little] used as adverbs and as adjectives. So I was saying, 'remember when we talked about '*muchos libros*' [many books], and there was another sentence were '*mucho*' was an adverb. So I was trying to refresh that which we learned a week ago. I just didn't want to go into the English 'good' and 'well', because a lot of people miss-speak and they say 'good' when they should say 'well'. Some of them don't even know; it's just the way they talk. And I don't want to correct their English [laughter]. I didn't want to go down that road! (P5I4[SR]-9093)

Margarita also brings her knowledge of Spanish culture to the class. As a dancer, she frequently uses music to complement the cultural information on the countries highlighted in each chapter in the textbook. And even though the students have positive reactions to the music videos she shares with them, she is able, albeit somewhat late sometimes, to identify potential problems with lyrics or the suggestive nature of the dance style associated with the music.

[Laughter] And this was so funny. Because I've heard this song by Ruben Blades a million times, but I think I never really paid attention to the lyrics, because it talks about a man cheating on his wife! [Laughter] So I caught that in the middle of it, and at the end I was like, 'ok, we're out of time', before they started asking [Laughter]. But I don't think they got it. Obviously it's not like a nudity scene or something like that. But I also showed them a '*Bachata*' [Dominican music and dance style] song that's one of my favorites, and it was even worse! I mean, I've sung that song many times… [Laughter] but then one of the lines is like, 'I feel so warm inside you' [Laughter]. But the rest of the song was fine. And then I wanted to show them how '*Bachata*' is danced, but then I thought, 'oh no, I'm not doing this', because it's so sexually suggestive. So I was like, 'they don't need to see this. They've already heard enough'. But nobody commented on it. *(P5I6[SR]-12342)*

Margarita also adds her personal knowledge of culture to her teaching practice, while complementing the cultural information in the chapter with music. The combination has positive results in garnering the students' interest. "*I showed them pictures of my time in El Salvador and they liked them and posed very interesting cultural questions. I showed them a video of Luis Enrique (salsa singer) and they liked it too*" (P5J2-1112). She also takes advantage of having grown up in Venezuela to bring a personal view of culture to the classroom. "*I showed them a 10-minute personal video on Venezuela. And we talked about the history and the geography, and current politics*" (P5I7-11573). In the following section Margarita's knowledge of context is discussed.

9.2.5   Knowledge of Context

Out of the total code assignations in Margarita's data, 9.3% are connected to her knowledge of context. As Margarita expands on her reasonings behind the strategy of the Jeopardy game as a teaching tool, her knowledge of students and her knowledge of context outside the university come to the surface.

> Ever since we were 5 or 6 years old we've been opening textbooks and being forced to study off of textbooks. […] And they're a bit monotonous, drilling the same thing over and over again, whereas something like Jeopardy mixes different things. […] They associate the game with the television show. When they open the textbook, there is no association, there's no competition aspect to it either. (P5I7-15467)

Even though Margarita regularly demonstrates her knowledge of context outside the university in her use of videos, music and cultural information, during our conversations and in her journal entries most of the overt representations of her knowledge of context are related to the Spanish program. During our first interview she describes what she believes to be the teaching style promoted by the program. "*One where you don't lecture. It's almost like my law classes. Get them to speak and think about it, not just stand there and be lecturing, like a one-*

way communication; that's what is not promoted. What's promoted is a two-way

communication" (P5I1-15488). She is also able to voice her disagreement, both during

interviews and in the classroom, with some of the programs guidelines. The following two

excerpts are examples of Margarita's compliance with departmental guidelines, even though she

demonstrates a lack of agreement with them.

> I almost feel like I teach them the very top layer, and then I throw them into doing the
> whole thing. And that's kind of what the department expects, that they do a lot of work at
> home. […] I just have to play by the rules even if I don't agree with them. Like the
> instructions in Spanish [for quizzes and tests], I told them, 'I don't agree with that, but I
> have to do it'. I was told at the beginning that we couldn't spend any time in class
> reviewing for the exam, and that actually changed. The GTAs were saying that among
> themselves, 'we can't spend any time reviewing. That sucks!' So I told the students,
> 'guys, I don't agree with this. If I could I would review with you, but I can't', so I just
> gave them a quiz that had the same format as the test. And then we all learned that we
> could actually spend class time reviewing, and I did it. (P5I4[SR]-5231)

> I wanted them to do a pair exercise, but they dread those. They drag their feet. In one
> class, one of them said, 'can we please not do pair exercises this class?' and they were all
> like, 'yeah'. But I told them, 'the department upstairs wants you to do pair exercises.
> They think they're good for you because you get to talk a lot more. So we have to do
> them'. (P5I6[SR]-13293)

There are other program guidelines that, while not in disagreement with them, Margarita

does not follow blindly. For example, one of the rules of the program is that after two unexcused

absences, one percentage point of the student's final grade will be deducted for every subsequent

absence. Her knowledge of the policy and her knowledge of students allow her to identify

exceptions to the rule.

> I know there are rules about attendance, but if somebody tells me… Like one girl, she
> had been sick, she had been throwing up, and I said 'do you have a medical note?' and
> she said, 'no, I just stayed at home'. I don't know what it will come down to at the end of
> the semester, but if someone is border-line and they have missed three classes, and I
> know it's because they've been sick or something like that, then I may just not deduct the
> point. (P5I2-3477)

Margarita is also able to draw from her knowledge of instruction to circumvent her knowledge of departmental policy. "*The program is all about, 'don't translate. Do not give them translations! They have to think in Spanish!' I agree with that, I just don't think you can apply that 100% of the time in Spanish 1001*" (P5I2-14835). Other times Margarita goes against both her knowledge of instruction and her knowledge of departmental context in order to grant students' requests.

> I don't usually go over the conjugations with them because I think that's so mechanical, and the program is really trying to steer us away from that. But they've asked me to do the conjugations with them. 'We want to hear you say the conjugations. We want to do the conjugations with you'. (P5I4[SR]-12695)

During one of our interviews, Margarita voices her disagreement with the department's policy to reduce D, F, and W grades. She shows particular concern regarding what she feels as pressure to keep students from withdrawing from class.

> I think the policy is very unfair toward teachers because, the way they explained it to us during the orientation meeting was, 'if students withdraw is because of you; of the teachers, because you're not doing something good, or because you're not entertaining enough'. I don't think he used the word entertaining, but that's how my brain translated it. And I thought, 'oh, great! I have to be a clown and entertain them so that they won't want to quit'. I think he said, 'it's because you're boring'. That was his word, and he stressed it. So yeah, I fully disagree with that. As a student I withdrew one class in all my school years, and it had NOTHING to do with the professor. It was my decision. And the students who withdrew, I'm sure they didn't withdraw because of me. They did it for other reasons that are none of my business. […] It should not affect me. Apparently it does. If they ever want to not give me a job as a GTA because too many of my students withdraw, I guess there's nothing I can do about it. But I just don't think that should be the policy. (P5I5-12876)

Despite her dissatisfaction with some departmental policies, Margarita is highly appreciative of the required Foreign Language Teaching class that she is taking along with her fellow new GSTAs in the program. She describes the dynamics of the class and what she considers its positive aspects.

> I think it's a great class. We're only there one hour a week as opposed to the 2 hours and 45 minutes. I almost wish we could take the whole thing because it's very helpful. He always opens up by asking us what things worked that week for us. And then we go into the things that didn't work. […] So it's really interactive and I get a lot of ideas from other students, and he always gives us really good ideas for exercises. He always gives us one or two very good ideas for things we can do in class. (P5I3-83)

Margarita is able to apply several of the ideas gathered in the GTA class. Even though the implementation of some of the ideas may not have the desire effect at first, she is able to make modifications to achieve positive results.

> For the second assignment, based on the GTA class, [I did something] called the prose model; you just basically give students a sample of what they have to write or speak, and that helps. So I gave them a sample in the second oral assignments, both spoken and written so they could match the written words with the sound. But what they ended up doing was writing out a paragraph and then reading it out loud, which is not the goal. And it was my mistake; I put the written text there. What I did in this third one was just recording my voice. I didn't do anything in writing. I think that worked. (P5I7-13636)

Another benefit of being in the GTA class was the collaboration and sharing of materials among the new GSTAs. As we learned in Mary's chapter, the inexperienced GSTAs in the project were able to exchange information and materials in a way that the experienced group had not been able, though willing, to achieve. Interestingly, Margarita takes credit for being the starting point of this collaborative effort. "*It started because of me*" (P5I7-3367). During our second interview, Margarita describes the genesis of the materials exchange.

> The other GTAs spend a lot of time in the GTA room, but I don't because law school is just killing me, and I spend hours upon hours in the Law library. And [the professor] always emphasizing 'you got to share your resources. It's OK to borrow'. […] So I talked to them yesterday after class, and I don't know that my comments came out the best way, but I was like, 'listen. I know I'm not there, and I know I'm missing out on a whole bunch of stuff, but please give me a hand, because law school is killing me', and they were like, 'yeah, we'll email you the stuff'. (P5I2-17689)

Even though the process has a slow start, "*it took a while*" (P5I3-1456), Margarita is able to take advantage of the materials shared by her fellow new GSTAs, and also contribute to the materials pool.

Now we're getting to the point where we're really exchanging stuff so that's good for me. It's so helpful and it really complements what I do. […] I've been sending them videos, and they've started to send me some of their PowerPoints. That's really helpful, because I just borrowed like 3 slides from somebody. And it was so quick, as opposed to spending one hour and 30 minutes making PowerPoints with pretty pictures, which I can do. It's not that I don't have the skills; it's just a matter of having the time. So they sent stuff to me, and I just cut and pasted three slides filled with images. And they send me videos too so that's good. (P5I3-1456)

During our second stimulated recall interview, Margarita shares her feelings regarding

the collaborative efforts of her peers. She also expands on the process of materials exchange and

how her teaching practice, and those of her fellow new GSTAs, have benefited from it.

That slide is somebody else's too. And I thought I was going to feel guilty about using other people's slides, but no [Laughter]. I think it's just fine. I'm super fine using somebody else's slides. And I don't normally put that much information in my slides like this GTA does, so maybe some of [the students] benefit from that. It's good to mix it up. And we did agree on sharing the materials. And I send them stuff. Like when I posted the *Escritura* [writing assignment] 3, I did a sample paragraph for all three topics, for the students to use as examples. And I sent them to all the new GTAs. I think almost all of them used at least two. And for the practice test for test two, it was Mary and I. And I don't mind doing that. If I have the time, I will work. But this weekend was really tough for me. […] So I checked what they had sent. Because we send stuff almost every day. […] And I always change their slides to match what I'm doing, or to correct stuff. (P5I6[SR]-8747)

Even though she checks the materials she uses from the GSTA pool, on several occasions

errors make it into the classroom. While grading one her quizzes, Margarita realizes that one

item has two possible answers, which results in confused answers and very flexible grading.

That was sort of my mistake. I've realized that I really need to read the things that are given to me. That was something that I borrowed from another GTA. And she was sweet to give that to me and very generous. So it was on me, not to [have] read it before putting it on the quiz, which I think I did, but not in enough detail. So that was my bad, and [the students] pointed that out. (P5I3-14641)

As the semester progresses, the collaboration process expands to include future GSTAs.

Margarita expresses happiness that future GSTAs will be better prepared to teach in the program.

She is also appreciative of the materials she has accumulated to use in the future.

It started with four of us; four girls. And then we added other people. And then we added tutors from the LARC who are going to be teaching next semester. And I think that's awesome! Now they have so much stuff. Do you know what I would pay to have the stuff that I have right now? I can cruise now! If I can teach 1001 next semester, I can cruise. (P5I7-3878)

During our final interview, Margarita reflects on her struggles as a new GSTA, and the

different elements that have helped her overcome such struggles.

I think the worst part of the semester was that I was thrown into it cold turkey. Like, 'here you go. Here's your book and your calendar. Good luck! Pat-pat on the back'. And that was tough in the beginning. The learning curve was really steep. Fortunately I had a support network rising from the GTA class that I'm taking, the other GTAs, meetings with [the program coordinator]. But it's still tough. Those first two months were not fun. I was spending so much time planning, and I still didn't feel confident, or prepared, or consistent because I was learning stuff as I went. Now I figured how I want things to be, but before it was like, 'uhhggg! I just messed up!' […] I feel that I'm a better instructor now than at the start of the semester. […] Every day I get better. (P5I7-2697)

Despite the developing nature of Margarita's PPK, which has led to a number of 'dang!'

moments, she has been able to make successful pedagogical choices that leave her satisfied with

the results of the semester. Her experiences throughout her first semester as a GSTA, and the

support she has received from department and peers, have expanded and enhanced Margarita's

PPK. The following section presents Margarita's expectations and plans for the future.

9.3   Margarita's Future

Margarita's thoughts regarding her future start with the second semester of work as a

GSTA. She understands that the circumstances may differ from the current ones, but is

appreciative of what she has learned this first semester.

Next semester is going to be a whole different ball game. And that's just because I've already taught. But that's class-specific. If I continue to teach 1001 it is going to be a whole different ball game. If I teach something else then it's going to be… well… partially, -probably not fully, but I would say to a great extent- I'm going to wobble a lot. But now I know the structure of the exams, and wait for them to plan certain exercises. Now I know more or less how the system works. (P5I5-1873)

Regarding her future after graduation, Margarita's plans are not quite definite. Even though teaching is not her official career path, it is still an avenue she might pursue in the future.

> I don't have any specific plans. I'm different because I think the other GTAs are all studying to do this for a living, whereas I'm going to law school. And I have other jobs. I work as a translator and interpreter. And hopefully next year I'll start working in the legal field. But I would love to teach after graduation, although probably not Spanish. I've always felt that way, though. Even when I was studying international affairs, I always knew that eventually I would teach. I don't know that I'll do it full time. Maybe I'll teach one class in whatever I'm specializing in. I do love teaching. I enjoy it. But mainly I want to practice law. If you go to law school you're very committed to practicing law. (P5I7-1057)

9.4   Chapter Summary

As a law student, Margarita is the only participant in the project not pursuing graduate studies in Spanish or Education. However, her relationship with Spanish and Spanish teaching has expanded throughout her entire life. Margarita brings to the classroom her experiences as a native speaker, translator and interpreter, and Spanish tutor.

Despite her previous experience, Margarita is a first-time GSTA. Thus her personal practical knowledge (PPK) is still developing and being informed in part by what she learns from her mistakes. She faces for the first time the complexities of the Spanish classroom; including variations in student attitudes, preferences, abilities and limitations. She also struggles with difficult students and departmental expectations. She learns to navigate the difficulties of designing, implementing, and grading assignments. And she is able to seek and take advantage of the support and contributions of her peers and the department. Although she aspires to be a lawyer, Margarita sees teaching as a viable option for her future, even if it is not related to Spanish.

10 RESULTS: LULA

Lula is the third of the project participants who was considered an inexperienced GSTA. The fall semester of 2012 was Lula's first semester as a GSTA in the Spanish program. At the time of her participation in the project, Lula was teaching two Spanish 1001 courses. In keeping with the structure of the participant chapters, Lula's narrative will be presented primarily in her own words. Section 10.1 presents a brief overview of Lula's background. Section 10.2 explores Lula's PPK in relation to the sub-categories previously discussed. Lula's plans for the future will be presented in section 10.3. And section 10.4 presents a chapter summary. Table 12 shows Lula's code assignations in order of frequency.

Table 12 Code Assignations in Lula's Data in Order of Frequency

Code	Number of Assignations	Percentage
Knowledge of Students	**145 (total)**	**25.3%**
Student attitudes	45	
Student-teacher interaction	29	
Student limitations	22	
Differences among students	21	
Student abilities	15	
Student learning	7	
Student expectations	4	
Student-student interaction	1	
Student needs	1	
Knowledge of Instruction	**126 (total)**	**22.1%**
Knowledge of teaching methodology	33	
Time management	24	
Knowledge of assignments/activities	22	
Knowledge of teaching resources	14	
Knowledge of language acquisition/learning	11	
Planning	9	
Knowledge of assessment	8	
Flexibility	5	
Knowledge of Self	**79 (total)**	**13.9%**
Limitations	33	
Personality	21	

Improvement	15	
Positive aspects	10	
Knowledge of Context	**54 (total)**	**9.4%**
Department/program context	23	
Peer collaboration	14	
Classroom context	13	
Context outside the university	4	
Knowledge of Subject Matter	**25 (total)**	**4.4%**
Linguistic knowledge	20	
Cultural knowledge	5	
Frustrations with Teaching	**25**	**4.4%**
Program support	**24 (total)**	**4.2%**
Program training	19	
General program support	5	
Background	**22 (total)**	**3.8%**
Language learning background	12	
Work experience	4	
Academic background	4	
Apprenticeship of observation	1	
Learning of instruction	1	
Personal background	0	
Knowledge of Purpose	**17**	**3%**
Influence of GTA Experience	**16**	**2.8%**
Teaching enjoyment	**15**	**2.6%**
Language Use	**14**	**2.4%**
Future	**6 (total)**	**1%**
Teaching-related future	3	
Academic future	2	
Non-teaching, professional future	1	
Personal future	0	
Current Goals	**4**	**0.7%**
Total Code Assignations	**572**	**100%**

10.1 Lula's Background

A native of Illinois, Lula was 24 years old at the time she participated in the project. She began learning Spanish in middle school, and even though there was some indifference to start, the language would soon become her focus.

> In 7th grade we were given the opportunity to ether take Spanish or take reading, and I knew I didn't want reading so I said, 'sure, I'll try the Spanish thing'. And I did well; I went all the way through high school, took AP Spanish, and got college credit. So I did

that. Majored in Spanish. I studied in México for a semester four years ago. Loved it. Then I worked at a local non-profit that works with Latinos. I worked there for over two years as a translator. Almost all my co-workers were Spanish native speakers, so I had a lot of experience there. Then I came here. (P6I1-3352)

Lula is completing a Spanish master's degree, and a translation certificate. While participating in the project she was taking a Spanish linguistics class and the required Foreign Language Teaching class for GTAs in the program. Even though she did not have an academic background in language teaching, she had some work experience in teaching ESL.

It was at a church in Marietta, every Saturday, and most students obviously were adults that were just learning English for every day…. you know, going to the grocery store. I had a class of about 20 students max; it depended on who came every week. But it was three months; two sessions of three months. I would go every Saturday and teach for about two hours. We had little activities. I didn't have to do a lot of lesson planning, because everything was already planned out, like the GTA thing here. But I learned a lot about what not to do and what to do. Obviously, I'm still learning (P6I1-681)

Lula began her Spanish teaching experience as a language tutor in the university's LARC for two semesters prior to becoming a GSTA. Her initial anxiety in applying for a teaching assistantship shows that she did not take the opportunity lightly.

Last fall I started my master's studies, and I was working at the time so I couldn't be a graduate assistant. But I finally got the chance in the spring and I became GLA (graduate laboratory assistant); I was a tutor in the language lab, so I did that in the spring and summer. I was a little nervous about being a GTA, but I knew it would be a great opportunity. So I applied, and of course I was approved [laughter] because most graduate [Spanish] students are. (P6I1-167)

Lula was taking her first foreign language class in a language other than Spanish while participating in the project. It is evident from her thoughts that the class informed Lula's PPK.

Taking the Portuguese 1001 class has helped me tremendously as well, because I can see things from the student's perspective. [I can see] how much the teacher speaks in English and how much I understand, and when I wish she were speaking English. So I think it's been very interesting to take that class my first semester teaching. And I've also gotten some ideas for activities from that as well [Laughter]. (P6I7-13724)

In the following section we will see other sources that inform Lula's PPK as we explore different areas of her cognition, and how such areas influence Lula's teaching practice.

10.2 Lula's Personal Practical Knowledge

10.2.1 Knowledge of Self

Despite the nerves associated with teaching Spanish for the first time, one cannot help but notice that Lula is having a good time in the classroom. "*I'm enjoying myself*" (P6I2-19436). She is enthusiastic, but seems to have high standards regarding student behavior and performance early in the semester. "*I try to be friendly but firm*" (P6I2-19178).

> I am animated, not crazy all over the place, but I try to create an animated atmosphere. But I'll be strict to the point that it becomes necessary. They're not going to walk all over me. They're going to turn in the work I tell them to. They're going to pay attention. But at the same time I try to encourage them. And if they get it wrong, well, at least they tried, or at least they're speaking. So I try to be animated, to make it fun, as much as I can in the classroom. (P6I1-4017)

It is also evident that Lula carefully plans and prepares for her classes. "*I'm an organizer/planner*" (P6I7-9180). That aspect of her personality, as well as her desire to keep students motivated to learn, are part of her knowledge of self. "*I'm very organized, and I try to be encouraging. […] I'm not perfect by any means, but at least I care*" (P6I5-1682).

Lula is aware of parts of her behavior that need to be modified for the classroom. "*I do try to slow down but I always speak pretty fast, no matter what language. [Laughter] I'm working on my teacher voice. I try to speak loudly and slowly, and enunciate*" (P6I4[SR]-14904). As a non-native speaker of Spanish, Lula shows awareness of some of her limitations, but is confident in her language skills for her teaching context, demonstrating her knowledge of self and her knowledge of students.

> I'm pretty confident [in my Spanish skills]. I know I still make mistakes, and once I say them in class I'm thinking, 'that should have been plural, or masculine, or feminine'. And

I'll try to catch it the first time, but for the most part, especially at this lowest level where there's much they don't know [laughter], you know… If I was teaching a higher-level class, I would be a lot more concerned about them catching those things. But right now I'm not really worried about that. (P6I3-4354)

One of Lula's realizations during her first semester as a GSTA is that some students need

to be informed of their grades on a regular basis so that they are reminded to complete missed

assignments. She is surprised by such need due to its opposition to her knowledge of self. "*I*

never really worry about my grades. I just do everything, and never have that problem" (P6I2-

16511). "*Doesn't matter how much I hated a class; I still did the work. I wanted to do well. But I*

guess that's just me" (P6I5-12214). Based on this realization, she hands out progress reports to

both her classes every two weeks. "*I'm trying to get to them, before it's too late. 'You still have*

time, so go do this'" (P6I2-16511). Thus, through her experience as a GSTA, Lula realizes that

her knowledge of self does not overwrite her expanding knowledge of students. Toward the end

of the semester, Lula reaches a similar realization regarding her language learning aptitude.

I feel like my outlook, my approach, has changed. I've been realizing that because I do succeed in languages I was putting that pressure on my students, and I've realized that not everybody has such an aptitude. It's not just the desire that's important. So I was a lot stricter at the beginning of the semester. And I challenged them a lot. I think they need to be challenged but I kind of realize they are not all going to get it right way, and I need to make it a bit easier for them. I'm handing them grades, but I've become a little more lenient and understanding of people's aptitudes for language. (P6I7-48)

The previous excerpt is a clear example of how Lula's teaching practice is informed by

her developing PPK. In earlier stages, her knowledge of self has a stronger effect in her teaching.

As her knowledge of students expands, she is able to modify her practice to suit the new

knowledge. Lula's knowledge of students, and its development and effects on her teaching

practice are further explored in the following section.

10.2.2 Knowledge of Students

As with all participants in the study thus far, the majority of codes applied to Lula's data

are related to her knowledge of students, with 25.3% of the total codes. By the time of the first

classroom observation, Lula already knows all of the students' names in both of her classes; all

60 of them. The reasonings behind such effort reveal Lula's knowledge of students, as well as

her knowledge of self and knowledge of purpose.

> It makes them, first of all, realize that I care that they're in class, and I notice when they're not [there]. It makes them feel like they're important. Like, 'so I will be missed if I'm not in class'. Hopefully they know that I care about what they do; that they're more than just a number, or a student ID; more than me wanting good reviews from them. I really do care how they do in the class. […] So I think it does make a difference. (P6I2-12563)

Lula's knowledge of students is further illustrated in her reflections regarding how she

believes students learn best. The classroom environment she strives to achieve is guided in part

by such reasonings.

> I guess [they learn best] when they're… comfortable; don't know if that makes sense. When they don't feel like there's a lot of pressure to be right and that I'm going to make fun of them, or they'll feel stupid, I guess. I just want to make them feel that the classroom a place for learning, and that we all make mistakes, and that as long as they're trying it will be good. I also want the classroom to be a place where they are given an opportunity to practice, especially since they're only in there three times for 50 minutes a week. Outside they are most likely not practicing much. (P6I1-10443)

The previous excerpt shows that Lula is also aware of students' attitudes toward the class.

She also understands that not all students share the same attitudes. "*Some really like the activities*

we do, but with others it doesn't matter what you do, they are not going to like it" (P6I5-1064).

Lula's knowledge of students includes assessment of their struggles with language learning as

well as their progress in the class.

> The classes I think have been getting better each time. There has been improvement. I'm still enjoying it. I can see that a lot of them are learning and trying to incorporate what they've learned. And for the most part it seems like my students understand what is going

on. I can tell that a few of them are behind, or confused, but for the most part they seem to be getting what I'm teaching. (P6I2-39)

Lula also shows awareness of the students' positive attitudes and behaviors that may be in part the result of her efforts both inside and outside the classroom. Lula's animated and encouraging teaching style, added to her availability and regular contact via email, give her a sense of accomplishment.

> I have a lot of students that seem to be enjoying themselves, which is really interesting. […] That makes me happy! It's like, 'ok, they're not totally bored. They're not hating their lives right now. Maybe they're actually enjoying themselves. [Laughter] They're paying attention. Even if they make mistakes, they're participating; they're volunteering'. I really appreciate that. There are regularly a lot of hands up. And a good amount that are trying to go above where we are, like, 'oh, could I say this?' Besides that, I have some students that are really on top of emailing me with things like, 'hey, I have a question about this, or how about this? Can you take care of this?' which is truly good. I prefer them to bug me like that than to not do anything. And I have seen that the reminder emails I send, even though sometimes they seem fruitless, they have made a difference. I've had students become more aware of turning things in. It really made me happy after I handed out the progress reports, I had three or four students email me saying, 'I know I haven't been doing well. I'm sorry. I'm going to do better. I understand there's no excuse. You can count on me'. And then I checked the next day and they had done all their late online work. So I'm seeing the results of all that work I put in. (P6I2-17227)

Another one of Lula's strategies to motivate students to complete work at home illustrates her knowledge of students as it develops during the semester. "*If it's something they don't have to turn in, they go, 'why should I do it?' That's when I started grading more things. Because I know if I don't give it a grade they won't do it*" (P6I5-10993). During our first stimulated recall interview Lula demonstrates her knowledge of individual students and how it shapes pedagogical choices.

> James [pseudonym] really likes to participate. He doesn't always get it right, but I appreciate that he is vocal. He does contribute a lot in class. And there's a good group of girls in the middle of the classroom that always works together. I have some people on the other end that are struggling, so I've been trying to focus more on them. (P6I4[SR]-1779)

Lula's reaction to some students chatting in class is an example of the 'stricter' outlook

during the earlier stages of the semester that she reflected upon in the previous section.

> It's really annoying me. And if they continue I'm going to pull them aside, or send them
> an email. […] I know their names, and they need to know we're not in elementary school
> so they should not talk when the teacher's talking. I've raised my voice a little, I don't
> think I'm yelling, but just so they can hear me. Today they did it again so I called on
> them to answer a question, catching them off guard, and I think they were kind of
> embarrassed. Maybe that will help them. (P6I3-9998)

During our last interview, Lula's reflection regarding the issue represents aspects of her

knowledge of students as it has expanded throughout her first semester as a GSTA, and dictates a

different instructional response. Lula's thoughts also demonstrate her knowledge of self.

> There are certain students that just get really talkative. And I wouldn't say they're bad
> students because they actually pay attention and do their work. They just get a little
> excited; they have friends in there. At the beginning of the semester it really bothered me,
> but I've gotten to where I understand that's how these students are. Yeah, they need to be
> quiet, and I do shush them a little bit, but I don't make a big deal out of it anymore. And
> I'm sure I've done that in classes before, where I spoke a little bit too much without
> thinking. (P6I7-15628)

Similarly to Elena with her two 2001-level classes, Lula's knowledge of students

includes differences between the students in the two 1001 classes she teaches. As early as our

first interview, Lula is able to identify different patterns in the groups' behavior. She expresses

her knowledge of students and knowledge of classroom context as she describes some of the

differences between the classes and the possible reasons for such differences.

> The time may be a factor. One is at nine and the other at ten. The nine o'clock crowd… I
> have a lot of people who participate, but I also have a lot of people who are tardy or
> sleepy. Also the classrooms are different: one is a deeper room and the door is at the back
> so if anybody comes in late it's not as distracting. I don't know; I have a lot of sleepy
> people in the nine o'clock class [laughter]. I also have a lot of people distracted by
> phones or books, so I have to get on them a lot about that, and be really encouraging:
> 'hey, you need to be more involved and do your work'. For the ten o'clock class, the
> room is not as deep and the door is at the front, so if anybody comes in late it's a
> distraction. I do have a lot of people involved in that class that seem eager to learn a lot of
> things. (P6I1-11451)

Lula's knowledge of students, exemplified by her awareness of the differences between the two classes, dictates some of her instructional responses in the classroom. Her knowledge of instruction is being shaped by her experience in the two classrooms. She is also able to apply the newly acquired knowledge from her first class onto the second.

> I think my first class is slightly larger so that might have something to do with it, but they take longer to do things or they get off track, and I kind of have to guide them more than in the second class, where everybody for the most part knows what's going on. They try to get ahead, they really participate in the class, they seem more mature. It's not as hard to get their attention and keep them on task […] I feel like I have to give more examples in the first class for them to grasp what I'm saying. And I just have to do more disciplinary things, like, 'listen, let's do this. Go to this page'. Besides that, […] the first class is sort of my testing ground where I figure what not to do [laughter], and what I should have done a little better by the second class. So I throw a few things out by the second class. (P6I2-1599)

Toward the end of the semester, Lula is happy with the relationship she has been able to build with both groups of students. In fact, it is the students that come to mind as she articulates what she believes has been the best part of the semester thus far.

> I think it's just been, honestly, my students. I've been enjoying them. The kind of relationship you build is not really a friendship because you're their teacher. But especially when they respect you, it lets you do more things with them. So the best part has been getting to know my students, and being able to show them and share my passion. (P6I7-1484)

The developing nature of Lula's knowledge of students is evidenced in the reflections she shares during our interviews. In turn, her expanding knowledge of students has shaped her teaching practice to achieve a positive relationship with them and assist their learning. In the following section, we explore Lula's knowledge of instruction and its effects on her pedagogical choices.

10.2.3 Knowledge of Instruction

22.1% of the total codes assigned to Lula's data correspond to her knowledge of

instruction. As she describes the general dynamics of her classes, Lula's knowledge of

instruction begins to rise to the surface.

> I find myself talking a little too much, but I really try to get them working together in pairs, so they don't feel alone and they can talk it out. That way they get a chance to talk and to give their input. And I try to incorporate reading, and listening, and speaking, you know, all the different skills. […] If I say something and it appears they don't understand it, I might make it a little more animated or write on the board so they can see it. (P6I1-9896)

As all the participants in the study, Lula uses PowerPoints regularly in her classes. Her

developing knowledge of instruction and knowledge of students dictate how Lula designs and

makes use of PowerPoints.

> They've evolved a little since I started. At first there were many more slides, and they were much fuller of content. But I'm winding it down, so I use the e-book more, because I know some people are still not bringing their book to class, and it's easier if they see it up there. […] I like to have the page number up there so I can say it and they can see it. […] Also I put a little bit of additional material, and an outline of what we'll do in class. And lastly I put the homework on there. […] Then I post the PowerPoints on uLearn after class, so they have access. That way they don't have an excuse. […] They know where the homework is, so they can just do it. I want them to succeed, so even if they miss class, if they care enough to check the PowerPoint, they'll see what they have to do. And I know that people are looking at them, because I forgot to post one and a student emailed me, 'can you please post that?' (P6I2-7894)

Lula's use of PowerPoints and online materials in class requires her to have a good

handle of the technological resources available in her classrooms. However, she seems to have a

difficult start in that regard.

> The very first class I ever taught, was in [building]. I knew how to use the technology in other buildings, but it has that separate little screen there, and I didn't know. So I get in there, and I couldn't turn anything on. […] I had to ask [the students] how to turn the computer on the first day! I said, 'I swear I know how to use a computer!' [Laughter]. Technology… should be easy. […] I really wish I had gotten in there before hand and had somebody sit down and show me, 'this is the button you push' [Laughter] (P6I2-5445)

Despite the difficulties, Lula is able to carry out her lesson, and make use of her knowledge of instruction, in the form of knowledge of instructional materials, to guide her pedagogical choices. The experience, in turn, informs her knowledge of instruction.

> It changed all my plans for that day. I couldn't figure out how to use the Docu-Cam, so I finally had it to where [the projector] was showing what was up on my computer screen, and I just pulled up the word document for the syllabus. So I found alternate way. As far as the cam, now that I know how to turn it on and focus it, things will be different. That first day I just pulled things up online, used the e-book, and just hand-wrote things. (P6I2-5654)

As a first-time GSTA, Lula's knowledge of instruction is in its earlier stages of development. Lula is learning about effective and ineffective pedagogical choices as she tries different strategies and activities in her class. She is also learning that time is a precious commodity in the Spanish classroom. Similarly to several other participants in the study, time management is one of Lula's primary concerns. As she reflects on what she considers a 'bad' activity, Lula illustrates the limitations of her knowledge of instruction, and her desire to continue developing such knowledge.

> I wish I had more time. I don't like the way I went over it. I didn't feel like I had enough time to personally write their answers as they said them so that they could see them. I didn't like how I called on them, they said it, and then didn't see it written until we'd gotten over all of them. So I need to figure out a way to do that differently. I would be better for them to hear and see the answers at the same time, but I didn't know how to do that without showing all the answers. So that was bad. I need to keep thinking about making it better. (P6I1-4487)

During our first stimulated recall interview, Lula continues to articulate her struggles with time management. She describes that particular class session as being 'rushed' and is dissatisfied with some of her pedagogical choices that day.

> I should have given them more time for this activity. I thought that later, but like I said, I was in a rush. I didn't really give them a chance to think about it, and just kind of threw it at them. But we still had to get to the other stuff, like the '*expresiones con tener*'

[expressions with the verb 'to have'], and I even had more stuff that I had to push off for the next class. (P6I4[SR]-8129)

On a subsequent interview, as she reflects on that 'rushed' class, Lula demonstrates how her knowledge of instruction is expanding as it is informed by her teaching experiences. She is making important pedagogical decisions to overcome her struggles with time management.

I've been trying to spend more time and make sure they understand. I've been more fluid with the calendar lately, and as long as I can get everything covered by test time, I'm willing to spend more time on certain things. Of course I can only spend so much time on something, so I've started giving more outside work. […] So if they don't understand something, I'll see it before the quiz or before the test, and I'll take care of it. (P6I5-9516)

Presentation of content, and activity design are also part of Lula's instructional struggles during her first semester as a GSTA. She is aware of the developing nature of her knowledge of instruction and she considers her lack of formal training in language teaching to be a weakness. Her expanding knowledge of students also causes particular difficulties with her approach to the cultural readings in the textbook.

I'm still trying -and I guess this is the main job [laughter]- to get them to understand, and still coming up with different ways of introducing material. Very specifically one of the struggles I'm still having is trying to find the right activity to do with readings. So it's hard trying to think of ways to change it up and introduce topics. I guess the way to refer to it would be that I'm still working on my [teaching] methodology. Like I said, I haven't had a background in pedagogy, so I'm still lacking in areas; like presenting the information and creating activities. […] And another reason I'm having so much trouble trying to figure out how to approach the readings is because I know they don't read them. And I don't want to spend time in class reading them. (P6I5-1877)

Because of the limitations and struggles Lula reveals in the previous excerpt, her experience while planning her lessons can sometimes be an unpleasant one. Lula's awareness of her limited knowledge of instruction elicits an emotional response.

I don't enjoy it when I really can't think of fun activities or a good way to present things. So I guess it depends on what I'm teaching. If I have no idea of a good way to introduce a topic and get the students interested and speaking, I have a really hard time planning. But, for example, today I did enjoy lesson planning, because I had really good activities.

There was a class last week when I couldn't think of a way to introduce the topic and it was killing me. (P6I5-2493)

One of Lula's journal entries presents an example of an activity created by her that she considers effective. From her reflection we learn which new GSTA takes the credit for the Jeopardy game that Margarita borrowed for her class and used with great success.

I created a game of Jeopardy to review the Ch. 3 vocabulary and simple verb conjugations. I had a handful of students that let me know that they had studied extra for the game. I'll take any improvement from my students that I can get. It was also enjoyable to play and see how well they were doing. (P6J3-847)

Despite the successes, the pressure to prepare the students for departmental assessment adds to Lula's occasional lack of enjoyment while planning lessons. Lula's knowledge of instruction, in the form of knowledge of language acquisition based on her own language learning experience, is somewhat in conflict with the expectations of the program. She shares similar feelings with her fellow new GSTAs, and once again expresses her difficulties in presenting content and creating activities.

I've been trying to introduce more things that are related to the test. I had even done a review on Monday based on the test, so that was helpful. This is one of the struggles a lot of us new GTAs have been talking about: the balance between preparing the students for the test -because you don't want to only teach a class for the test; you want them to succeed- and then making it fun and different, and promote acquisition compared to just learning and memorizing. But I believe both parts are essential. I'm looking back at how I learned; of course you have to practice, and you have to speak, and you have to get things wrong so you can be corrected, but you still need some structure. And it's really about memorization until you become really comfortable in the language. So I've been trying to think of ways to get them to work on that. Because you have to have what you're teaching match up with the test. So I'm having a bit of a crisis there. […] How do I make it fun but at the same time prepare them for the test? And that's really hard for me right now to figure out how to do. (P6I4[SR]-2821)

The third one of Lula's struggles regarding her teaching practice is language use. That is, the choice between using Spanish or English in the classroom. "*I'm still struggling about how much Spanish versus English I should speak, and when one or the other is appropriate*" (P6I2-

3822). Unlike Julio (who believed was using too much English), Lula struggles with when to use

English as she carries her classes almost exclusively in Spanish, even while presenting more

difficult concepts. "*I'm just used to doing it in Spanish. While I was explaining [a difficult*

grammar point] and some students were still so lost I was thinking, 'are you going to switch?'

[Laughter]" (P6I5-13319). Lula's language use conflict came up in every one of our interviews,

and several of her journal entries. During our last interview, Lula's reflection about the issue

summarizes her struggles throughout the semester, and illustrates her developing knowledge of

instruction. Her knowledge of context, knowledge of purpose, and knowledge of students also

come to the surface.

> I think at the beginning, because I was so inexperienced -and I know that they drilled on
> us, 'all Spanish! Just English for like 5% of the class'- I was like, 'ok, what does 5%
> equate to? When do I use that 5%?' [Laughter]. I was getting so technical that sometimes
> I wouldn't use English, and you do need English to a point. Especially if they don't know
> any Spanish! [Laughter]. Of course I understand the need for mostly Spanish because
> they do need to be immersed. So in the beginning I didn't use enough English. Then I
> went through a phase where I felt like I was using too much English. So I went from one
> extreme to the other. I don't really know if this was all in my head, it might have been,
> but this is how I felt. The grammar concepts were getting more complicated too. Lately
> I've been feeling like I found that balance. When it's necessary; if I keep repeating the
> same thing in Spanish over and over again, that doesn't mean they're going to get it. So I
> just try to find another way to say it and if that doesn't work, I go to English just for the
> sake of time and for the sake of comprehension so that they can practice. So I feel more
> confident with every class about my language choices. But it's still in my head; 'is it time
> to use English? Do I stick it out a little longer just in case they can grasp it?' I think I'm
> doing better, but it's still like a class-by-class struggle. Because I can't help to feel that by
> speaking English I'm giving in, and I'm allowing them to make me give in [Laughter].
> And that's not necessarily their goal; they just want to understand. (P6I7-11827)

When asked what she believes has been the most difficult part of teaching this semester,

Lula's thoughts go back to her struggles with lesson planning and activity design, and her

limitations as a first-time instructor.

> The unknown, the confusion, and trying to figure out how to do things since this is my
> first time. Also trying to plan and think… that is very challenging; trying to think of new

exercises, trying to make it clear to the students. The challenges of teaching for the first time. Learning by making mistakes [Laughter]. (P6I7-1873)

Despite all the challenges, Lula believes her teaching practice has improved throughout the semester. She demonstrates that her knowledge of self and knowledge of students have expanded, but most of all, she is able to articulate the growth of her knowledge of instruction.

> I definitely learned to lower my expectations. Because I've always had high expectations of myself and I put that on others, and I've had to remember that not everybody has them. So I've become more lenient. I also feel much more confident; I don't get nervous anymore. I learned how to prepare in less time. Before it was like, 'oh, it's going to take me two hours to plan this 50-minute class. That does not make sense'. Now I go through, 'ok, I have to cover this. Let's focus on that'. I don't depend so much on technology, even though I still use it for visuals, I try to not use it as much because all I really need is myself and I can present the information, whether that is with technology or not. I've also become more confident in my Spanish and my understanding of it. […] I feel like I'm a lot more flexible as well. (P6I7-7061)

In the previous excerpt, Lula refers to her increased confidence in her Spanish skills. In the following section we explore Lula's knowledge of subject matter and how it shapes her pedagogical choices.

10.2.4 Knowledge of Subject Matter

Lula's expression of her knowledge of subject matter during our conversations and in her journal entries tends to be embedded in her reflections regarding presentation of content and activity design. As she points out the perceived successes and failures of strategies and activities in her last journal entry, Lula's linguistic knowledge of Spanish comes to the surface, as well as her knowledge of students.

> When teaching direct object pronouns this week, I struggled because most students do not have a solid foundation in grammar, so it was all new. I felt like we did good exercises for this that also incorporated the food vocab but I should have focused more on when direct objects are humans instead of things. Also, because in some of the exercises concerning food we only used one verb ('comer') [to eat], some students came to understand that they always had to use 'comer' with all direct object pronouns. (P6J5-876)

Because of Lula's short experience as a language teacher, she tends to draw from her experience as a language learner in her teaching practice. In some cases, this comes in conflict with how content is presented in the textbook. The conflict, and Lula's knowledge of instruction in action, is illustrated as she reflects while watching her video-recorded class during our second stimulated recall interview.

> This part was hard. There were just so many comparisons [of equality and inequality]! And I don't remember how I learned these, but I don't think I was thinking, 'is this an adverb? Is this a verb? Is this an adjective?' I understand that's what makes them different but still… So I've been trying to at least go over those concepts [adverb, verb, adjective] so that they know what I mean when I say, 'this is how you compare with adverbs' versus 'this is how you compare with adjectives'. (P6I6[SR]-2586)

Lula's description of the thought processes behind the presentation and practice of a particular grammar concept becomes another example of the influence of her language-learning experience. As she debates with herself regarding which strategies she considers effective or not, she also demonstrates her knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of purpose, and knowledge of instruction.

> These are the first irregular verbs they've ever seen. So I'm trying to highlight what makes them different from the ones they've learned so far. I also always like to do the verb charts with the pronouns. And that's probably something else that is based on me as a learner. I liked having the charts that way. […] And for things like these, I usually try to do something for pronunciation, like repeating and having them repeat. But I've started to wonder if that's really effective. I don't know… I'm trying to remember if that helped me as a learner. With vocabulary, definitely, but with verbs… I'm not sure. Sometimes it just feels like a filler; like it's not necessary. And I decided to use translation for the expressions with '*tener*' [to have], because it's pretty different from the meaning of the verb alone. I wanted to make sure they could see that it's not the way they might imagine it to be. (P6I4[SR]-11742)

Lula's knowledge of subject matter and knowledge of instruction also combine to help her achieve instructional goals. She is particularly satisfied when she is able to create activities that have multiple purposes.

I was actually excited about this activity. It had the expressions of frequency we learned last chapter and the new expressions. And it had them work with a partner, so they were asking and answering questions to each other. I wanted them to see, 'well if there's '*tienes*' [you have] in the question, then I have to use, '*tengo*' [I have], because it's 'you' and 'I'. So I was able to incorporate a lot of different things. (P6I4[SR]-13771)

As a non-native speaker of the language, Lula's first-hand contact with Spanish culture is not as extensive as that of a native speaker. However, she seems to show an understanding of the inseparable nature of language and culture. She again draws from her experiences a Spanish learner as she reflects on how to motivate students to pursue the language outside of the classroom.

I think that's why we try to incorporate the cultural aspect. To remind them that it's alive and that people connect to the language; it's not a dead language in a book. So I think by showing them the fun they can have with the music, with the dance, with the pictures, to show them different aspects of what's connected with the language, the actual speakers, that may motivate them to learn more about it. We show them that they can travel somewhere and communicate. […] The culture that's connected to the language is what really got me. I can speak the language but if I don't care about the people I can meet by speaking that language, what's the point of studying it? Getting involved, reading, music, TV, actually speaking with people; that is all necessary. There's so many different aspects of the language and we need to cover all of them. (P6I5-5827)

As she mentioned earlier, Lula has some difficulties regarding the cultural readings in the textbook. She normally struggles to find or create the right activity to go with them. However, for one particular chapter Lula is able to demonstrate and make use of her knowledge of subject matter, as acquired during her time in Mexico, to bring culture to the classroom. We can also see Lula's affection for this particular side of Spanish culture.

I'm still like, 'I don't know what to do with these [readings]' [Laughter]. But then this one came around. It was about Mexico, and I love Mexico. So it was something very important to me; it makes me happy. So I was like, 'I want them to know this and love it!' […] It talked about Julieta Venegas [Mexican pop artist], so I figured I could incorporate her. And her music is a little different than what people think of a traditional Mexican music. So then I pulled in Vicente Fernandez [traditional Mariachi singer], because, come on, you have to talk about him and, you know, the hat and the outfit. [Laughter]. So I wanted to incorporate those songs and really introduce them into the culture. It's more than just reading about it in a book. 'So I see this "*ranchera, norteña,*

tejana" [Mexican music styles], what is all this?' I figured that I would include a few little clips and also try to have them describe what they were seeing. Hopefully there's some interest in there. Hopefully they saw, 'ok, there is culture related to this language. There's something attached to it. It's not just this '*ella es bonita*' [she is pretty] stuff. There's this whole world out there and it's not all how I thought it was. It's not all 'sombreros' and little guys with guitars. There are many different genres and things'. I'm going to send them more links with cultural stuff. (P6I2-13464)

The previous excerpt also illustrates Lula's knowledge of context outside the classroom.

The following section further explores this dimension of Lula's PPK.

10.2.5 *Knowledge of Context*

Lula's demonstrations of her knowledge of context seem to be centered on the Spanish

program. For example, she has taken the time to study and make use of the resources available

online to the instructors in the lower division program, including GSTAs. "*All of the information*

that's on uLearn from the coordinator… There are examples of past quizzes and exams, how to

grade things, when to count off, different policies. All that has been so helpful" (P6I3-1085). In

spite of her familiarity with departmental policy, which forms part of her knowledge of context,

Lula has difficulty making sense of some of those policies as they come in opposition with her

knowledge of instruction.

> I don't understand this whole departmental internal thing going on. They say, 'don't teach grammar. We shouldn't teach grammar. Blah blah blah. It's all about talking'. But you have to have grammar to know how to talk! And I know it should not be boring, you know, 'memorize this'; that's not what the language is. But you have to have structure in order to learn it. So it's another one of those things, 'when do I call it an adjective? When do I call it a descriptive word or something like that? So they don't get all confused'. And that's the other thing, how am I supposed to prepare them for the test if I'm not supposed to teach grammar? And how are they supposed to speak it and write it correctly if I'm not supposed to teach grammar? And I know there are different ways of approaching grammar, but to a point you just have to lay it out like this: this is what this is, and this is how it goes. (P6I4[SR]-5144)

Part of Lula's knowledge of context is the departmental policy to reduce D, F, and W

grades. As she reflects on the policy and its effects on her teaching practice, Lula reveals her

knowledge of context along with her knowledge of students.

> I think they have a valid point and a valid reason [to establish the policy], because they
> want everybody to do well. But at the same time I feel like it puts a lot of pressure on us
> as teachers. The thing is, if your student doesn't care, it doesn't matter how much you
> care or how much effort you put into it, they're not going to do well. I don't want my
> students to withdraw, or fail, or get a D, and I do believe in encouraging students, but it
> gets to the point where, in my opinion, it's starting to seem more like high school or
> middle school with all of these reminders, when we're dealing with grown adults with a
> syllabus and a course calendar. I feel like I'm really babying them. To some people it is
> very helpful, but I still see people who after getting multiple reminders don't do the work.
> And I don't see the fruit of my labor. I don't mind reminding them, but just being
> assessed by how many students are irresponsible in my opinion -although that's not the
> only reason someone might fail or withdraw, but a common one- it's a lot of pressure.
> (P6I5-7256)

Despite the concerns Lula expresses about departmental policy, she is appreciative of the

training she receives in the required Foreign Language Teaching class for graduate teaching

assistants. The concepts she is learning in the class during the earlier stages of the semester help

shape her teaching practice.

> It's been good. I'd never taken any education classes, so I'm totally new. So any
> information I get is helpful. [The professor] even held a class the week before classes
> started, […] which was very helpful. […] The book that we read is very helpful too. It
> talks about [the idea that] what you teach has to make sense, they have to be able to
> understand it, you have to have them talking more; it's not a lecture. So a lot of good
> points so far. I'm enjoying it. (P6I2-11559)

Later in the semester, Lula tries to reconcile the theory she is learning in the GTA class

with the expectations of the program. She again expresses the pressure she feels because of the

DFW policy further revealing her knowledge of context. Lula's developing knowledge of

instruction is also revealed in her reflection.

> In the GTA class we learned about different ways in which language pedagogy has
> changed from what we did as learners: memorization, focus on grammar; to more of a
> promotion of acquisition where the students are making use of the language in the

classroom. And I was doing that at first, but then when the first test came, I felt a lot of pressure, because I felt like it was still based on the other way of teaching. So I was seeing a tension between the two different styles of teaching. I started out doing it one way, and then I thought I had to go back to fill-in-the-blank activities and verb charts, and I did that for like three classes [laughter] because I was thinking, 'oh no! I'm going to have a bunch of Ds, Fs, and Ws!' So now I'm just trying to find the right balance and having an engaging class and getting them to where they will do well on the test. […] I think I'm getting more comfortable in finding that balance, but I went from one extreme to the other because I was worried about the Ds, Fs, and Ws. (P6I5-8411)

Like Mary and Margarita, Lula is part of the group of new GSTAs that have been able to collaborate and share materials throughout the semester. In Margarita's chapter, she takes the credit for being the genesis of the collaborative effort. However, for Lula the sharing of materials with other GSTAs began before she became one.

I just talked to a few of my classmates and a lot of them were GTAs, and I told them I was starting the following semester and that I was nervous. And a lot of them offered, 'hey, I have some old materials that I can give you'. So it started out like that; I was already given some of their old materials. And then in our GTA class the professor really encourages us to share. […] So among the new GTAs we keep a constant thread [online] with questions and answers, and we send materials. I had never thought of it as being a team activity, but it is so helpful to have that support there. There have been times before we got into sharing a lot when I got so overwhelmed, and I know we all were, but then we realized, 'if I do this day, then you can do this day'. (P6I7-2246)

Lula is appreciative of the collaboration among GSTAs to the point where she considers her peers to be her "*biggest source of information*" (P6I3-1562). She understands that there are limitations to the support and guidance she receives from the department. As she describes how she has benefited from the collaborative process, it is clear that it goes beyond sharing materials, and she further demonstrates her knowledge of context.

Without [the other GSTAs], I don't know what I would do. They've given me some examples of their materials, they answer every question because they understand that when you come into this, there's no way the department and the coordinator can answer every single question, or help you have every single thing ready. So a lot comes from the support of my colleagues. Like, 'have you tried this in class? What do you think about this?' That's where the majority of the support comes from. […] I've gotten PowerPoints with some activities. I've had actually some of my peers send me some examples of quizzes they've given. Also, they've been a big help on how to use Gradekeeper

[software], because there are instructions on line, but it's hard to read and figure it all out. I've had people sit down with me personally and show me how to do that. They've also sent me Excel files all ready with the equations to figure out the final [writing assignment] grades, or the final homework grades. So that's really made a big difference in my time. (P6I3-1562)

During both of our stimulated recall interviews, Lula regularly points out how her

teaching practice benefits from the collaborative efforts of her fellow GSTAs. The following four

excerpts are examples of these benefits, and of her own contributions to the material pool.

We've been having a lot of group work among the new GTAs. We've been making up different slides and different activities and sharing them. And this [activity] was made by another GTA. And I was very glad I had it because I've been super busy. (P6I4[SR]-10465)

Those images are not mine either. Actually this whole PowerPoint is one of my classmates. I had a busy weekend so I didn't have time to make one. But I did like the way she set it up, because it gave it a different look than in the book. (P6I4[SR]-12739)

All of these pictures are from another GTA. We really switch and share. I made the PowerPoint for the next lesson and a lot of people used it I think. (P6I6[SR]-5430)

The other new GTAs and I keep sharing a lot of materials, and two of them, Mary and Margarita, made a really good study guide, and I posted it and we went over it. So I think the students felt a bit better because of that (P6I6[SR]-1696)

Lula also took advantage of her time before becoming a GSTA to prepare by observing

several of her classmates' Spanish 1001 classes. "*That actually did really help me and that's*

influenced a few things I've done. And then I've come up with my own way of doing things"

(P6I7-5519).

During our final interview, as Lula reflects on her experiences during her first semester as

a GSTA, she expresses satisfaction and acknowledges limitations. "*I'm actually very satisfied. I*

know I didn't do everything perfectly, but as far as a learning experience and my interaction

with my students, I give it like a 9 out of 10. I'm having a good time" (P6I7-785). When thinking

of her future as a GSTA, she reveals an understanding that her teaching is a work in progress,

and looks forward to applying the knowledge she has acquired during her first-time teaching

experience.

> I think my only goal is to improve. I'm not going for perfection. I know that's not attainable. But I think I'm very confident in that at least I will change something; now whether it's better or not I won't know until I try it [Laughter]. But certain lessons I will approach differently. The things that worked well I think I'll keep. But I think it's trial and error, and I'm confident I will get better over time. (P6I7-16043)

Lula's other plans for the future are presented in the following section.

10.3 Lula's Future

During our first interview, I asked Lula if she expected to continue being a GSTA after

this first semester teaching. Her answer shows her interest in language teaching despite the

difficulties she had early on. "*I really like it, so I think really want to continue teaching Spanish.*

I was very nervous at first, but after my first class, even with the technological issues [laughter],

I was smiling. I was very excited about the next class" (P6I1-11123). Regarding her academic

and professional future after graduation, Lula's plans are not definite, but the possibility of

pursuing at least a part-time career in language teaching seems strong.

> I think I want to continue teaching. I'm not sure if I'll get a PhD. Maybe I'll try to be a part-time instructor, and maybe work for an institution that offers Spanish classes. I do enjoy working in the university, but that may not happen, I don't know. Also I love tutoring one-on-one. That's my forte, I believe. And I'm also in the translation program, so I think I'll try that too. (P6I7-1047)

10.4 Chapter Summary

Starting in the seventh grade, Spanish has become Lula's academic and professional

focus. As a new GSTA, her PPK is still in its early developing stages, and even though she feels

confident in her knowledge of subject matter, her knowledge of students and knowledge of

instruction undergo important transformations during the semester. Lula comes to the realization

that her knowledge of students should guide her attitudes and expectations toward them more than her knowledge of self.

During her first semester as a Spanish teacher, Lula struggles with three important aspects of language teaching: time management, lesson planning (including activity design), and language use. Her developing knowledge of instruction, knowledge of students, and knowledge of subject matter help shape her teaching practice to overcome some of her struggles. However, she is aware of the fact that she is yet to acquire the necessary experience to feel truly successful as a Spanish instructor.

Lula feels the pressure of departmental policy. However, as her fellow new GSTAs in the project, she has been able to take advantage of the training provided by the department, and most importantly, of the collaborative efforts of her peers. Lula hopes to continue teaching Spanish in the future, although she is not yet sure of the particular context of instruction.

11   RESULTS: CLAIRE

Claire is the final participant in the project, and the fourth in the group considered as inexperienced, as she was in her first semester as a GSTA. During her participation in the project in the fall semester of 2012, Claire was teaching one Spanish 1001 class. As with all participant chapters, Claire's narrative will be presented primarily around her own words, and will start with an overview of her background (Section 11.1), followed by an exploration of her PPK in relation to the dimensions previously discussed (Section 11.2). Claire's thoughts on her professional future will be presented in section 11.3. Finally, section 11.4 presents a summary of the findings tied to Claire's data. Table 13 presents Claire's code assignations as identified in the data in order of frequency.

Table 13 Code Assignations in Claire's Data in Order of Frequency

Code	Number of Assignations	Percentage
Knowledge of Students	**147 (total)**	**30%**
Student attitudes	44	
Student-teacher interaction	37	
Student limitations	26	
Differences among students	18	
Student abilities	10	
Student learning	7	
Student expectations	2	
Student-student interaction	2	
Student needs	1	
Knowledge of Instruction	**90 (total)**	**18.4%**
Knowledge of assessment	17	
Knowledge of teaching resources	15	
Knowledge of teaching methodology	13	
Knowledge of assignments/activities	13	
Knowledge of language acquisition/learning	11	
Time management	7	
Planning	7	
Flexibility	7	
Knowledge of Self	**56 (total)**	**11.4%**

Limitations	25	
Personality	15	
Improvement	8	
Positive aspects	8	
Knowledge of Context	**56 (total)**	**11.4%**
Department/program context	20	
Peer collaboration	17	
Context outside the university	11	
Classroom context	8	
Knowledge of Subject Matter	**22 (total)**	**4.5%**
Linguistic knowledge	16	
Cultural knowledge	6	
Influence of GTA Experience	**22**	**4.5%**
Frustrations with Teaching	**21**	**4.3%**
Background	**19 (total)**	**3.9%**
Language learning background	9	
Apprenticeship of observation	3	
Learning of instruction	3	
Personal background	2	
Work experience	1	
Academic background	1	
Program support	**18 (total)**	**3.7%**
Program training	14	
General program support	4	
Knowledge of Purpose	**17**	**3.5%**
Language Use	**11**	**2.2%**
Teaching enjoyment	**7**	**1.4%**
Future	**3 (total)**	**0.6%**
Teaching-related future	2	
Academic future	1	
Non-teaching, professional future	0	
Personal future	0	
Current Goals	**1**	**0.2%**
Total Code Assignations	**490**	**100%**

11.1 Claire's Background

At the time of her participation in the project, Claire was 22 years old. Born in Bosnia, she migrated to the US at the age of 11. Interestingly, Claire's exposure to Spanish began in her home country, and not in a formal context.

I was eight years old, I believe, when I watched my first '*telenovela*' [Spanish language soap opera] and this was new because, in the year 97 or 98 they started showing the first '*telenovela*' in Serbia. They had Serbian subtitles but I was listening to Spanish and… I watched every single one. And then they started showing more. Like every year there would be like two and then three. So I was watching more Spanish than English for example. It was kind of like receiving three hours of Spanish on a daily basis. (P7I1-1872)

After arriving in the US, Claire began attending ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes in school. However, her learning of Spanish continued informally until high school, where she had her first official Spanish class.

I had Hispanic classmates in the ESOL class and they realized that I watched all these '*telenovelas*' and they started to talk to me, and that was great [laughter]. I didn't actually take a Spanish class until high school. I signed up for Spanish 1 in 11th grade, and since I clearly knew more than necessary for level one, I took the placement test, so for the second semester I was in Spanish 3. And then in 12th grade took Spanish 4 and also took an AP exam at the end of the year. I got 5 on the AP exam. (P7I1-2347)

After graduating high school, Claire enrolled in the same university where she currently pursues her master's degree in Spanish, to complete her undergraduate studies. She majored in Spanish and minored in French. However, due to her background in Spanish, she did not take the 1001-level class she currently teaches. "*I took a placement test here and that put me in the advanced grammar class, so that's where I started*" (P7I1-3029). Even though teaching Spanish was not her original career choice, Claire remained focused on the language. Her path toward Spanish-teaching became clear shortly before college graduation.

During my undergrad, [teaching] was just something that I decided to do last semester. So it was kind of new, this new idea. I spoke to [my academic advisor] regarding further education. And the whole idea [of the master's program] just seemed very appealing to me, because what I was originally going to do was graduating from the Spanish major and then do the translation/interpretation program here. But after I heard about the master's program the whole GTA thing, and the teaching certificate, I decided to do that. Plus I'm also thinking of doing the translation certification anyway, so we'll see. (P7I1-142)

As previously mentioned, Claire is pursuing a master's degree in Spanish. She is also completing a teaching certificate and a translation certificate. She is the only one of the participants in the study that speaks four languages: Serbian, English, Spanish, and French. She describes herself as a fluent speaker of the first three, but considers her French skills not to be as advanced as the others.

> My French… is OK when it comes to reading and comprehension, but when it comes to speaking it's not so great [laughter]. I didn't practice all that much, and I feel like I need to receive way more input for French. I just mainly focused on grammar in classes instead of focusing on talking and receiving the vocabulary and all that. (P7I1-3232)

Claire has also taken elementary Russian and Portuguese classes, but her only formal training regarding linguistics and language teaching consists of one undergraduate course in Spanish linguistics, and the required Foreign Language Teaching class for GTAs she was taking while participating in the project. Like Ann and Lula, Claire worked as a tutor in the University's LARC prior to her first semester as a GSTA. "*I tutored during the summer*" (P7I1-5861). She also tutored informally in Serbian, her native language, and she is able to point out an important difference between teaching her first and second languages.

> With Serbian… with your native tong you know to apply the rule but not what the rule is. I just speak it. So when they ask me why it's that way, I'm like, 'because it is. [Laughter] It sounds right that way". So it takes me a while to go back and review why that grammar rule was applied, because I don't really think about it. […] With Spanish, I learned some of those rules, even if I don't remember them that much. But the book kind of explains it for you too. So it tells why you can't say something, or how to make it clear for them. So it actually helps me as well, to review my knowledge. 'Oh, so that's why it is what way!' [Laughter]. (P7I1-5961)

In the previous excerpt, we can see how Claire's knowledge of subject matter and knowledge of teaching resources inform her teaching practice. In the following sections, we will further explore Claire's PPK and its influence on her pedagogical choices.

11.2 Claire's Personal Practical Knowledge

11.2.1 Knowledge of Self

Claire's love of language is an important part of her knowledge of self. "*I have a passion for languages. I'm a language junky*" (P7I1-10211). Even though she has chosen to focus her studies and future career in Spanish, when it comes to her interest in languages in her personal life, Claire does not discriminate. "*I listen to music in like 20 different languages. [Laughter] No exaggeration. There's always something new to listen to*" (P7I4[SR]-6338). Claire's interest in languages is reflected in her description of her preferred type of students, further revealing her knowledge of self. "*I guess I like students… that are kind of like me as a student. Meaning that they take interest, they ask questions, they really try to participate*" (P7I1-12322).

As a first-time GSTA, Claire is trying to establish what her classroom behavior should be. She wants students to be able to relate to her, but believes there should be a certain amount of distance between her and the students.

> It's really hard to not be on the same level with them. Because you have to have a distance where you're the instructor and they're the students. So I think I have to hold myself back from being… too informal. I understand what they're going through, but at the same time I cannot be buddy-buddy with them. So I find myself being very… not serious but kind of… you know, in that professor zone while teaching. But every now and then I add in like a little story that applies to the content. For example, in one of the sections of the '*Lectura Cultural*' [cultural reading passage], they were talking about *People en Español* [the magazine], and I told them about how I was in Kroger once buying the Spanish version of People, and the cashier was like, 'this is in Spanish, you know that?' and I was like, 'yeah, I know that' [Laughter]. That kind of lightens the mood and makes them laugh. But I try not to cross the lines. (P7I1-8573)

Being what she would consider overly friendly with the students is not the only aspect of Claire's knowledge of self that she seems to modify for the classroom environment. As opposed to most of the other participants in the study, Claire rarely makes use of gestures to help illustrate

meaning in the classroom during any of the observations. In this case, Claire seems to get her cue

from the students.

> It's funny because usually when I do talk I move my hands a lot. But with them I tried the whole gesturing thing the first couple of classes, and it wasn't really uncomfortable for me, but they were looking at me like… they were confused, or something. So even with obvious gestures like for 'talking' or 'listening' they made these weird faces. (P7I2-1990)

Another element of Claire's knowledge of self is possibly, and to some degree, a

consequence of her avoidance of gestures in class. Claire believes that sometimes she may come

across as too passive in the classroom. However, she is able to recognize the circumstances in

which her energy increases or decreases.

> I have my days where, if I have something fun planned, then I'm more energetic. But there are others… like when we have so much grammar to cover; I know I'm going to be boring. Today I was a bit late because of traffic, so I was a bit louder and energetic to get things going faster. (P7I7-18231)

While watching her teaching on video, Claire is able to inform her knowledge of self by

identifying behaviors she considers negative. Her newly gained awareness prompts her to want

to make changes in her demeanor in the classroom. "*I think at the beginning I was just too*

serious. I looked like I was about to kill somebody [laughter]. I'll try to be aware of that and

maybe smile more" (P7I4[SR]-9283). Another one of Claire's realizations resulting from

watching the video recordings of her teaching is what she considers her uncharacteristic patience

with the students' pronunciation errors.

> It's actually surprising. With my parents I just don't have patience at all [laughter]. It's like, 'no, that's not how you say it. This is how you say it'. But with my students, I remember when I was starting I kept thinking, 'oh, my God, I hope I don't correct them every single time', but it's good to see I've controlled myself. (P7I6[SR]-4122)

Claire's confidence in her Spanish skills is part of her knowledge of self. "*I'm actually*

really comfortable speaking Spanish" (P7I3-4892). However, she is able to identify perceived

limitations, their causes, and the resources that aid them.

The only times that I catch something, is that I might speak, not too fast, but I might stutter a little. So I have to stop and pronounce more carefully. And teaching has been helping me with my own grammar a lot; starting with the basics. I remember when I learned grammar, I learned in the class, but the moment I was out of the class I would not think about it anymore. What stayed with me was more of an instinct of, 'oh, this sounds right; this doesn't sound right'. Now that I'm breaking things down for them, it's kind of coming together, so it's helping me as well. (P7I3-4892)

Despite having the help of the textbook, Claire is aware that her limitations regarding grammar content can affect her teaching practice. "*Sometimes they ask questions and I'm like, 'that's just the way it is' [laughter]. Like, irregular verbs are just irregular. So I guess sometimes when it comes to explanations, there are things I just don't know*" (P7I5-2244).

During our last interview, Claire is able to reflect on her developing knowledge of self. She shows awareness of the improvements she has made regarding her attitude in the classroom, but is uncertain of her improvement as a Spanish instructor.

I feel like I'm more comfortable with being the instructor. I remember the first few weeks I was just, not intimidated, but it was a completely new experience. But I've gotten somewhat used to this position and doing this. So I feel more comfortable. Whether I'm a better instructor or not… I'm not sure. I think I became more confident, even if I make a mistake I'm more OK with that [laughter]. It's no longer like, 'oh, my god! I made a mistake. What are they going to think?' (P7I7-9326)

Claire's knowledge of self seems to be evolving to match the teacher persona she strives to adopt in the classroom. She is aware of how this area of her PPK influences her teaching practice, and is able to make conscious pedagogical choices that seem to be in conflict with her knowledge of self. In the following section, Claire's knowledge of students will be explored.

11.2.2 Knowledge of Students

As with all other participants in the project, Claire's knowledge of students receives the highest percentage of the codes applied to the data, with 30% of the total. Claire begins to inform her knowledge of students on the first day of the semester. "*The first class they kind of looked at me like, 'are you serious?' because we skipped the preliminary chapter and they were all*

confused" (P7I1-7657). As the semester progresses, Claire reports that the shock of the first class

has passed, but she believes the early class time (9:00am) has a negative effect on the students'

attitudes. However, she is able to identify a positive change in attitude prompted by practice.

> It's early in the morning, and they all look like they're not awake yet. They have this bored face on. That kind of bothers me because it's hard to go and engage their attention. But after they do the activities they are kind of up and going. I can see they're getting more eager to learn Spanish, which is kind of exciting for me. (P7I1-7657)

> Not every one of Claire's strategies to engage the students seems to have the desired

effect with all of them. Like Margarita, Claire borrows Lula's Jeopardy game to try in her class.

Even though she believes the strategy to be a success, and is able to expand her knowledge of

students in the process, she is also aware that not all students took advantage of the learning

opportunity.

> This Jeopardy game, it was Lula who created it. […] It was something different. It was a good way to practice for them, and also entertaining. Their reaction was much better than what I thought it would be. I noticed they were very into it, and very competitive, which I did not know before. […] I think they still enjoyed it a lot. I don't think they were all involved, though. (P7I4[SR]-6552)

> During one of the classes I observe, Claire projects a music video and instructs the

students to stand by their desks so she can show them how to dance salsa. As she reflects on the

strategy, its purpose, and results, Claire's developing knowledge of students comes to the

surface.

> I had thought about whether or not to dance with them. And then that day it was raining and they looked sleepy so I thought, 'ok, let's dance!' [Laughter]. They actually looked depressed when they came in. The '*Lectura Cultural*' was about Nicaragua, and the singer is a very famous Nicaraguan salsa singer. So I just wanted them to experience a little bit of the culture and see how to apply it to the music. […] I don't know if they were shy to do it, but some were not doing much. […] But one of them asked me if it was fun to learn, because it seemed fun to try, so I was like 'yeah, sure!' They should try. I'll try to encourage them. Some of them are not even old enough to go to salsa clubs, so I'll inform them where to go to practice and learn. (P7I4[SR]-4869)

Throughout our interviews and in her journal entries, student attitude problems continue to come to the surface as Claire expresses her knowledge of students. As she reflects on what has become one her major challenges during her first semester as a GSTA, we can see how her teaching practice and emotions are affected by the students' negative attitudes and non-participatory behavior.

> Sometimes when I ask a question in Spanish they still look at me like, 'I don't understand what you're saying'. Even when I'm clearly using words we've covered. […] So it feels like they put up a wall and I can't get trough it. It's the whole demeanor I guess that bothers me, because they just seem to be planted in their chair. And I understand it's the morning and they might not be fully awake or whatever. But when they refuse to answer a simple question is like they don't even try to comprehend what I'm saying or what I'm asking. It bothers me in particular when I've asked the question to two other people right before and they answer, and then I get to the third, ask them the same question -and if they're paying attention they should know what the response should be- but then they go, 'oh, I don't now…' I sometimes just move on to the next student, and I don't know if that's the right thing or the wrong thing to do. But then even when I try to rephrase or ask something different, a lot of times they still don't know how to answer. I wish they would at least try. It's not like I'm going to kill them if they get it wrong, you know? [Laughter]. I've been trying to not skip them lately. (P7I2-5948)

As part of her efforts to get students to participate in class, Claire devises different homework activities for students to share in the classroom. For one activity in particular, she devotes extensive class time so that every student has the opportunity to read out loud in the classroom. In her account of the activity, Claire demonstrates her knowledge of students.

> We are covering the food vocab, so I sent them a lot of links to Hispanic restaurants and a model of a review that I wrote. So they wrote their own little review. And I wanted them all to read theirs in class, because usually there are some that don't volunteer and that would never go. And if I just ask them they would know that I'm picking them because they never go. And if I went with the ones that always participate, then they would think that I always call on the same people. So this way, everybody participates. […] For the most part it was good. Some of them… I couldn't understand everything, but for the most part they did OK. The ones that always do well did well. The ones that are usually neither here nor there… I'm satisfied with the fact that they're making an effort. I like that they feel comfortable enough to share their work. But some of them didn't do it. (P7I6[SR]-1156)

Even though Claire seems to sometimes focus on what she perceives as the students'

limitations, her expanding knowledge of students informs her teaching practice. She is able to

device pedagogical strategies to aid in the students' comprehension of the content.

> When I was covering the adjectives, it annoyed me that when I said '*adjetivos*'
> [adjectives] I was asked what that meant. At the time I just thought, 'it's the same thing
> in English. Do I have to explain that adjectives describe people?' But then I figured lots
> of Americans don't really know parts of sentences, and sometimes they don't think about
> it, but you have to break the sentence down for them. So in the next PowerPoint I color-
> coded stuff. I had '*pronombre*' [pronoun] and that was blue, and then I had the '*verbo*'
> [verb] and it was orange, and '*adjetivo*' was yellow. The example would be in those
> colors so they could see what was what. (P7I2-5443)

In one of her journal entries, Claire reflects on a difficult situation with one of the

students in her class. Claire begins to question her developing knowledge of instruction due to

the student's statements, as they become part of her knowledge of students.

> One of the students that failed emailed me Wednesday night. He sent me this long, long
> email about how he is not happy with his Spanish learning or his grade. He had a C in
> class. One thing that specifically hit the nerve was that he tried to blame his failing grade
> on my method of teaching. In a way he succeeded, because I ended up feeling really bad
> and evaluating my teaching method. He said how he did not have enough practice or
> examples, even though I had them do several written assignments and I even gave them a
> sample so that they had something to go by. (P7J4-243)

Upon further reflection and after receiving encouragement from fellow GSTAs, the

program coordinator, and the professor in the GTA class, Claire regains the lost confidence in

her teaching practice. Another issue that comes to the surface during our interviews is some

students' failure to complete assignments. "*I don't like giving out zeroes when it's because they*

didn't do an assignment" (P7I5-3520). Claire's frustration with this issue continues to be

palpable even toward the end of the semester.

> I don't know if it's my fault or their fault, but sometimes they just don't do their work. So
> I feel kind of bad when I give them a bad grade. But then again, I can't give them a good
> grade because they don't deserve it. It frustrates me a lot that they turn in stuff late or
> they don't do it even though I keep telling them. That has to be one of the most
> frustrating things in teaching [Laughter]. (P7I7-1997)

Despite Claire's frustrations, she is able to identify positive student behavior, and the rewarding nature of her work as a Spanish instructor. She understands that students must be exposed to Spanish beyond the classroom, but is content with her role as a GSTA.

> I like it when they participate, or when they show that they care, that they understand things, and get through [content] correctly. It's rewarding to know that what you're trying to tell them is coming across. But at the same time I feel like… I keep telling them that if they want to learn a language it's not just the 50 minutes in class. You have to really spend time outside of the classroom. And I'm not really sure that they comprehend what that means [laughter]. When I was younger used to explain myself the stuff that I was learning, and pretend I was a teacher explaining it to myself. And now I find myself in that role and it's kind of… Yeah! You know? It feels good. (P7I1-9498)

Claire's contentment with her performance as a new GSTA is somewhat diminished when she reflects on her ability to motivate students to learn. She considers her lack of teaching experience to be limiting, and keeping her from being able to change some students' minds about learning Spanish. In her reflection, Claire's demonstrates her knowledge of students.

> I guess this is where the whole lack of experience comes in. I've been thinking about that. At this point of the semester, I'm not sure… The [students] that came into the classroom with the mindset of, 'yes, I really want to learn Spanish; I want to minor in it', are the ones who have kept up their interest. The ones that are there because they have to take it are just kind of there, and I haven't really seen that much change in attitude. I believe that it is possible to change their mind about learning the language, but at the same time I don't think I've figured out exactly what to do to get them to that stage. (P7I5-4104)

As a first-time GSTA, Claire's knowledge of students is in its earlier stages of development. In the following section we will see how her knowledge of instruction evolves throughout the semester as well, and how it affects her teaching practice.

11.2.3 Knowledge of Instruction

18.4% of the total codes assigned to Claire's data are related to her knowledge of instruction, receiving the second highest percentage of code assignations. As Claire reflects on

her role as a Spanish instructor, her knowledge of instruction, in the form of knowledge of

language acquisition, is revealed.

> Since it's 1001 I feel like I'm just there to kind of give them an intro[duction] into Spanish language; give them some basic details or basic vocabulary that they need for their environment. For higher levels, I'm thinking it's more about teaching students how to think in Spanish, but it also starts in the lower levels. So I think I'm also there to put them in the right direction when it comes to learning the language. Right now, since they only speak English they only think in English, so I try to get them on the right path to thinking in Spanish, and less focused on the difference between English and Spanish. (P7I5-418)

As mentioned earlier, Claire shows frustration with some students' failure to complete

homework assignments and get further exposure to Spanish outside of the classroom. Students'

lack of participation in class is another one of Claire's frustrations. In one of her reflections

regarding these two issues, Claire is able to express her knowledge of language acquisition as

derived from her own experience as a learner and brief academic background in linguistics and

language teaching. Claire's knowledge of students is also revealed.

> I kind of know what they go through, especially because they are adults, it's not the same as with the kids; they are really conscious and their affective filter is all the way up there. So the problem with grown-ups is that you always want to get everything right; you don't want to make mistakes, you're scared of making mistakes if you participate. I also kind of feel bad for them in the sense that if they just come to class, and that's the only Spanish input that they get, they're not going to learn the language. I keep telling them to practice and listen, whether it's music or TV, and do the activities, study the vocabulary. But it's like they don't follow through. And I understand they probably have busy schedules and have other classes and other things to study, but foreign language is not like math, or science, where you can learn it, memorize it and get on with it. For this class… memorization alone is not going to work. My knowledge of that is based on that I've learned in my linguistics class, the stuff I'm learning in the GTA class, and my personal experience. I know when I took English in Serbia, I was there for like 45-50 minutes in class, and once I was out I really did not care. I hated English, and I only took it for one year… I didn't like the language at all until I came here and had to learn it [Laughter]. (P7I2-11560)

Claire's experience as a language learner seems to further inform her knowledge of

instruction, specifically regarding her use of PowerPoints as a pedagogical tool. However, she

does not discard the idea that students might not appreciate the tool as much as she did as a learner.

> As a student I always thought the PowerPoints contained better information than the book, or at least it was the summarized version of it. So it was better than taking notes and summarizing what I read. I had the PowerPoint. So I thought that it would be easier for them to have them since it's 1001 level. But I also have the page number where they can find the information for each thing if they want to use the book. (P7I1-16524)

Different elements in Claire's knowledge of instruction are still evolving during her first semester as a GSTA. She is uncertain as to how strict she should be with the students, being more or less so at different stages of the semester. She is trying to achieve a balance that allows her to help the student succeed in the class, and prevent dissatisfaction or behavioral problems. However, as she seems to be leaning toward being less strict, she questions her choice.

> Maybe I should be more strict. I was the first day, and I thought I would be throughout the whole semester. But I found it very difficult, because I want them to do well and… and I'm still strict about some things, like due dates. But in class I'm not strict when it comes to other things, like when they come in late; I'm not taking points off. So… I'm not sure if that's a strength or a weakness. You don't want to be overly strict to where they hate you, or overly lenient to where they do what they want. So I'm trying to find the in-between, I guess. (P7I5-2244)

Claire continues to adapt and modify her teaching practice throughout the semester. She responds to students' requests, and makes use of her knowledge of instruction to make successful pedagogical choices. Claire is particularly pleased and somewhat relieved to see one of those choices bear fruit.

> They all complained about not understanding the context, and I keep saying, 'you do not have to understand every word; you just have to get the key concepts. Like if you see the word '*deporte*' [sport] and the verb '*jugar*' [to play] is not in the word bank, they you go with '*practicar*' [to practice], instead of '*bailar*' [to dance], or whatever. So we've been looking for those key terms during practice a lot, and it's been working out better for them. I actually had a couple of students come up to me after class and say, 'ok, today I understood everything in class'. So that feels good. I'm like, 'ok, thank God!' [Laughter]. (P7I2-14695)

Another teaching practice that evolves during Claire's first semester as a GSTA is her strategy for grading exams. She has been able to find a more efficient, and less emotional, strategy.

> For the first one I graded one test at a time, so I kept getting caught up in my feelings about how each student was doing. It was like, 'oh! This is horrible! Why didn't you study for this?' So now for [the second] one, I decided to grade one page at a time. So after the first page I didn't know whose test I was grading, and I was able to go through them faster. Only when I did the math and put the grades down, I knew who it was. And then I could go, 'oh, well…' [Laughter]. I also decided to write the correct answers on the test so they could see them during the time I gave them to look at their test in class. (P7I6[SR]-5679)

The developing nature of Claire's knowledge of instruction is evident in her reflection regarding lesson planning versus the reality of the classroom. She is learning that not everything goes according to plan in the language classroom. She also shows frustration with her perceived inability to create engaging activities, and the fact that repetition is a necessary aspect of language teaching.

> In my head, when I plan out the lesson, it all looks perfect. But then when you try the stuff in class it's like, 'ok, maybe not!' [Laughter] […] So I've been trying to find ways to just keep the class entertaining, but I've gotten to a point where I don't know what to do anymore. And then I think, 'in order to get them ready for the exam, I need to cover this, and I don't have the time to make it fun. We need to get through this material'. […] And they ask a lot of questions that take class time. For example, I was covering '*ser*' versus '*estar*' [the two forms of the verb 'to be'] today. And after I had talked about it for a while, one of them asked, 'so how do we know when to use '*estar*'?' and I actually needed a moment [laughter] because I felt this sharp pain in my brain. All I could think was, 'didn't I just…?' [Laughter]. It was kind of like he took a needle and pierced my brain. So this week has been less fun. (P7I5-8495)

In her search for entertaining, engaging activities to bring to the classroom, Claire often relies, to a great extent, on the input she receives from the GTA class. However, she recognizes that her lack of experience can sometimes alter the procedure and outcome of those activities. Claire demonstrates her developing knowledge of instruction in her example.

We discussed in the GTA class that to review the vocab you can try passing a ball around, but it can't be hard because they could get hurt. So I was like, 'ok cool', and I found something that would work. I was planning for the game to go completely differently but then I got to class and the game got started, and I was like, 'oh, wait. That's not supposed to be the way to do it' [Laughter]. Because originally we were all going to be standing and whoever caught the ball and gave the wrong answer would sit down, so the last one standing is the winner. So I don't know what was going through my mind and I just threw the ball and then I was like, 'oh, no!' The game was still all right because it kind of showed they don't review the vocabulary from the previous class. But I guess next time when I do the game I'll do it the right way. (P7I5-10393)

Like most of the other participants in the study, one of the pedagogical issues with which Claire struggles in class is language use. She is aware of the program's expectations in this regard, demonstrating her knowledge of context. However, her experience as a language learner and her knowledge of students further inform her knowledge of instruction to the point where language use becomes a particular challenge for Claire.

I understand, and agree, that Spanish should be spoken the majority of the time. But since it's the 1000 level it's just kind of hard. When I look at my past professors, especially for French, I don't think they spoke French constantly, especially in the 1000 level. Everything was in English except the vocabulary and the activities. Same thing happened with Russian and Portuguese in 1001. […] When they asked you questions they did it in the language we covered in class, but when it came to explaining and actually talking about other things, it was mainly in English. I think it is very important for them to listen to Spanish, but at the same time, when they look at you with that I-have-no-idea-what-you-just-said face… it's very difficult. So that expectation is…for me at least it takes a little adjusting. (P7I1-21625)

In her efforts to increase the amount of Spanish exposure in the classroom, Claire makes important instructional choices. For example, as she considers that there is too much English in the textbook, she makes sure her PowerPoints are completely in Spanish. Claire's knowledge of instruction, knowledge of purpose, and knowledge of subject matter are illustrated in her reflection.

What bothers me in the book is that some stuff, like the instructions, the grammar explanations, and even some cultural information, are in English. […] I think the information is there for a reason, but I wish it was in Spanish. I think it's stupid that it's in English. So now what I've been doing in my PowerPoints for the grammar is to

translate the explanations into Spanish. I take advantage of cognates for that. So that way, when I'm explaining the grammar they can see on the PowerPoint the words that I'm saying. (P7I2-4301)

Claire also works very hard at avoiding translation in the classroom, that is, providing the English equivalent to a word or phrase the students have difficulty understanding. As she shares the reasonings behind this pedagogical choice, Claire again draws from her experience as a language learner and from her academic background in linguistics to demonstrate her knowledge of instruction and knowledge of purpose.

> The issue with translation… My thought is that, yes, if I translate it will probably be easier for them to understand. But if I keep doing it, I fear they're going to keep translating everything. So every time they're going to use a word they'll have to go, 'oh, this is what this is in English'. But I guess it will take a while to get to that point where they're not going to think about the English equivalent. I think they start with expressions that don't translate literally. But even if I don't translate, I can see that they do. When it comes to my personal experience, there was a lot of translation. If I watched a soap opera and it had subtitles in Serbian, then that was translation. When I printed song lyrics, every word that I didn't know I would look up in the dictionary, so that was translation as well. I guess what I'm trying to keep them from is the literal translation what will many times get them to say the wrong thing or get the wrong message. When I took the Spanish linguistics class, the professor said, 'if they apply the same rules they use in English to Spanish, it's going to affect their learning in many cases, because either it's not going to make sense to them, or they are going to learn use it in the wrong way'. (P7I4[SR]-3579)

Despite the difficulties and challenges of being a first-time GSTA, Claire is pleased with the experience. She is also aware of how much she has learned throughout the semester as her knowledge of instruction has expanded and evolved. During our final interview, she seems to look forward to applying her newly acquired knowledge. "*It went well. It went better than I expected, but… I've learned a lot, so next semester I feel like it's going to be much better [laughter], hopefully. Now I have the general idea of what to do and not to do, or what to do more of*" (P7I7-23). In the following section, we will explore Claire's knowledge of subject matter and its effect on her teaching choices.

11.2.4 Knowledge of Subject Matter

As mentioned earlier, Claire is confident with her Spanish skills. Drawing from her

experience as a language learner, she believes her language skills are satisfactory for her work as

a GSTA. However, she is aware of the occasional limitations being a non-native speaker may

bring. During our second stimulated recall interview, she points out an instance where she failed

to provide a word a student requested. In her reflection, she illustrates her knowledge of subject

matter, knowledge of self, and knowledge of students.

> Here somebody asked how to say 'cucumber'… and I know the word. When I looked it up later I was like, 'duh! "*pepino*". Of course I know that!' [Laughter]. But at the moment I just… I told him I would get back to him on that. I told them once, 'I'm sorry. I'm not a walking dictionary [Laughter]. Sometimes my brain just freezes and it's just not going to happen'. So I think for the most part they just think, 'ok, cool'. They haven't really made any comments about it so I don't think they mind. And they know I'm not a native speaker, but I don't think they mind that either. When I was learning, the teachers that had a thick accent, I didn't like. I liked the ones that sounded more natural. I don't think that I have a thick accent. If I did, I think they would mind. Like, 'why is she even teaching this if she can't even speak it?' (P7I6[SR]-3256)

We also learned in the previous section how Claire avoids providing translations for the

language covered in class. Since she has chosen not to make use of gestures to illustrate

meaning, she usually relies on synonyms, cognates, and images. However, she sometimes has

difficulty in making the meaning of certain terms clear to the students. As she reflects on one of

such instances, she demonstrates her knowledge of subject matter and knowledge of instruction.

> I was thinking, 'how am I supposed to tell you what '*simpático*' [likeable] means?' The problem was also that I was trying to use the adjectives that we had already covered. So with '*simpático*' I could use '*amable*' [friendly] or '*bueno*' [nice], but I wasn't sure that they knew '*amable*' because it wasn't in the set of words, so I was like, 'ok, I can't use '*amable*''. And then the same guy came the next class and said, 'oh, I heard a song, and she used '*simpático*'', and I was like, 'oh, Christ! And we're back with this word' [Laughter]. In my head, I was like, 'don't you have something similar in English?' Because I'm pretty sure there's a cognate but people don't use it. Like with '*amable*' there is 'amiable' but a lot of people don't know it. That class we finally had '*amable*' so I tried to explain that it was a combination of '*amable*' and '*bueno*'. And the picture was

no help, but I think he got it, because I used several examples. So hopefully…
[Laughter]. (P7I2-10308)

In addition to her efforts to accurately convey the linguistic aspects of the language to the students, Claire regularly brings cultural content into the classroom. She sometimes relies on the information in the textbook, but will often expose the students to other elements of Hispanic culture.

> I think exposing them to the culture and other ways to have more Spanish input is one of my strengths. Because I have shown them different websites and music and stuff that they might find interesting; that draw them into the language. I don't think the grammar can draw anybody into a language [Laughter]. I'm trying to make the class more than just grammar instruction. (P7I5-1781)

During our first stimulated recall interview, Claire points out an example of her efforts to expose the students to cultural information beyond the one found in their textbook. "*I had them watch a Spanish movie or a movie about a Hispanic person and write a summary. I gave them some suggestions but they saw whatever movie they wanted. I wanted them to do something different from the cultural readings*" (P7I4[SR]-845).

Claire also takes advantage of the collaborative efforts among new GSTAs to further illustrate cultural content in her class. As she comments on a music video she presented in class, her knowledge of Spanish culture comes to the surface.

> We did the introduction to the Caribbean culture for the chapter, and one of the countries is Dominican Republic, so Juan Luis Guerra being from there, it just made sense. I was planning on doing a different song, but Lula emailed us saying she was going to do this song in her class. I actually hadn't heard the song before, and when I did I thought, 'well, that's a lot of African influence, so you can see that influence in the culture. And it goes perfectly with the reading'. So I decided to do the same thing that she did. (P7I7-13098)

Even though Claire's knowledge of subject matter is not overt during most of our conversations and in her journal entries, she is able to demonstrate it. Particularly, we can see

how she strives to pass on to the students her interest in Hispanic culture. In the following

section we explore Claire's knowledge of context, and how it informs her teaching practice.

11.2.5 Knowledge of Context

Claire's classroom is long and narrow. She usually has to navigate a sea of book bags to

get to the students as they do group work. Her awareness of this difficulty is part of her

knowledge of classroom context, and her willingness to move around the classroom regardless

demonstrates her knowledge of instruction.

> Before I didn't really do the whole walking-around thing, because it's so cluttered in the classroom. There's not enough space; their book bags are everywhere. So when I walk I trip all over the place. But this week I've started doing more of that. I approach them when they work in pairs or in groups and I answer their questions. I think they needed that from me. (P7I2-1058)

Claire demonstrates her knowledge of context outside the university as she highlights

some the benefits of learning a foreign language to the students.

> I told them right at the beginning of the semester that if they were there just because they had to take it, that was fine, but that in today's society, it makes you more desirable for a job if you put on your resume that you speak a different language. So bottom line, it's easier to get a job for a person that speaks more than one language than for a person that just speaks English. The way that businesses work now, and even in the medical field, you need to be able to communicate with different kinds of people. (P7I5-6430)

Regarding Claire's knowledge of the department/program context, she shows awareness

of the resources available to instructors. She consults the informational resources regularly, and

sometimes the program coordinator as well.

> I keep referring back to the documents on uLearn in case I forget anything; like the deductions for the 'Escritura' [writing assignment]. I consult the syllabus as well for the absences and stuff they cannot make up. Other than the first few meetings and the questions that I had that first week, I haven't really asked the program coordinator much. But I have to email him about that student that sent the email complaining about my teaching. (P7I3-1079)

Despite her awareness of such resources, Claire feels that most of what she has learned throughout the semester has come from trial and error in the classroom. Though she expresses appreciation for the independence derived from the experience, she seems to hope for more guidance and support.

> I felt like I had help, and I could have asked anybody, but at the same time it was also a self-learning experience; like I was on my own. And I think that could also be a good thing because that way you can become more independent, but still… (P7I7-4809)

Claire refers to the difficulties of two of her fellow GSTAs to illustrate what she interprets as insufficient support from the department. In Margarita's chapter we learned about the serious behavioral problems one student presented in class. Claire makes reference to that struggle, and that of a more experienced GSTA, as she demonstrates her knowledge of context.

> One of the more experienced GTAs and one of the new ones [Margarita], had problems this semester with one student and it got a bit out of their hands, I guess. And they were given support in that the people in charge talked to the two students and saw what could be done, but I felt like in order to show greater support maybe a stronger action should have been taken. I mean, if the students decide to stay in class you never know if they are going to change their attitude. If I was in their shoes, I don't think I would want to deal with that in every class, especially after the student snapped at me. I wish they would have taken the side of the instructors and gotten the students out of the classes. It put the instructors in an uncomfortable position, because maybe because of that one student, they would feel less motivated to teach the class. It would have definitely impacted me. I guess it would depend on the students' reaction after the incident. If that had happened to me and the student had kept on giving me attitude, that would have probably drained the energy out of me, or at least given me a negative feeling that I would have spread to the rest of the students. So I think that impacts not only the instructor, but also the whole class. (P7I7-3264)

Also as part of her knowledge of context, Claire shows awareness of the role that teacher evaluations completed by students at the end of the semester play in the assessment of GSTAs. She shows her concern as early as our first interview, and wonders if such evaluations produce the same anxiety among faculty members. Claire's fears seem to stem mostly of her inexperience as a GSTA.

I have it in my mind whether the students at the end of the semester are going to like the class, you know, when they do evaluations. […] I am worried because they [the department] do look at evaluations at the end of the semester; like, 'this is what you did'. And I really don't want to be in trouble, and have that chat with [the program coordinator] [Laughter]. I wonder if the professors who have PhDs and they know everything about the program; I wonder if they have the same fear. Because some of them… they already know what they're doing, so when they come to class, it doesn't seem like they care about how you're going to evaluate them. (P7I1-22736)

Claire also believes that the number of Ds, Fs, and Ws in her class can be used to measure her success as an instructor. She describes the situation as 'stressful' and is aware of how the policy affects her teaching practice, more than it benefits the students.

To be honest, last week was the midpoint, so I was a little worried about that. We had that meeting with the program coordinator, and he was like, 'even Fs are not as bad as withdrawals'. And I was freaking out. I was like, 'oh my god! I hope I don't come in on Wednesday and half my class is gone!' [Laughter] which was not the case, thank God. But I think the policy affects my grading. I think the policy affects the teachers more than it does the students because, for example, I cannot help the people that are failing in my class if they don't come to me for help, if they don't turn in their work, or if they don't do what they're supposed to. I can't pass a student that does not take the exam, or that doesn't do the work. So it's very stressful. I should not feel responsible for the ones that don't do the work. I give out progress reports regularly, and I write notes on the ones that may need them. Like, 'come talk to me. I can help'. But I don't know what else to do. (P7I5-7407)

Despite the pressure she feels from departmental policy, and what she considers insufficient support from the department, Claire shows great appreciation for what she learns in the required Foreign Language Teaching class she is taking during her first semester as a GSTA. During one of our interviews she is able to point out several benefits of taking the class and how she has applied learned content to her teaching practice.

It's been really helpful. I think with every class I've learned something new that I can do with students, or how to act, or what to say in certain situations. I've started using the puzzle maker for the activities, which I didn't know we had. And the professor introduced us to websites that have activities the students can do at home, so I shared that information with them. Another thing that's helpful is how to address certain student behaviors. We start every class with what was good this week and what was really bad, or what really got on our nerves. After that, you get a definite perspective of how it is for other GTAs. Also, for exams, I learned to make sure to tell them not to look at other

people's paper [laughter]. And the textbook for the class helps a lot because it gives demonstrations and examples on how to introduce a certain topic, or what to do; how to talk to them and how to explain things. (P7I3-56)

Like her fellow new GSTAs, Claire has taken advantage of the GTA class and the support of her peers. "*In the classroom, most of what I do or say is from the information that I gather from other GTAs, as well as the GTA class*" (P7I3-3648). She is highly appreciative of such support, and shows awareness of her limitations as a new GSTA. As she reflects on some of the benefits of the support she receives from fellow GSTAs, she demonstrates her knowledge of context.

They've been extremely helpful. And that's one thing that I like about the department, because there's no competition really; everybody's there to assist and help out and share information, and tell you what to do and what not to do. […] I have a friend in the medical field and she says that no one there wants to help anybody because there's such great competition. So I'm thankful for what we have, because I don't think I would be able to do all of this on my own. (P7I3-1502)

As we have seen in the chapters devoted to the inexperienced GSTAs, the collaboration among them extended beyond what the experienced group reported. The collaborative efforts included regular exchange of resources, and even co-creation of materials. The following three excerpts are a few examples of how Claire's teaching practice benefited from this experience, and how she, in turn, contributed to the practices of her collaborators.

Lula did a mini review for the exam, I did my PowerPoint review, so the listening activities came from her review, and I sent my PowerPoint to Mary and Margarita. So it was great because Mary used my pictures for the family vocab, and Lula used my possessive adjectives slide. (P7I3-7964)

Mary and Margarita designed a practice test that was almost exactly like the test. It even had a listening section and a reading section. So I used it and my students said it actually helped them a lot, because it was almost like taking the exam to get ready for the exam. So I'm hoping on doing something like that for the third exam. (P7I6[SR]-5170)

This week I was busy with my other classes, so the fact that I had two other GTAs send me practices for the grammar stuff was good because I was like, 'yes! I have the activities!' (P7I7-2430)

In Pat's chapter, he mentioned that two new GSTAs had accepted his invitation to

observe his class during the previous summer semester. We later learned that Mary was one of

them; Claire was the second one. Claire considered the experience to be a positive one and was

able to identify several pedagogical practices that she considered successful.

> It helped me a lot because I realized that the whole thing wasn't as bad as I thought it
> would be. He gave me an idea of what I needed to do when it comes to lesson planning
> because he had the PowerPoint up. It was also a longer class because it was summer, so I
> could see a lot of material and a lot of activities. And it actually went by pretty quickly; I
> didn't feel like, 'oh, my God, I want to get out of here'. So it was interesting to see the
> other instructor just trying to make it more entertaining for the students. He spoke
> Spanish almost the whole time, so that was great. (P7I7-7452)

After that first experience with peer observation, Claire invited a fellow new GSTA to

observe her class and provide feedback. She also considered that to be a positive experience, and

plans to observe at least one class before the end of the semester.

> I have one GTA who came to observe my class, and then we discussed my teaching
> skills. She told me what she saw in my class that she wasn't doing in her class. So that
> helped me as well in a way. But also I wish I had had time to -maybe I'll do it after the
> thanksgiving break- observe somebody else's class and see how their class is going. I
> think that would help me for next semester; looking at what's working in their class
> compared to mine. (P7I7-8666)

As she looks forward to the following semester, Claire shows awareness of different

elements of her teaching practice that she would like to change.

> If I get to teach next semester, I can already see what I would do different to avoid
> confusion or grammatical weaknesses. And attitude-wise, there are things I would
> change. So next semester I would still be nice, but I would set some rules that cannot be
> broken. So if I say, 'no cellphones' I mean it. (P7I5-3128)

Claire's words illustrate the developing nature of her PPK as an inexperienced GSTA. As

with the inexperienced group, Claire's PPK appeared to expand and evolve more dramatically

than it did for the experienced GSTAs in the project. It is also evident that the peer collaboration

that took place among the new GSTAs during the semester aided in the development of Claire's PPK. The following section presents Claire's plans for the future after graduation.

11.3 Claire's Future

Even though Claire's original plans before graduating from college were to pursue a career in translation and interpretation, she is now certain that her future is in language teaching. She is yet to decide the specific context in which she would like to teach, but seems to lean toward more advanced, academic topics, which might require training beyond her current master's program and teaching certificate.

> I'm going to get the teaching certificate while doing my masters, but I'm not sure yet if I want to go into a PhD program in Spanish and spend another 5 years going to school. I decided to maybe apply for that next semester or so, and also do the translation certificate while I'm still making up my mind. I see teaching as my career, which is why I'm contemplating doing a PhD. And the other reason I'd like a PhD is because as a professor you can teach a basic class, but you also have the opportunity to teach a more specific topic that you research. Now that I'm in the master's program, I realize that I enjoy those classes more, the ones that are very focused on a topic, not just Spanish in general. So I'd like to teach something more focused. (P7I7-702)

11.4 Chapter Summary

Claire is multi-lingual, and a self-proclaimed language enthusiast. As a first time GSTA, she struggles with the limitations brought by being a non-native speaker of Spanish, and her limited experience and training. Claire's knowledge of self guides several of her teaching choices, but it is also put aside to allow her to reach pedagogical goals. Her knowledge of students is still in its earlier stages of development, and while it seems to be mostly informed by student limitations, it aids Claire's teaching practice. Claire's knowledge of instruction is also developing, and primarily informed by what she learns in the GTA class and from other new GSTAs. As a whole, Claire's PPK is yet to fully complement and aid her teaching practice, but she looks forward to applying her newly acquired knowledge in future semesters.

12   COMPARATIVE RESULTS

One of the principal realizations to which I arrived after examining and presenting the results of the study is that the PPK of the GSTAs in the study is complex, interconnected, and constantly evolving. Clearly, these case studies are not meant to be generalizable. On the contrary, they present numerous examples of how individual circumstances can affect the teaching practices of GSTAs. However, several themes were identified which seemed to be commonplace among the participants, or at least some of them. In this chapter, I attempt to identify commonalities as well as differences in these themes as they relate to the GSTAs' teaching experiences, that is, whether they were new to the program or had been teaching there for several semesters. The investigation's research questions, as presented in Chapter 1, are:

1. What are some of the more salient characteristics of the personal practical knowledge (PPK) of experienced and inexperienced GSTAs?

2. How does PPK inform the teaching practices of GSTAs?

3. Does the PPK of inexperienced GSTAs differ from the PPK of experienced GSTAs? And if so, how does it differ?

Questions 1 and 2 were answered in the result chapters devoted to each participant. Question 3 can be addressed in part by looking at themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) that arose during the process of reflection as the participants talked and wrote about their experiences as GSTAs. Important themes that emerged from the data tied to the participants are:

- Prominence of knowledge of students

- Time management (knowledge of instruction)

- Language use (knowledge of instruction/subject matter)

- Limitations (knowledge of self)

- Influence of GSTA experience

- Program training (knowledge of context)

- Peer collaboration (knowledge of context)

The seven themes are explored in the following sections. Numeric data based on code assignations will be used, along with the participant's words, to illustrate differences and similarities between the experienced and inexperienced groups. For purposes of clarity in this and the following chapter, pseudonyms, instead of participant numbers, will be used in the identifying information of participant quotes.

The number of code assignations was not uniform among all participants due to several factors: Interview and journal length (some GSTAs spoke and wrote more than others); repetition (some GSTAs re-instated previously expressed ideas throughout interviews thus, increasing the number of codes assignations); and turn-length (some participants spoke in longer turns thus requiring fewer code assignations within each interview). Therefore, individual numeric values (i.e. the number "Knowledge of context" codes assigned to one participant) will not be used to compare and contrast results. However, upon calculating the percentage of codes assigned to the groups (experienced versus inexperienced), the distribution was almost even. The experienced group received 51.2% of the total code assignations and the inexperienced group received the remaining 48.8%. Thus, group numeric values will be referenced in the following sections. Table 14 presents the total codes assigned to each participant and both the individual and group percentage values.

Table 14 Total Code Assignations for Each Participant with Individual and Group Percentages

Participant	Total Codes Assignations	Individual Percentage	GSTA Experience	Group Percentage
Julio	618	12.1%	YES	
Pat	740	14.5%	YES	51.2%
Ann	625	12.2%	YES	
Elena	670	12.4%	YES	
Mary	733	14.3%	NO	
Margarita	702	13.7%	NO	48.8%
Lula	572	11.2%	NO	
Claire	490	9.6%	NO	
Total	5150	100.0%		100%

12.1 Relevant Themes

Most of the themes are directly linked to the participants' PPK, and one is a central variable in the project: the participant's awareness of the role that having previous GSTA experience, or not, plays in their PPK, and in turn, in their teaching practice. Figure 2 presents numeric data for the seven themes as distributed between the experienced and inexperienced GSTAs in the project.
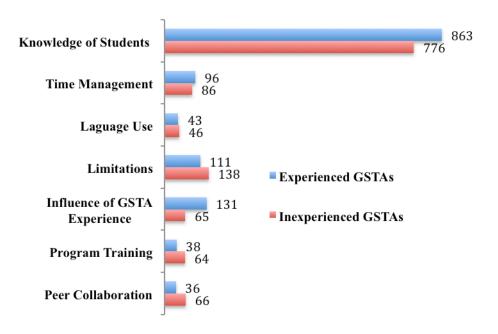

Figure 2 Code Applications for the Seven Themes in the Groups

It is important to point out that the code "Knowledge of students" is the sum of all the sub-codes related to it (see Table 5). The remaining codes in Figure 2 are singles codes, that is, they do not have associated sub-codes. Thus, the chart is not intended to identify differences between codes, but rather between the two groups (experienced versus inexperienced GSTAs) within each code. In the following sections I will make reference to Figure 2 as the seven salient themes of the project are discussed.

12.1.1 *Prominence of Knowledge of Students*

In Figure 2 we can see how the experienced group had, overall, a higher number of codes assigned that were associated with their knowledge of students. Overall, this group showed greater awareness of the students' abilities, needs, limitations and attitudes.

> One of the things that I learned very quickly […] [is that] you are going to have to repeat yourself. They will not follow instructions the first time every time. You are going to have to make things extra, extra, EXTRA clear. And then make them even more clear, so that they will do what you want them to do. (Elena, I3-2657)

> I felt like my personal guidelines were a lot more rigid during my first couple semesters. And as I started relating to my students, I started really hearing what they were saying and understanding what to say to be able to reach them and to make them understand the concepts. (Ann, P7-12451)

For inexperienced participants, student attitudes and limitations were salient, and in many cases, their expectations had to be adjusted. Margarita's change of approach for activities is an example of such adjustment.

> I have to model the first sentence, because there are still people who don't know what to do with them. […] I almost feel like I should have done this [modeling] at the very beginning of the semester, and I don't think I ever did. I think I just assumed that they could and would read the instructions and know what to do. (Margarita, I4[SR]-7222)

Despite the difference between the two groups regarding this area of their PPK, one of the most salient results of the project is that all participants articulated the relevance of students

in the reasonings behind teaching decisions over all other informing elements. Thus, knowledge

of students was the most frequently used code family in the data associated with each participant.

Table 15 shows the percentage values of the codes or code families related to the participants'

PPK.

Table 15 Percentage Code Applications related to PPK Categories

Code	Julio	Pat	Ann	Elena	Mary	Margarita	Lula	Claire
Knowledge of Students	**24.6%**	**29.2%**	**38%**	**39%**	**35.5%**	**32.1%**	**25.3%**	**30%**
Knowledge of Instruction	22.2%	22.4%	20.4%	23.4%	27.5%	23.5%	22.1%	18.4%
Knowledge of Self	11.6%	9.5%	11%	5.3%	9.3%	9.5%	13.9%	11.4%
Knowledge of Context	12.8%	12.3%	6.7%	6.7%	6.8%	9.3%	9.4%	11.4%
Knowledge of Subject Matter	6%	4.2%	5.4%	6.4%	5.3%	4.4%	4.4%	4.5%
Knowledge of Purpose	1.9%	0.8%	2.4%	1.2%	2.2%	2.4%	3%	3.5%

We can see in Table 15 how 'Knowledge of Students' had the highest percentage of the

assigned codes for each participant. The differences between knowledge of students and the

second most applied code family, knowledge of instruction, ranged from 2.4% (Julio) to 17.6%

(Ann). Thus, the majority of the pedagogical decisions made by all eight participants were

informed by their knowledge of students.

12.1.2 Time Management

An element of the participants' knowledge of instruction, the struggles to make effective

use of class time surfaced frequently during interviews and in journal entries for almost all

participants. In the case of the experienced group, there were two main reasons for their

concerns. For Julio, his problems with time management were due to his personality and his

tendency to give motivational speeches. "*When I'm in the classroom I don't want to miss that*

personal opportunity to talk to students" (Julio, I7-12336). Ann and Elena were in the process of

adjusting to shorter three-times-a-week classes from the bi-weekly ones they were teaching the previous semester. And Pat was adjusting to a much shorter class period than he had just had in the summer.

The new GSTAs were in the process of learning how long it takes students to complete activities, how long it takes to address student questions throughout the class, and how short 50 minutes can be in the Spanish classroom. Margarita and Lula frequently commented on feeling 'rushed' in the classroom, to the point where they sometimes had to skip activities or assign them as homework. *"I don't have time to cover everything that the book has in class. The 'lecturas culturales' (cultural readings) and things like that, I'm assigning for home"* (Margarita, I2-1656). Margarita and Claire were even more vocal about having to devote un-planned time to answering student questions. "*They ask a lot of questions that take class time*" (Claire, I5-8495).

12.1.3 Language Use

Issues with language use were also present in the participants' minds as they expressed their knowledge of instruction, knowledge of subject matter, and even their knowledge of context in the form of knowledge of department/program context. All participants were aware that departmental guidelines indicate Spanish should be relevant in the classroom. "*I know they want me to speak in Spanish*" (Margarita, I2-21198). However, there were some differences in the GSTAs' understanding of how much English could be used in the classroom. For some, it was five minutes, which would be equivalent to 10% of class time. "*I would need to re-read the departmental manual, but if I'm not mistaken, it says something about five minutes of English per class maximum, so I'm safely within the parameters*" (Pat, I6[SR]-22116). For others, it was 5% of class time. "*I know that they drilled on us, 'all Spanish! Just English for like 5% of the class'- I was like, 'ok, what does 5% equate to? When do I use that 5%?'*" (Lula, I7-11827). And

for other GSTAs English should be used for specific purposes. *"I remember [program coordinator] saying a lot of times in the orientation meetings, 'always use Spanish in the class, except, sparingly, only when you are explaining grammar'"* (Ann, I4[SR]-2699).

As to the actual use of English versus Spanish the GSTAs reported, they went from believing they used too much English, *"Every semester I tell myself I have to use more Spanish. And then I try to teach the theme and the culture and the grammar, and it sucks me back into the English"* (Julio, I4[SR]-11625), to avoiding it even when they thought it would be helpful. *"I'm just used to doing it in Spanish. While I was explaining that and some students were still so lost I was thinking, 'are you going to switch?' [Laughter]"* (Lula, I5-13319).

Besides Julio, who was dissatisfied with his excessive use of English in the classroom all throughout the semester, all other participants reported positive feelings about their use of Spanish versus English by the end of the semester. Pat and Ann, from the experienced group, and Margarita expressed confidence in this issue consistently. The experienced Elena, and first-timers Mary, Lula, and Claire struggled with language use in the earlier stages of the semester, but believed they had found a more satisfactory balance toward the end. In Elena's case, she became aware of her use of translation in her PowerPoints during one of our interviews, and decided to modify subsequent ones. Overall, the inexperienced group reported a few more instances of struggles with language use (See Figure 2).

12.1.4 Limitations

As Figure 2 shows, first-time GSTAs (Mary, Margarita, Lula, and Claire) showed awareness of perceived limitations, as part of their knowledge of self, in more instances overall than the experienced group (Julio, Pat, Ann, and Elena). Within the latter group, Julio seemed to be the most vocal about what he perceived as the shortcomings in his teaching practice. *"I guess*

I see so many areas of improvement. So many areas that I intend to make better. I intend to do something but there're missing elements" (Julio, I4[SR]-7763). While the other three experienced GSTAs also showed awareness of their limitations as instructors, they were able to lessen the effect of some limitations through different pedagogical practices. "*The PowerPoint business has also evolved due to the fact that, as you can see from my Chinese notes here, my handwriting is pretty terrible*" (Pat, I2-11236).

For the new GSTAs, some of the perceived limitations were connected to their knowledge of subject matter. "*Sometimes when it comes to explanations, there are things [of the language] I just don't know*" (Claire, I5-2244). However, the expressed limitations in this group were mostly centered on their inexperience as Spanish instructors. "*[My] main weakness is definitely that this is my first semester teaching*" (Margarita, I5-1762). "*I still wish I could have better preparation for the grammar lessons, but it's hard to come up with different methods without much experience*" (Mary, J4-1318). Lula's reflection on what she believed was the worst part of the semester summarizes this groups' awareness of the limitations brought on by inexperience.

> Overall it was just the unknown, the confusion, and trying to figure out how to do things since this is my first time. But also trying to plan and think… That is very challenging; trying to think of new exercises, trying to make it clear to the students. The challenges of teaching for the first time. Learning by making mistakes [laughter]. (Lula, I7-1873)

12.1.5 Influence of GSTA Experience

As would be expected, the experienced GSTAs referenced their experience in the classroom as informing pedagogical decisions more than twice as often as the inexperienced group. Many aspects of their teaching practice were the consequence of learned lessons in previous semesters as GSTAs. "*With [the online homework], I used to get tons of emails with a million questions. So […] for the first three or four classes, I go into the site, open everything*

and make sure to answer any questions. And now I only get one or two emails" (Ann, I1-13176).

Other pedagogical choices began more organically. "*I'm reviewing days of the week. It's one of those things. It started as a thing I did to stall for time while the computer was starting up, and decided it was a good thing*" (Pat, I6[SR]-280). In addition, all the participants in this group reported feeling better prepared to teach overall than in earlier semesters. "*I have such a better time than in previous semesters. […] I feel a lot better now. I believe that my level has improved. Before you just don't know where you're going, and now I have a better idea*" (Julio, I7-14641).

Despite the difference in reference to experience between the two groups, the new GSTAs were able to express what they were learning as their first semester progressed. Some of them repeated successful activities.

> Those [crossword puzzles] I've done two or three times, and [the students] seem to really be receptive to them. Because they give them time to think it through a little bit more, and I do it in class because that way they'll actually do it, you know. (Mary, I7-11495)

Other new GSTAs had to rectify practices which did not have the intended result. Margarita's attempt to re-assign the seating in her classroom is a good example of a rectified strategy as informed by experience.

> Oh, boy! Oh, for the love of me! It did not work! [Laughter]. And the funny thing is that the people who were usually very engaged, and very respectful and very nice, they just changed. And they didn't want to participate; they were completely alienated. And then the girls who chat, still chatted. They came to me after class and some of them said, 'we really didn't like it. Please let us sit where we sit. This is not good for us'. So when they came in today they were like, 'can we sit where we want to sit?' and I said, 'yeah, go ahead'. So what I'm going to do is let them sit wherever, and if I still have those issues with the chatty ones, then I will rearrange those four. (Margarita, I3-9780)

Some of the realizations reached by the inexperienced participants were more personal in nature, but still informed their PPK and, in turn, their teaching practice. "*I definitely learned to lower my expectations. Because I've always had high expectations of myself and I put that on others. And I've had to remember that not everybody has them. So I've become more lenient*"

(Lula, I7-7061). All four GSTAs reported they had learned much during their first semesters as Spanish instructors and had increased their level of confidence. They also felt better prepared for teaching in the future.

> I feel like I'm more comfortable with being the instructor. I remember the first few weeks I was just, not intimidated, but it was a completely new experience. But I've gotten somewhat used to this position and doing this. So I feel more comfortable. […] I feel like everything that I've done this semester, when it comes at least to the material; I'm going to use it again next semester. But I'm going to change some teaching methods next semester, because I know now more what I need to do to prepare them better. (Claire, I7-9326)

12.1.6 Program Training

Experiences regarding the training provided by the department for GSTAs, particularly the required Foreign Language Teaching class, seemed to be quite different between the experienced and inexperienced groups in the project. In the experienced group, Pat was exempt from the training class due to his teaching certificate. For the other three participants, even though it had been several semesters since they took the training, it had left an impression. For Julio, the experience was not beneficial.

> That class, I believe it was more like a whining class. I felt we should bring some wine and cheese. Let's not just come and complain about our students. Let's figure out what the problem is. 'What do you think? Does anyone have a solution? Why don't we work in groups and discuss?' It was always like, 'oh, I have this student…' I wanted it to be more like, 'hey, let's talk about this and fix it'. (Julio, I7-4451)

It should be mentioned at this point that the same professor taught the class every semester; so all participants had the same instructor. However, Ann's impressions of the GTA class seemed considerably more positive than Julio's. For Ann, it helped relieve the stress of her first semester. "*It was low stress, very informational; we got to share. Just hearing about what other people do in their class, and how different people approach different tasks, was good. It was interesting. And you could use that in your class*" (Ann, I3-158). Elena's impressions

seemed to fall somewhere in the middle between Julio's and Ann's. Even though the experience

was not negative, the class was not as helpful as she had hoped.

> I remember liking the instructor and I remember getting to hear the experiences of the other new teachers, but I remember thinking that, regarding the class itself and the book we had to read, for me it just seemed like common sense. I don't know. I have mixed feelings about that class. In some ways I feel like it was a little useless. (Elena, I3-123)

All four new GSTAs were taking the class during their participation in the project. They

were able to articulate the influence of the class in their teaching practices as it happened. The

difference in the amount of codes related to program training evident in Figure 2 is due to the

fact that, as we learned in the participant chapters, the first-time GSTAs frequently reported on

activities or strategies that originated in the class. "*What the professor in the GTA class says is,*

people learn differently; some people learn by hearing, other people learn by seeing, and other

people learn by doing. And the videos combine listening and seeing, so that's why I think they're

good" (Margarita, I3-20735). They also took advantage of the opportunity to share their

struggles with the members of the class, and received suggestions for possible solutions to their

problems.

> I've realized that I don't know how to incorporate [the readings] into the class. […] I'm not happy about that, but I did bring that up in the GTA class last night. I was like, 'I need help! I don't know how to get them to read and make it fun'. So we talked about having some questions, that they can look at on a quiz, or as they read in class. (Lula, I2-9933)

Despite the positive influence the GTA class had on the new GSTAs' knowledge of

instruction, and as a result, their teaching practices, Mary reported some dissatisfaction with the

class.

> It has been helpful to a certain extent. I think mainly the professor has been taking a lot of time to ask us what we think is working for us, and the things we've been struggling with in our classes, so [he can] give us ideas on how to handle tough situations. And also a few times giving us ideas as far as activities to work with. My only frustration so far is that pretty much all materials available to me, including in that class, have plenty of great

examples of how to incorporate interesting activities with vocabulary, which I don't find very hard to do. […] [But] the main thing I've been struggling with is incorporating the grammar lessons in different ways. (Mary, I3-134)

The GTA class was also the point of origin to what I believe was a major point of difference between the experienced and inexperienced GSTAs in the project: peer collaboration. This is the final theme in the chapter and is explored in the following section.

12.1.7 Peer Collaboration

All four participants in the experienced group reported having consulted fellow GSTAs for administrative issues or for general ideas for their classes. "*Sometimes I get ideas from them. Or I'll share my ideas with them. If nothing else, it's great to talk and hear other people's funny stories. And we do ask each other a lot of questions, especially if we are unclear about something*" (Elena, I3-2325). Ann commented on a teaching strategy she learned from one of her peers. "*I give them the verbs conjugated and ask them to give me the infinitive forms. That's from another GTA*" (Ann, I4[SR]-4405).

When it comes to the sharing of materials, the experienced participants reported having done so in a very limited capacity. "*There was one time when somebody sent me a series of photos that would have been useful for presenting the travel vocabulary. That was last fall*" (Pat, I7-3242). "*I've had the desire… but it hasn't materialized. I'm not sure why. Maybe the environment or the opportunity haven't been quite right*" (Julio, I7-3737).

> Nobody has ever approached me, or even made a request for materials or anything, so I haven't really given mine to anybody. But I have asked other people for some and they've been kind enough to share theirs with me, and I've adapted them for my classes. (Ann, I7-4466)

Despite their lack of experience in sharing materials with other GSTAs, these four participants agreed that doing so more extensively would be beneficial to their teaching practice. Julio went further and expressed his desire to have the GSTAs work as a team.

I want to work in an environment where there's teamwork. The professional field does it. People that do business; they work together. It's not like we are not allowed, but we don't have the structure; we don't know how to do it. And maybe not everyone wants to do it. I do want to get better, and learn from other people in my level. I don't know… I wish we were more of a team. (Julio, I7-10622)

For the inexperienced GSTAs in the project, the idea of teamwork was close to the

reality. "*We've been having a lot of group work among the new GTAs*" (Lula, I4[SR]-10465). As

mentioned earlier, for this group of instructors, the GTA class was the starting point for their

collaborative efforts. Even though Margarita took credit for being the catalyst, the other new

GSTAs credit nearness and the encouragement of the professor in the GTA class for their sharing

of materials.

Well, [it started] partly I guess just naturally because we are all kind of around all the time, but by taking the class with [professor's name], that was like the introduction. He encourages [sharing] a lot. So it helped us to kind of branch out I think; to just not wait until someone asks for us to help, but just send [emails to] each other like, 'this is what I am using tomorrow if you guys are interested', or 'I think found this cool activity I am going to try'. (Mary, I7-1847)

In the participant chapters related to the new GSTAs, we saw several examples of the use

of shared materials by this group. "*I got a sample practice exercises for Exam 1 from one of the*

other GTAs. […] That listening practice was shared by another GTA" (Margarita, I3-12621).

However, the collaboration among the first-time instructors was not limited to materials

exchange.

It would have been more difficult if I didn't have the support of other GTAs. The fact that everybody was so helpful and there to answer questions and give me advice based on their experiences, and what to do or how to do it, I felt was the biggest help for me. (Claire, I7-6598)

All four new GSTAs reported that this collaboration was a significant aid to their

teaching practice, and we could see how it informed their knowledge of instruction. An

important part of the group's knowledge of context, this teamwork became an elemental aspect

of their PPK, and in turn, their pedagogical decisions. Lula's description of the collaborative

process provides a summary of its influence and positive effects on this groups' performance.

> Without them, I don't know what I would do. They've given me some examples of their materials, they answer every question because they understand that when you come into this, there's no way the department and the coordinator can answer every single question, or help you have every single thing ready. So a lot comes from the support of my colleagues. Like, 'have you tried this in class? What do you think about this?' That's where the majority of the support comes from. […] I've gotten PowerPoints with some activities. I've had actually some of my peers send me some examples of quizzes they've given. Also, big help on how to use Gradekeeper [software], because there are instructions on line, but it's hard to read and figure it all out. I've had people sit down with me personally and show me how to do that. They've also sent me Excel files already with the equations to figure out the final [writing assignment] grades, or the final homework grades. So that's really made a big difference in my time. (P6I3-1562)

12.2 Chapter Summary

Through our conversations and their reflective writing, the participants in the study have

illustrated the challenges and triumphs that graduate Spanish teaching assistants experience

during one semester. Their words have also allowed me to identify different elements of their

personal practical knowledge, their origins, and how they inform these GSTAs' teaching

practices.

Using numerical coding data, as well as the participants' own words, seven themes

emerged in answer to the third research question posited in the study: Does the PPK of

inexperienced GSTAs differ from the PPK of experienced GSTAs? And if so, how does it differ?

The themes showed that the participants had several common elements in their PPK. Their

awareness of student abilities, limitations and attitudes was expressed the most frequently as

affecting their teaching practice. Also, for both groups, perceived limitations, and issues with

language use came to the surface with similar frequency.

The remaining three themes showed where the differences between the experienced and

inexperienced groups lay. The influence of the programs' training in their PPK was more explicit

and direct in the latter group, while some members in the former were either ambivalent or dissatisfied with the training. The influence of previous GSTA experience was more evident for the experienced instructors, and a more effective source to their PPK and aid to their teaching practice. Finally, the collaborative efforts of the new GSTAs, as part of their knowledge of context, became an integral part of their PPK and a benefit to their performance that the experienced group had not been able to achieve.

13 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

13.1 General Discussion

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 included a number of studies regarding the evolution of research related to L2 and FL GTAs. Such research has shifted from a focus on training (Freed, 1975; Hagiwara, 1969, 1970, 1976; Nerenz et al., 1979), to a focus on development beyond the current institution (Arens, 1993; Huffman, 1998; Murphy, 1991, and others), a trend that has continued in the 21st century (Guthrie, 2001; Kost, 2008; McDonough, 2006, and others). The reasoning processes of L2 and FL GTAs have also been explored through studies on GTA reflection, identity, perceptions, and beliefs (See Chapter 2 for complete references). Despite this body of research, our understanding of the cognitions of FL GTAs is limited, and such understanding is even more limited in relation to GSTAs. The present study is the first to explore the personal practical knowledge of graduate Spanish-teaching assistants.

Studies of teacher cognition have produced several models of L2 teacher knowledge as a result of the realization that behavior alone does not fully explain what L2 teachers do (Borg, 2009; Johnson, 2009). Among the various models of L2 teacher knowledge, the notion of personal practical knowledge emerges as one that encompasses not only pedagogical and content knowledge, but also personal, affective, experiential, and contextual knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Elbaz, 1983; Golombeck, 2009; Meijer et al., 1999). In the present study, the PPK of eight GSTAs, both experienced and inexperienced, was explored and re-created through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall, and reflective journals. This exploration enhances our understanding of the knowledge base of an understudied population: graduate Spanish-teaching assistants.

Based on the interpretive framework derived from previous findings in PPK research, eight narratives were constructed, as PPK is "expressed through story, image and metaphor" (Golombeck, 2009, p. 158). In the narratives we find that the PPK of these GSTAs is complex, even in its earlier stages of development. All participants demonstrated knowledge of the six categories of PPK explored in the study:

- Knowledge of self

- Knowledge of students

- Knowledge of instruction

- Knowledge of subject matter

- Knowledge of context

- Knowledge of purpose

From the narratives we also find that the PPK of GSTAs is fluid, and in a permanent process of expansion and adaptation, as informed by their experiences in and outside the classroom (observed by Ariogul, 2006, with FL teachers). The GSTAs' constantly-transforming PPK affected their view of past pedagogical choices, as well as current and future ones. Thus, their future planning and practice were improved (also found by Tsang, 2004, with EFL teachers).

As the participant GSTAs shared the thoughts behind pedagogical choices, different areas of their PPK were revealed, as well as their origins. The findings corroborated the influence of language learning experience in novice teachers' practices (Yigitoglu, 2011; Zapata, 2002). In addition, for the new GSTAs, it seemed that their original knowledge of students was highly based on their knowledge of self. Lula and Claire reported having to lower their expectations of students upon learning through experience that most students would not hold themselves to the

same high standards for language learning as had the GSTAs for themselves. The inexperienced

GSTAs also faced the challenge of presenting new material each class without the benefit of a

more extensive knowledge of instruction (also observed by Meijer et al., 1999). All four

participants in this group reported having feelings of frustration and anxiety brought on by being

'out of ideas' for presentation and practice.

For the experienced group, most of the challenges were centered on the characteristics of

the new groups of students in their classrooms. Pat, Ann, and Elena identified different

behavioral and learning patterns between their two classes, and for the most part adapted their

pedagogical decisions accordingly. Pat even seemed to develop very positive feelings toward one

class, and negative ones toward the other. Overall, knowledge of students was the area all of the

participants' PPK expressed most often, and the one that most influenced their pedagogical

decisions. Smith (1996) and Chou (2003) found a very similar pattern, where "student

characteristics had the most impact on the teachers' decision making" (Chou, 2003, p. 140).

For all participants, knowledge of department/program context was salient, and it

informed many teaching decisions. Departmental policy affected the tone and frequency of

teacher-student interaction outside the classroom, despite their own beliefs, as the GSTAs tried

to avoid D, F, and W grades in their classes. Most of the participants, particularly in the

inexperienced group, expressed anxiety of being judged through the lens of this particular policy.

> Contextual factors can constrain what teachers do, particularly in the work of novice
> teachers whose ideals about language learning may need to, at least temporarily, be put
> aside while they come to grips with the instructional and social realities they face in [their
> programs]. (Borg, 2006, p. 275)

The participants' knowledge of context outside the classroom was also evident in the

narratives. These findings are consistent with what other specialists have also found to be the

highly contextual nature of PPK (Meijer et al., 1999; VanDriel et al. 2001). The GSTAs views of

the training provided by the program were varied. The immediacy of the support received by the inexperienced group in the GTA class, coupled with their thirst for instructional training, made the information obtained in the class a vital element of their PPK. For the experienced group, it is likely time had diminished the effects of program training.

However, the experienced participants were able to clearly and frequently articulate how the lessons learned in previous semesters informed their PPK, and as a consequence, their teaching practice. For the first-time GSTAs, strategies and activities had to be constantly revised and even discarded as they were being tested for the first time. Thus, the influence of experience was immediate in their PPK, as found by Tsang (2004). These findings are consistent with Borg's (2006) assertion about the relationship between cognition and practice in language teaching:

> [It] is neither linear nor unidirectional. It is not linear because cognitions and practices may not always concur, due to the mediating influence of contextual factors; and it is not unidirectional because teachers' cognitions themselves are shaped in response to what happens in the classroom. Language teaching, then, can be seen as a process which is defined by dynamic interactions among cognition, context and experience. (p. 275)

One of the major findings revealed in the study, and which is not present in other studies regarding L2 teachers' PPK is the significant role that collaboration played in the expansion of the new GSTAs knowledge of instruction. Their collaborative efforts not only facilitated their teaching practices, but also informed the creation and application of their own materials. Although it was not an objective of this project to evaluate the materials produced by the GSTAs, according to Kennedy and Pinter (2007) teachers who develop materials as a team tend to produce higher quality materials, and benefit more from the design process than those who produce them individually.

In addition, through their collaboration, these GSTAs were also able to reduce the anxiety of teaching for the first time while fulfilling academic requirements for their study program. I propose that the rate in which their knowledge of instruction developed and evolved throughout the semester was accelerated as they learned from their peers. This finding is consistent with the sociocultural perspective on teacher cognition proposed by Johnson (2009), who posits that socially mediated activity results in potential transformations for both the individual engaged in the learning process and the activity being learned.

13.2 Limitations

Research in teacher cognition is inherently predisposed to some limitations. Investigating a person's reasonings, beliefs, and decisions cannot be done by merely asking informants about them. Furthermore, a teacher's PPK is not directly observable. Thus, one research methodology alone is insufficient in the exploration of teacher cognition, and even with the multi-methods approach of this study (i.e., semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, stimulated recall, and reflective journals) we are limited by what the participants are able to express in their own words. Even when faced by questions based on their own practice, or by watching themselves teaching on video, teachers are not always able to articulate well the reasonings behind their teaching decisions (Borg, 2006).

Another limitation of the study is that due to scheduling conflicts, the GSTAs were observed and interviewed every two weeks, and not after every class period. The reflective journals were intended to fill some of the inevitable gaps between observations and interviews, but did not provide as much insight into the participants' PPK as the interviews and the stimulated recall sessions.

My position as a fellow GSTA with respect to the participants may be considered a limitation of the study, since relational distance is considered favorable in most research studies. However, I believe that the openness and honesty that the participants showed throughout their involvement in the project was greatly aided by the relatable nature of our conversations. I also believe that being observed by a fellow GSTA reduced the participants' anxiety in the classroom, and made them more willing to join the project in the first place.

Finally, even though eight case studies were carried out as part of the project, wide-reaching generalizations regarding the PPK of experienced and inexperienced GSTAs cannot be made. The participants being majority female, all teaching in the same program, and all but one student being in the same Spanish MA program, means that they are not necessarily representative of all GSTAs. However, the design of the study, in its exploration of the PPK of GSTAs, can serve as a guide and inspiration for future research in other language teaching contexts.

13.3 Implications for Language Teacher Education and the Development of FL GTAs

Through the study of the PPK of Spanish as a Foreign Language GTAs we learned that the reasonings of these novice teachers change over time, and that such reasonings are complex, contextual, personal, and malleable. This final characteristic highlights the importance of FL GTA development. "Professional development emerges from a process of reshaping teachers' existing knowledge, beliefs, and practices rather than simply imposing new theories, methods, or materials on teachers" (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, p. 2). The relevant role that FL GTAs play in language programs further reinforces the need for training as FL GTAs "are expected to have an understanding of administration, methodology, and content" (Herschensohn, 1992). Kost (2008) presents three more reasons for FL GTA development.

First, departments owe high-quality instruction to their undergraduate students who are enrolled in these courses. Second, the graduate students who are teaching the basic language courses are the first (and often only) contact the undergraduate students make with representatives of another language and culture, and thus have the potential to positively affect undergraduates' choices of majors and minors. Third, thorough and systematic training will prepare graduate students well for their future careers in academia. (Kost, 2008, p. 29)

For the GSTAs in the project, the training received consisted of one pre-semester 4-6 hour informational meeting, and one Foreign Language Teaching course during their first semester teaching.

Novice [G]TAs who have never taught need a forum—some might call it an emotional outlet—where they can primarily discuss and reflect on a range of issues that are directly related to their daily teaching experiences. Such a course should allow the [G]TAs to explore their own beliefs about language learning and teaching and focus primarily on the pragmatics of teaching, such as instructional planning and teaching techniques. (Brandl, 2000, p. 368)

Brandl's (2000) description seems to correlate with what the new GSTAs in the project described as the GTA class. As opposed to Julio and Elena (two of the experienced GSTAs), this group found the course to be welcoming of their thoughts and frustrations with teaching, and a place where they could get suggestions for problem-solving and content presentation and practice.

The eight GSTAs in the study reported that even though they had the impression they would be observed by a faculty member or the program coordinator sometime during the semester, such observations did not take place.

I would like feedback. Because we're supposed to be observed, but I have not been observed yet, and we only have two weeks of class left. I know I'm not doing everything right; I know this is a learning process. And in order to improve I need to know what I'm not doing right. So more feedback would be good. (Lula, I7-6659)

The peer observations that the participants reported were initiated either as invitations to be observed (as in Pat's case), or by asking to sit in other GSTAs' classes (as Lula did). In

Elena's "addendum" to her coded data, she indicates that a more organized peer and evaluative

observation process took place two semesters after her participation in the project.

Receiving feedback from an experienced peer or a supervisor is also an effective way for

FL GTAs to understand how students may perceive them. In a qualitative and quantitative study

of the training preferences of FL GTAs, Brandl (2000, p. 367) did not find "any differences

between novice and experienced TAs regarding their preferences of different training forms,

[but] many novice [G]TAs expressed stress and anxiety when observed and videotaped". Taking

a developmental rather than evaluative approach to observations might help reduce such anxiety

(Farrell, 2007). Carrying out peer observations prior to those by a figure of authority may help

FL GTAs become more comfortable with the process. In addition, "by watching experienced

teachers in action, whether in the classroom or on videotape, trainees develop an awareness of

how different teaching styles affect student participation and learning" (Azevedo, 1990, p. 25).

> [Observing Pat] helped me a lot because I realized that the whole thing wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. He gave me an idea of what I needed to do when it comes to lesson planning because he had the PowerPoint up. […] It was interesting to see the other instructor just trying to make it more entertaining for the students. (Claire, I7- 7452)

FL GTAs should also have the opportunity to observe their own teaching to attain more

complete understanding about their practice (Geyer, 2008). Such realizations can help FL GTAs

gain better control over their teaching practice (Ferrell, 2007).

> I feel like when I see myself… if I didn't know me, I'd see this person that's really interested, and knowledgeable about the subject, and pretty passionate about it. And on the other hand I feel like there's definitely a lot of room for improvement on the admin part, like the organization, and with the classroom engagement. I need to wrap that up. […] [There needs to be] more interaction, and individual and group engagement with the material. (Ann, I4[SR]-10672)

FL GTAs should receive some form of professional development before they are

assigned classes of their own. Azevedo (1990) and Richards (1998) suggest focused field

experiences such as observations and practice teaching during the semester prior to their first teaching appointment. Kost (2008) proposes an apprenticeship model in which graduate students are assistants to experienced language teachers prior to becoming principal instructors. The goal of the model is for the apprentices to be "eased into teaching and have the opportunity to develop their teaching skills in a guided and low-pressure environment, which leads to increased confidence" (Kost, 2008, p. 45). Gray (2001), Hornberger (2006), Malderez (2009), and Siskin and Davis (2000) propose mentorship as a way to provide counseling, guidance, support, challenge, and assessment in the education of foreign language teachers. Working as language tutors in the university's language lab could also serve the purpose of pre-service professional development. "*The LARC was a good experience*" (Ann, I3-3226).

Because of time constraints, FL GTAs need to be trained in a how-to format that will aid in preparing them for their immediate duties (Azevedo, 1990). However, for many FL GTAs teaching does not end upon graduating from their graduate programs. All but two of the GSTAs who participated in this study considered language teaching to be their chosen career, and none of them discarded it completely for the future. This was true even for Margarita, who was attending law school during the period of the investigation. Thus, the education of FL GTAs should go beyond the 'how-tos' of training for immediate needs. FL GTAs should be able to question and understand the justifications for using one pedagogical practice over another.

> The novice language teacher is in a vulnerable position, facing teaching for the first time knowing that she or he lacks the expertise and experiential knowledge base to teach to her or his expectations. The subsequent contradictions between what a novice teacher envisions happening in the language class and what actually happens is likely to produce an emotional response. (Golombek & Doran, 2014)

Thus, the models of FL GTA training and education should provide opportunities for reflections about self, theory, and practice (Farrell, 2007; Geyer, 2008; Kinginger, 1995;

Richards, 1998; Richards & Lockhart, 1996). Allowing FL GTAs to construct first-person

narratives through journals may be one efficient way to achieve self-reflection about their

teaching practice and beliefs as they celebrate, criticize, and question their teaching practice

(Johnson, 2000; Johnson & Golombek, 2002). However, journaling alone may not be beneficial

to all FL GTAs (Akbari, 2007; Strand, 2006), and thus should be complemented with other self-

reflective alternatives such as guided interactions with teacher educators and peers.

FL GTAs should also be encouraged to seek professional development outside their study

programs by joining professional organizations and participating in academic events where

language and language teaching innovation are discussed and promoted (Azevedo, 1990*).*

> Ever since about 2009 I have attended the Southeastern Coastal Conference on
> Languages and Literature where you can see a mixture of linguistics, language teaching
> and literature presentations. So I've gotten some things [for my teaching] out of the
> applied linguistics there. (Pat, I1-4655)

One of the most salient findings of the study is the important role that collaboration

played in the PPK and practice of the inexperienced GSTAs. Language departments should

promote and even organize those types of collaborative exchanges. When they do, the use of

technology is paramount as it simplifies the organization and distribution of materials while

helping all GTAs receive the shared information (i.e. questions and answers) at the same time.

Social media tools such as Facebook and departmental listserves (Hawkings, 2004) can facilitate

such collaborative efforts as well. It must be noted that, "varying individual expectations,

unresolved conflicts and general lack of experience [may mean] that some teachers [might] not

benefit as fully as others" (Young et al., 2007, p. 220). Thus, proactive support from experienced

faculty and/or program coordinators is important.

Finally, FL GTAs should be "recognized as members of the higher education teaching

community" (Zapata, 2002). The study's results emphasize the need for foreign language

programs to recognize the relevant role that FL GTAs play in language instruction, and to

provide these novice teachers with opportunities for reflection, discussion, collaboration, and

practice that will aid their professional development and self-image.

> I feel like GTAs have such a weird middle ground position where we're students, but we're not just students, and we're instructors but we're not full-fledged faculty. So I feel like we don't really completely fit into the student world, and we don't completely fit into the teaching world either. Sometimes I wish there were more… support, or more… acknowledgement. […] Even with simple things like when I'm filling out a form and they ask, 'what's your job title?', and sometimes in the drop down menu I don't know what to pick. 'Should I pick teacher? Should I pick student? What should I pick?' Because I'm both! And this is not just for this program; I think that's an issue with GTAs in general. (Elena, I7-2748)

13.4 Implications for Future Research in FL GTA Cognition

We have learned from the literature reviewed for the study that FL GTA development has

not received enough research attention, and that calls for further empirical research in GTA

development have been made (Allen & Negueruela-Azarola, 2010). However, I believe that such

research should be based on teacher cognition studies, through which the actual reasonings of FL

GTAs are explored, in order to establish different avenues for teacher education. How can we

decide what FL GTAs need to know if we lack an understanding of what they already bring to

their practice? We need to understand what these novice teachers believe, know, and feel if we

are going to be well positioned to promote substantive change and improvement (Borg, in

Birello, 2012). The construct of PPK provides a broad and encompassing view of cognition since

it takes into account the influence of experience and context: two elemental aspects of teaching

(Borg, 2006).

However, as previously mentioned, the study of teachers' cognitions is anything but

simple. The complexities of the interconnections between beliefs, thoughts, knowledge, and

practice call for mixed-method studies where observation and self-report are combined.

Regarding the latter, semi-structured interviews provide an array of information for researchers.

Past and present experiences, in and outside the classroom, provide valuable insight into

language teachers' reasonings about their practices.

The stimulated recall interviews were among the most revealing regarding insight into the

participants' PPK. For all of the GSTAs in the study it was the first time they observed their own

teaching, thus the realizations about their practices were new. The participants also reported on

the benefits of watching videos of their teaching.

> It was weird to see myself. [Laughter] I paid attention to all my weird mannerisms and stuff. I think watching the video itself did not help much, but watching the video and then talking about why I did what I did or 'this is what I was thinking then, and this is why I did that and not that'. I think it helps to sort of go over my own mental process; to remember why I did certain things. And it reminds me, for the future, what might work or not work. (Elena, I7-14803)

Classroom observations can serve different purposes. Detailed observation reports can be

used to compare beliefs to practices, and to seek an understanding of how experience informs

cognition and vice versa. They can also provide starting points for inquiry as they can be used to

prompt reflection during interviews. However, it is important to make efforts in reducing the

levels of anxiety an observer can provoke for a novice FL GTA. It is also important to clarify the

purposes of the observation prior to data collection (Murphy, 1992). Multiple observations may

also be required as the participants are likely to behave more naturally once they become

accustomed to the observer. Finally, having the experience of an observer in their classrooms

may help prepare FL GTAs to being observed for evaluative and/or training purposes.

> It wasn't so bad, you know once I got used to it maybe like after the first time. […] [Actually] I think it's really good. At first I was wondering, when you first sent the email before the semester started, I was like, 'I don't know if I want to do that for my first time. I'll be nervous'. But I think it's really good that I have someone observing, even though you weren't giving me like an evaluation for the school, I feel comfortable to have someone observing me since I didn't have anyone this time. So I think holding off on

that since no professors have come to see me it would be a lot more nerve-racking when they came like if I never had anyone. I think it was healthy. (Mary, I7-23064)

The reflections made by the participants in their journals provided further insight into their PPK. As it was mentioned in the previous section, reflective writing can be used as an important tool in FL GTA development. Thus, it is important at this point to establish a distinction between reflective writing for research versus teacher education purposes. As Borg (2006) asserts:

> While both purposes may be productively combined, a research dimension demands added rigor. […] For example, while reflective writing conducted to promote professional development may give teachers freedom in deciding what to write about, how and when, such freedom may not be conductive to the generation of sufficient data about specific research questions. (pp. 268-269)

For the present study, a journal-writing schedule was established for each participant at the start of the data collection period. Despite the schedule, regular reminders at the end of interviews and via email were necessary to assure that all participants kept up with their journals.

Learning is a process that unfolds over time, so if we want to understand such processes, a longitudinal approach is the only option (Borg, 2006). One suggestion would be to explore the cognition of first-time FL GTAs (as it was done in this study), and then repeat the process one, two, or three semesters later. Pre- and post- training studies can also help us gain insight into the effects of education on the PPK of FL GTAs.

Case studies "provide [a] rich vehicle for helping student teachers develop the capacity to analyze situations, to explore how teachers in different settings arrive at lesson goals and teaching strategies" (Richards, 1998, p. 79). Thus, the raw information about what FL GTAs actually experience from their point of view can be helpful to other teachers as they can see how their reasonings form the basis for many pedagogical decisions (Farrell, 2007). Finally, as

participants are able to reflect on their practices and articulate the reasonings behind them, they also benefit from projects like this one.

> It's definitely, really, wonderful. I really enjoyed this interview part of it. Probably my favorite part, aside being observed, that's a really great enhancer of my self-awareness. That, plus the interviews being contributing to the fact that I do need to think more about why I do things. Like the information questions versus the yes/no questions. And it has made me want to change things up a little bit more with my PowerPoints. (Pat, I7- 25361)

13.5 Final Remarks and Future Endeavors

By investigating the personal practical knowledge of FL GTAs we shed light into what this relevant, but under-researched, teaching population brings to the language classroom. Listening to the voices of FL GTAs as they go through the challenges of their 'weird middle ground', as Elena put it, can help re-shape our image of what FL GTAs think and do. Their voices can guide our efforts to better support their development and thus, reach the ultimate goal of effectively helping students acquire language, both in the immediate setting of undergraduate FL programs, or wherever the careers of the FL GTAs may take them in the future.

The future of the Spanish program that houses the GSTAs who participated in the study seems very promising. Starting in the fall semester of 2014 drastic changes will be implemented in how FL GTAs are supported. New students will not be in charge of their own classes during their first year of graduate studies. During that year, they will be working as tutors in the LARC, providing research assistantship to faculty, observing and reporting on classes, and building portfolios. That period of preparation will be followed by a year of language teaching, during the first semester of which they will take the GTA class as requisite support and while they continue building their portfolios.

Finally, in the future I may have the opportunity to join a FL department as an instructor following the completion of my graduation requirements. If/when such opportunity arises, as part of my responsibilities, I hope to be able to aid in the professional development of FL GTAs (both

before and while teaching) and implement some of the suggestions derived from my research

(i.e. guided peer and self-observations, micro-teaching, and reflective writing). I also hope to

continue my research efforts into the cognitions of GSTAs.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A - Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Appendix A.1 - Questions for First Semi-Structured Interview

1. What courses are you currently teaching?

2. How did you become a Spanish teacher/GTA?

3. How long have you been teaching in the Spanish program?

4. How long do you expect to be teaching in this program?

5. Have you received any training to be a language teacher?

    5.1. Have you taken any methods/teaching courses? If so, which ones?

    5.2. What courses/instructor(s) have had a significant impact on you?

    5.3. Have you attended any conferences, workshops, or training programs on language teaching? If so, which ones and when?

6. Please tell me about your earliest teaching experience. What was it like?

7. How would you describe your overall classroom behavior as a Spanish teacher?

8. What is the best part of being a Spanish teacher?

9. What frustrations do you have as a Spanish teacher?

10. What expectations and needs do your students have for their language learning?

11. What preferences do you have in terms of the types of students you like to teach?

12. What do you think is the best way to help your students overcome limitations in their language learning and enhance their language skills?

13. Are there any styles of teaching promoted in this program? If so, which one(s)?

14. What restrictions do you experience on the kinds of materials you use?

15. What are the restrictions on the content or organization of your lessons?

16. What method or methods for teaching do you prefer? Why do you prefer it/them? To what extent have the methods influenced your own teaching?

17. What do you consider to be characteristics of a successful lesson?

18. In what situations do you think your students can learn best?

Appendix A.2 – Sample Questions for Follow-up Interview

P4 (Elena)
Questions for Interview 5

1. How would you define 'language'?

2. What do you think your role is as a Spanish instructor? What are you there for?

3. How do you think your students see you? What image do you think they have of you?

4. What would you consider to be your strengths as a Spanish instructor?

5. What about your weaknesses?

6. Is there any part of your job that you don't like to do?

7. Do you think is possible to change a student's mind about learning Spanish? That is, is it possible to make students intrinsically motivated to learn?

8. Do you think students have to be exposed to Spanish outside of the classroom to be successful in the class? Why?

   a. And to be successful Spanish speakers?

9. What do you think your students' use of Spanish will be in the future?

10. What do you think about the policy of reducing WFs?

    a. Is it a good/bad thing?

    b. How does it affect your teaching practice?

11. Can you tell me about your classes these past couple of weeks?

    a. Have you made any changes in your teaching after watching yourself on video?

12. Let's talk about the class I observed. You had a conversation with some students before the class started. Is that common?

13. In your slide about prepositional pronouns you used a different picture from the one in the textbook for students to point out the location of items. Why did you go with a different picture?

14. You shared some of your personal experience of visiting Costa Rica. What do you think is the value of sharing that with the class?

15. Can you tell me about the strategy of having students correct each other's writing?

Appendix B – Sample Calendar of Events for Participant

(Locations have been redacted for anonymity)

Calendar for: P3 (Ann)

Interview locations that show as TBD are pending on study room reservation guidelines. I will email the interview location two weeks prior to the date.

Legend: VTT: video-taping test; VT: video-taping; TBD: to be determined

August

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27 Interview 1 9:30	28	29 Obs. 1 1:30	30	31 Interview 2 10:00	

September

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Journal 1
8	9 Obs. 2 (VTT) 1:30	10	11 Interview 3 4:00	12	13	14
15	16 Obs. 3 (VT) 1:30	17	18	19	20	21 Journal 2

October

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
7	1	2	3	4	5	6 Journal 3
7	8 Obs. 4 12:00	9	10 Interview 5 4:00 TBD	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20 Journal 4
21	22	23	24 Obs. 5 (VT) 12:00	25	26 Interview 6 10:00 TBD	27
28	29	30	31			

November

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3 Journal 5
4	5 Obs. 6 1:30	6	7 Interview 7 4:00 TBD	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Appendix C - Classroom observation sheet

      Participant #: _____   Date: _____

      Observation #: _____

Part 1: Basic information
1. Classroom environment

2. Content

3. Materials

4. Activities

5. Other notes

Pat II: Classroom interactions and activities

Time	Event	Comments

Appendix D - Reflective journal sheet

Please write a journal entry about any salient events related to your teaching in the space bellow. You can use any of the following questions as guidance:

- What problems did I encounter and how did I deal with them?
- What was the <u>most</u> effective strategy/method I used in class?
- What was the <u>least</u> effective strategy/method I used in class?
- What was my biggest teaching accomplishment?
- Would I do anything differently if I had the chance? Why?
- Did I do anything different than usual? Why?
- Did I discover anything new about my teaching? What was it?

Date of journal entry: _____

Date(s) of event(s): _____

Journal entry:

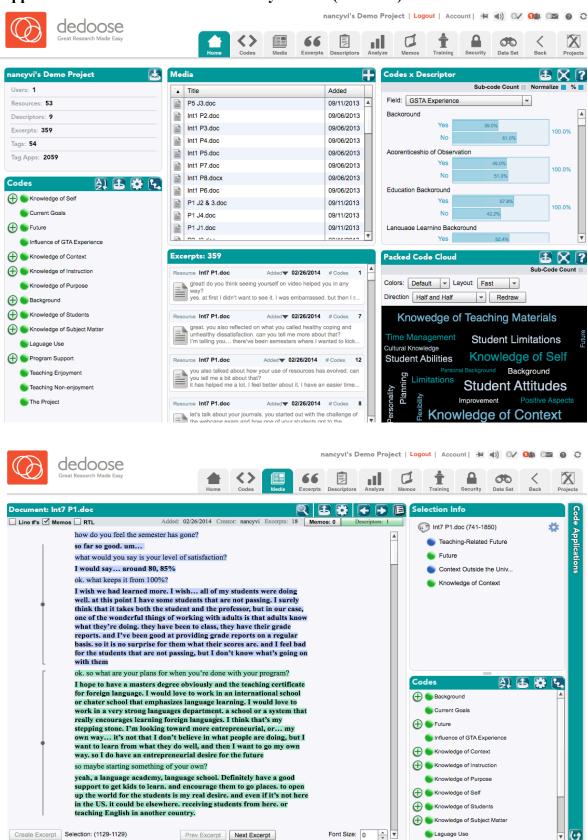**Appendix E – Instructions for Stimulated Recall Interview**

(Adapted from Gass and Mackey, 2000)

Instructions for research participants

We are going to watch the video I made of your class. I am interested in what you were thinking at the time you were teaching. I can see what happened, but I don't know what you were thinking. So, what I'd like you to do is tell me what you were thinking, what was in your mind at that time while you were observing or speaking or listening to your students.

You'll have the keyboard in front of you and you can pause the video at any time you want. So if you want to tell me something about what you were thinking, or make any comments, you can press the space bar to pause to video. To play the video, press the space bar again. If I have a question, then I will pause the video and ask you to talk about that part of the video. Do you have any questions at this point?

Appendix F – Screenshots of Data Analysis Tool (DeDoose)

Appendix G – Informed Consent Form

Georgia State University
Department of Applied Linguistics and ESL
Informed Consent

Title: Personal Practical Knowledge of Graduate Spanish-Teaching Assistants: An Issue of Experience
Principal Investigator (PI): John Murphy **Student Principal Investigator (SPI):** Nancy Yanez-Pinto

I. Purpose:
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate the Personal Practical Knowledge of Spanish as a foreign language graduate teaching assistants. You are invited to participate because you are a graduate Spanish-teaching assistant (GSTA). Six to eight participants will be recruited for this study. Participation will require no more than 10 hours of your time over the Fall semester of 2012. All interactions with the student PI during this project can be conducted in English or Spanish, as preferred by you. We will interact in the language that makes you feel the most comfortable.
II. Procedures:
If you decide to participate, you will:
Participate in seven individual 60-minute interviews with the SPI (once every other week), at a time of your convenience. This will require seven hours of your time over the 15 weeks of the semester. It is suggested to conduct these in a private study room at the University Library (which will be reserved by the SPI). If this location is inconvenient for any reason, a different private location of your choosing can be used as well. All interviews will be audiotaped.
Be observed in your classroom six times during the semester by the SPI (once every other week).
Be videotaped during three of the six classroom observations (the first recording is for equipment testing and to help get the participants used to the camera, thus it will be discarded). View and discuss the remaining two videotapes with the SPI as part of two of the seven interviews (stimulated recall). You can request to view the video files prior to these discussions.
Take 10-25 minutes to write and submit to the SPI a brief reflective journal (100-250 words) during the weeks you will not meet with the SPI (once every other week, five entries in total). No more than three hours in total over the 15 weeks of the semester. Journal entries can be submitted on paper or electronically to the SPI.
Provide the SPI with classroom materials such as: lesson plans, activity sheets, and handouts, as well as other relevant course assignments. This can be done at the time of classroom observations or interviews.
Set up a schedule with the SPI at the start of the study indicating projected dates and time for interviews, class observations, and journal entry and classroom material submissions. This schedule will be tentative and changes can be later made at your convenience.
III. Risks:
In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life. Your participation in this study will be **confidential** and there will be no consequences regarding your position as a GSTA. Using a small digital camera located in the back of your classroom, as well as discarding the first video recording, will help reduce any possible discomfort from being videotaped.
IV. Benefits:
Participation in this study may benefit you personally. Becoming aware of your own personal practical

1

knowledge has been proven to aid teaching practice. Overall, the case narratives that will be generated by this project will be useful as prompts for reflection and discussion in teacher preparation courses, workshops, and orientation sessions for new teachers. In that way, novice GSTAs can gain access to the reasoning abilities of other GSTAs, and be able to identify the characteristics of their own knowledge by reflecting on that of other novice teachers. Specific suggestions for GSTA development in this program should also emerge from our findings. **You will also receive $50 upon completion of the project.** Participants who complete at least 7 weeks of involvement but choose to drop out before the end of the 15 weeks will receive $25.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. You will have one week between the signing of this consent to the start of the project to further consider if you want to participate. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

VI. Confidentiality:

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. You, Dr. John Murphy, and Nancy Yanez-Pinto will have access to the information you provide. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board, and/or the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)). We will use a participant number and a pseudonym rather than your name on study records. The information you provide will be stored in password- and firewall-protected computers. Any identifying data, including this consent form and the key (code sheet) to identify research participants will be stored separately from the research data, under lock and key, to protect privacy. All digital video files will be deleted after their use in the stimulated recall sessions. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results.

VII. Contact Persons:

Contact John M Murphy (████████████████████████) or Nancy Yanez-Pinto (████████ ██████████████████) if you have questions about this study. You can also call if you think you have been harmed by the study. Call Susan Vogtnerin the Georgia State University Office of Research Integrity ████████████████████████████ if you want to talk to someone who is not part of the study team. You can talk about questions, concerns, or suggestions about the study. You can also call Susan Vogtner if you have questions or concerns about your rights in this study.

VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Subject:

You will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be audio and video recorded, please sign below.

_____   _____
Participant   Date

_____   _____
Principal Investigator   Date

Appendix H – IRB Approval Letter

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Mail:	P.O. Box 3999	In Person:	Alumni Hall
	Atlanta, Georgia 30302-3999		30 Courtland St, Suite 217

Phone: 404/413-3500
Fax: 404/413-3504

July 31, 2012

Principal Investigator: Murphy, John M
Protocol Department: Applied Linguistics & ESL
Protocol Title: Personal Practical Knowledge
Submission Type: Application H12566
Review Type: Expedited Review, Category 6, 7

Approval Date: July 31, 2012
Expiration Date: July 30, 2013

The Georgia State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved the above referenced study in accordance with 45 CFR 46.111. The IRB has reviewed and approved the research protocol and any informed consent forms, recruitment materials, and other research materials that are marked as approved in the application. The approval period is listed above.

Federal regulations require researchers to follow specific procedures in a timely manner. For the protection of all concerned, the IRB calls your attention to the following obligations that you have as Principal Investigator of this study.

1. For any changes to the study (except to protect the safety of participants), an Amendment Application must be submitted to the IRB. The Amendment Application must be reviewed and approved before any changes can take place

2. Any unanticipated/adverse events or problems occurring as a result of participation in this study must be reported immediately to the IRB using the Unanticipated/Adverse Event Form.

3. Principal investigators are responsible for ensuring that informed consent is properly documented in accordance with 45 CFR 46.116.

   - The Informed Consent Form (ICF) used must be the one reviewed and approved by the IRB with the approval dates stamped on each page.
   - A Waiver or Alteration of Consent has been approved for this study in accordance with the requirements set forth in 45 CFR 46.116 d.

4. For any research that is conducted beyond the approval period, a Renewal Application must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the expiration date. The Renewal Application must be approved by the IRB before the expiration date else automatic termination of this study will occur. If the study expires, all research

activities associated with the study must cease and a new application must be approved before any work can continue.

5.   When the study is completed, a Study Closure Report must be submitted to the IRB.

All of the above referenced forms are available online at https://irbwise.gsu.edu. Please do not hesitate to contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity (404-413-3500) if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Cynthia A. Hoffner, IRB Vice-Chair

Federal Wide Assurance Number: 00000129