



# **Learning to Teach in a Non Traditional Program: The Changing Conceptions and Increasing Sophistication of Understanding Teaching**

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# + A study of the transformations in the conceptions of teaching in a group of university students

Conceptions of teaching function frameworks of reference to make sense classroom experiences and to organize teaching practice

As learners participate in teacher education experiences and use tools and learning opportunities, they renegotiate their conceptions teaching and redefine teaching practice.

Understanding the transformations conceptions of teaching is central to teacher educators who are tasked with designing meaningful learning experiences for students of teaching, making visible core aspects of teaching.

How do our students conceive of teaching and of their role as Spanish teachers in elementary classrooms?

# + A2LP Background

- A collaborative partnership between the **Ann Arbor School District** and the **University of Michigan School of Education** that began in 2008
- Provides **Spanish language instruction** twice a week to all 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders in 80+ classrooms, teaching over 2,000 elementary students annually

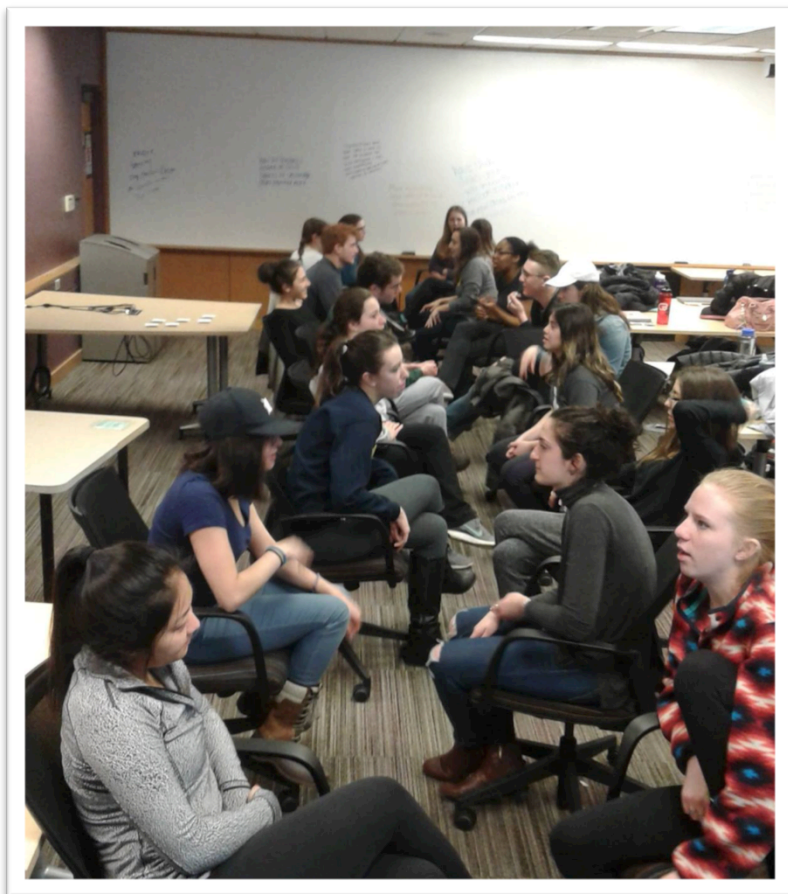
“Making new languages a tool and a resource for all students”

# + A2LP Dual Goals

- To support **linguistic and cultural pluralism** in the community, by facilitating language learning and achievement in the District's schools
- To advance **the learning of second language teaching** for undergraduate students participating in the program, creating **new forms of teacher education**



# + Two Settings for Learning and Collaboration: Seminar and Elementary Classrooms



# + Who are our language teaching assistants (LTAs)?

- **Undergraduates from multiple disciplines** across the University of Michigan
- **Spanish-speaking participants**—intermediate to advanced
- Motivation appears to be focused **on service learning**; not necessarily a pipeline to formal teacher education
- Approximately **20-25%** are/become **students in teacher education programs**

# + Why they enroll in A2LP?

- Desire to participate in a **community** where one is known; difficult to feel known in a very large university
- Appeal of a **seminar-type classroom** in which one's voice can be heard and shared
- An interest in “**giving back**” to one's community
- The allure of getting off campus and into the “**real world**”
- Experiment with **what it means to teach** in a low-risk way

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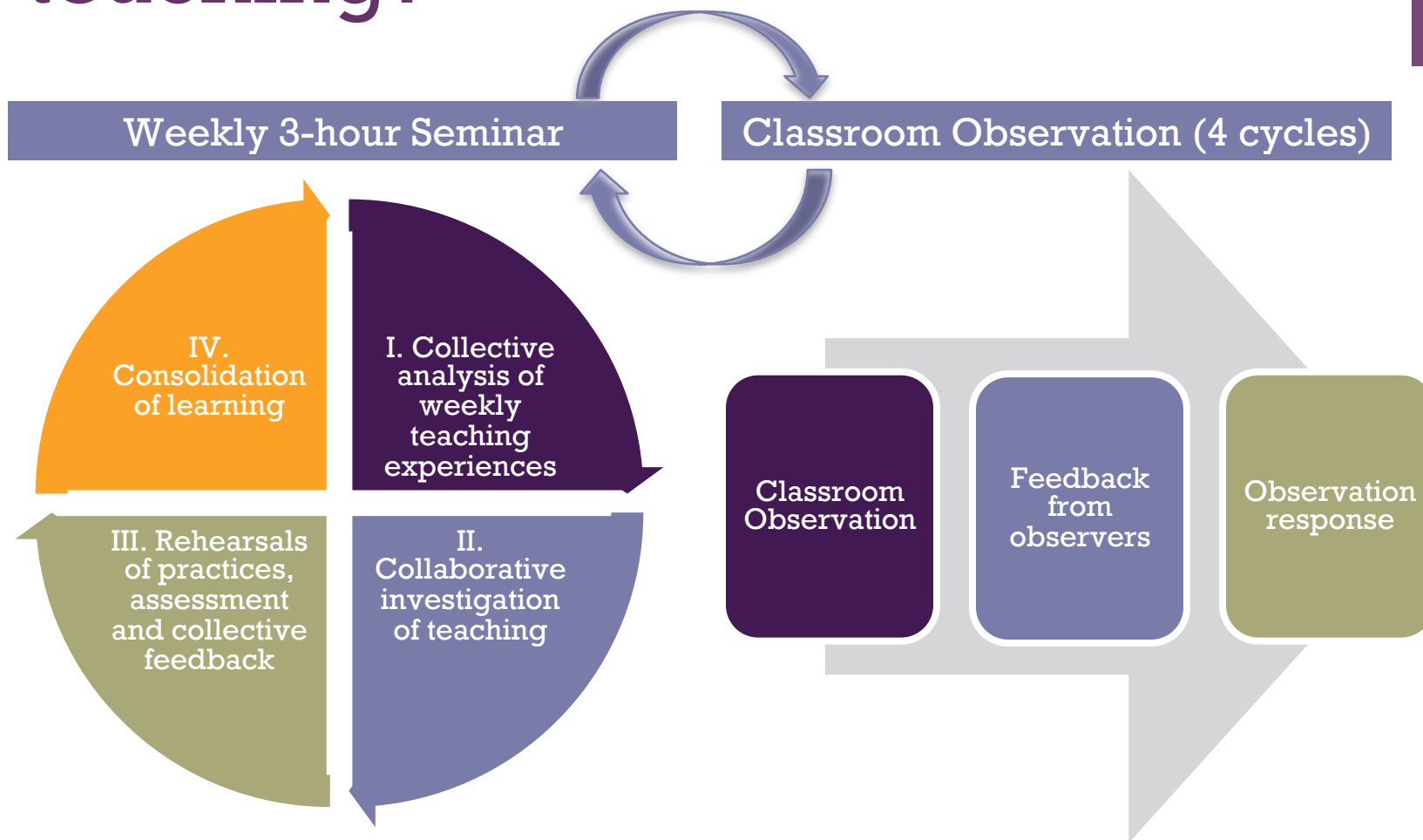
A2LP has given me the amazing experience to improve upon my Spanish while teaching children and giving back to the community. Both in seminar and in my fourth grade classes, there is an incredible sense of community that is really comforting going to school so far away from home. It is such a unique opportunity at Michigan and I'm so lucky I was able to participate in it.



*Leslie*



# + How are LTAs prepared for teaching?





# + A Sociocultural theory of learning and a teacher education design theory

The root of the development of higher psychological functions is sociocultural

Learning teaching is a social process of participation in 'communities of activity' organized around teaching and learning

Communities of activity share common understandings or 'social facts', defining what is taken as true and central by the members of the community

Participants in a community negotiate previous conceptions and experiences with common understandings –social facts—of the programs

Social facts function as semiotic tools to make sense of experiences, organize practice, and position participants as legitimate members of the community

(Freeman, 1993; 1996; 2016; Lampert, 2010; Presseisen & Kozulin, 1992; Wertsch, 1991; Johnson, 2009; Lave, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978)

# + Study Design

Data sources	Number of samples
Entry survey: Initial conceptions of teaching	39 surveys
Responses to seminar prompts	879 responses (39 LTAs * 23 seminar prompts)
Video-Based Cases	3 LTAs
Field Notes	23 seminars

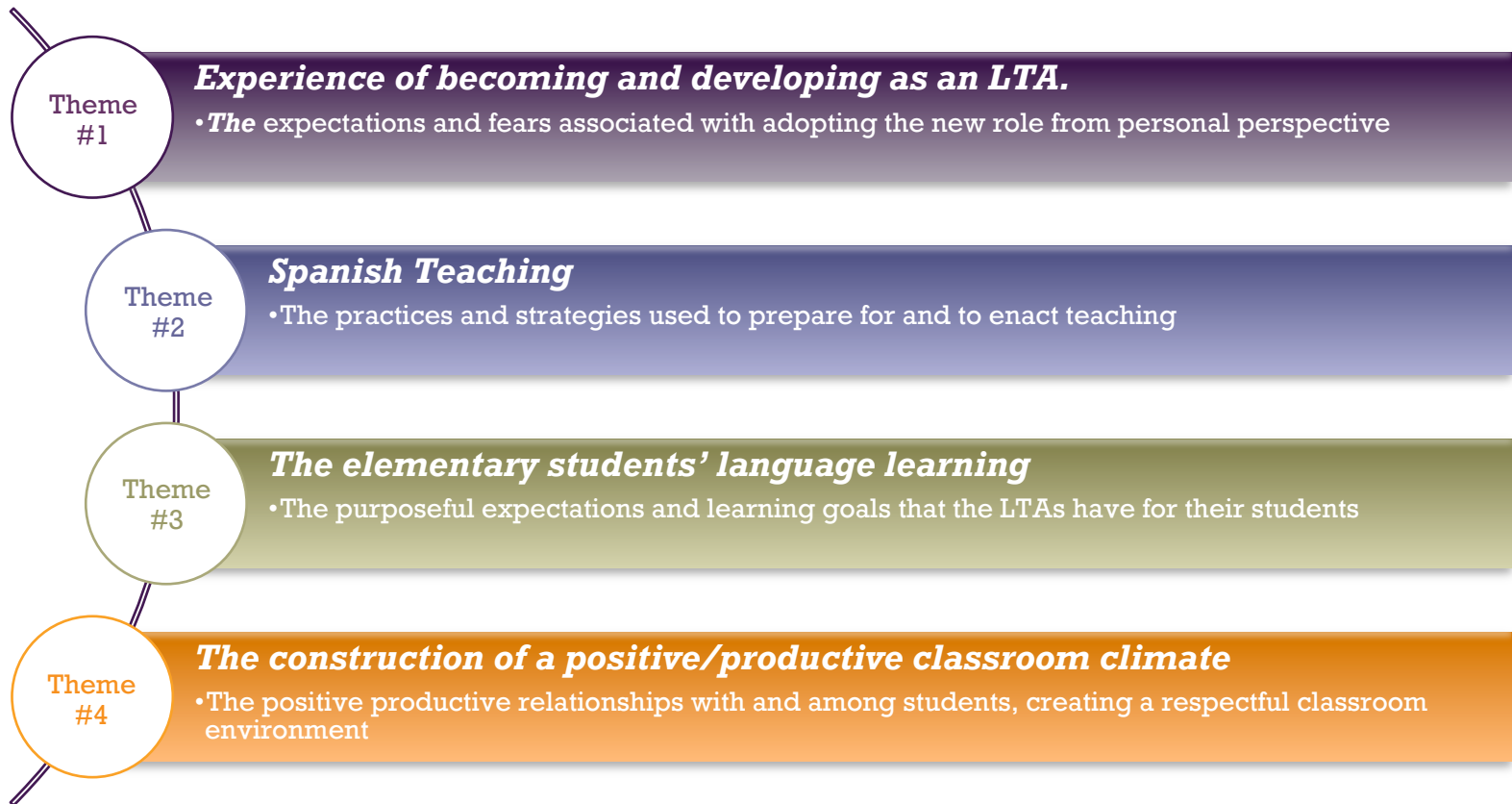
## ■ Data collection:

- written texts created as part of LTAs' coursework
- Produced by the complete cohort of LTAs over year-long participation

## ■ Grounded data analysis:

open and axial coding (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to identify LTAs' conceptions of teaching, patterns of development and transformation, and overarching themes

# + What is teaching about and what goes into it?



# + How these ideas appear and change over time?

- The theme “Spanish teaching” emerges early and very frequently in the data signaling that Spanish teaching represents the core activity around which the participants organize their practice
- Some themes not only appeared more frequently than others, but that they are addressed more frequently in certain moments of the academic year. For instance, “Experience of becoming and developing as an LTA”
- The transformation in the conceptions of teaching seems to accompany the development of the participants and their trajectories of participation. For instance, “The elementary students’ language learning”



# + Implications for A2LP and for Teacher Educators

- Conceptions of teaching are critical because they make transparent the ways in which learners of teaching understand and negotiate ideas, experiences, and expectations about teaching and learning
- Practices represent central aspects of the activity of teaching and cannot be reduced to a list of steps that the learners of teaching will learn independently of their enactment.
- By deliberately examining what learners are noticing early in the program and then leveraging those “noticings” in our input sessions we can more carefully customize opportunities for student learning.
- The importance of teacher educators being clear and purposeful about what they want students learning to teach to “see” and to “notice” and to “take up”.

# + Further Communication



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