



Mexican English Teachers' Experiences of International Professional Development in Canada: A Narrative Sequel

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Abstract

This article investigates the experiences of two Mexican English teachers who took part in an international second language (SL) teacher professional development program working for one semester as Spanish language monitors in schools and at a university in Canada. Using a narrative approach, we interpret their experiences of the following: curricular structure of such professional development programs including experiences at work; professional homestay; English language immersion and continuing acquisition; living in Canada and encountering everyday Canadian culture; and professional and personal learning. We inquire how teaching a first language in the SL environment contributes to the development of SL teachers. The article also reviews the five recommendations of a preceding study (Plews, Breckenridge, & Cambre, 2010): professional recognition, individual and institutional goal-setting, personalized language and culture learning outcomes, the role of professional homestay and interaction with education administration, and time and guidance for critical reflection. Our narrative emplotment of the two participants' experiences echoes the poem "Little Orphant Annie" and the tale of "Goldilocks": the first tale recounts how someone is left to do menial chores yet inspires others; the second is about a chance initiative-taker who is disappointed by the "big people" but finds her way to right things for herself thanks to the "little people." These narratives have led us to re-emphasize our previous five recommendations for effective SL teacher international professional development and to further recommend including a graduate-level SL course as the focal point of the program and site for relevant networking and future collaboration.

1 Introduction: The story thus far

This article explores the experiences of two Mexican English teachers, while they were taking part in an international second language (SL) teacher professional development program in Alberta, Canada, in the 2005 winter term. As such, it serves as the sequel to a prior study (Plews, Breckenridge, & Cambre, 2010) of two other Mexican English teachers who had taken part in the same program, implemented in the same manner, in the preceding fall semester. All four Mexican English teachers worked for one semester as Spanish language monitors in Alberta schools and universities. They were to learn about teaching approaches and educational culture in Canada by working in the immersion setting of Canadian education institutions, while Canadian teachers and students of Spanish were to benefit linguistically and cross-culturally from the value-added presence of Mexican native speakers of Spanish assisting in the classroom. The program thus aimed to enhance the quality of local Spanish-as-a-foreign-language teaching and learning in Alberta and at the same time contribute to improving the quality of English language instruction in a partner state in Mexico (Plews, 2007).

In the first part of the study (Plews et al., 2010), we revealed that the program as experienced by the first two participants followed the familiar curriculum structure of providing participants *an immersion setting for chance cultural encounters* and *a busy work schedule* that left little or no time for formal, supervised reflection on linguistic, cultural, intercultural, and pedagogical learning. This curriculum did enable success in some aspects of the program, but other aspects were less effective. The exposure-by-immersion model provided opportunities for facilitating language, culture, intercultural, and professional learning, but they were not guaranteed, coordinated, or systematic.

The first two participants evaluated the program positively: they enjoyed the immersion experience, expanded their professional network, learned about SL teaching approaches used in Canada as well as Canadian culture, and found their interactions with teachers at work and on the homestay to be essential for their sense of success. The schools and universities – especially the students – also benefited from the language monitors’ work and presence. However, the extent and nature of the participants’ language development was unclear and their everyday culture learning was expressed more in descriptive terms than interpretive or critical. Also, the first two participants found little opportunity to reflect on the relevance and meaning of the notes they had taken while teaching or assisting Spanish classes in Canada for their work as English teachers in Mexico. Finally, the fundamental stories of the participants’ affective and symbolic development as recognized teachers in their own right had not been anticipated by the program. The participants had to negotiate the transition from classroom guest to professional colleague. For one (recounted using the narrative frame of “The Princess and the Pea”), this required her to have her merit acknowledged and to assert her prior status as an established teacher. For the other (using the frame of “Cinderella”), this meant making use of the right circumstances to foster her abilities and confidence as a novice teacher. The most crucial aspect of the first two participants’ experiences was their professional identity and its recognition. We maintained that “[h]ad the Mexican teachers been identified as in-service teachers from the start, their function in the Canadian classroom might have been better understood and supported” (Plews et al., 2010, p. 17).

In the conclusion of the first part, we maintained that the curriculum of general exposure to the target language and culture combined with a busy work schedule left professional learning too much to chance and/or initiative (born of necessity or personality); it did not make the most of interactions between the Mexican in-service teachers and the Canadian cooperating teachers. With a view to avoiding uncritical teacher tourism and instead encouraging best practices, we made five recommendations for future program designers to consider. These were:

1. appropriately recognizing participants as qualified in-service teachers;
2. involving the participants, their home institutions, and host teachers, professors, and administrators in a dialogue to establish individual teacher and class goals related to language pedagogy;

3. requiring the participants to set personal objectives for language development and cultural learning;
4. arranging homestay with a host teacher or administrator and interaction with the host education administration; and
5. allocating time for the participants to critically reflect on their experiences under appropriate supervision.

Kinginger's (2009) review of research in foreign language study and residence abroad indicates that participants as a whole make gains in various aspects of language learning, albeit with differences among individuals, and that personal experiences and the development of intercultural awareness and understanding vary greatly, often depending on how participants are received and how they interpret or position themselves ideologically in relation to the new target language speakers and settings they encounter. Research both on study abroad and more specifically on international education for teachers that addressed program structure has revealed the *laissez-faire* nature of programs that follow a curriculum of mere exposure to an immersion setting to be a concern (e.g. Barkhuizen & Feryok, 2006; Bertocchini & Costanzo, 1996; Brecht & Robinson, 1995; Brierley & Coleman, 1997; Gorsuch, 2003; Lo Bianco, Liddicoat, & Crozet, 1999; Wilkinson, 2000, 2001). Such program structure was often not articulated with the participants' or the home institutions' educational goals (see also Brindley, Quinn, & Morton, 2009; Coleman, 1998; Engle & Engle, 2003; Wilkinson, 2005; see Bridges, 2007, and Wernicke, 2010, for detailed examples of explicit articulation). The exposure model provides some conditions for facilitating language, culture, and intercultural learning, but in and of itself, it offers no guarantee. Several studies (e.g. Dewaele & Regan, 2002; Fraser, 2002; Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004; Isabelli-García, 2006; Kinginger, 2008; Klapper & Rees, 2012; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Roskvist, Harvey, Corder, & Stacey, 2013; Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004) focused on observing aspects of language acquisition, communicative competence, or interaction in study abroad have argued that the foreign language immersion setting *per se* is less important than participants' ability to access quality interactions and to get involved in activities in the local community where they make the effort to use the target language. Other studies (Adams, 2006; Ranta & Meckelborg, 2013) looking into the quality and the quantity of the time participants spend on target-language-related activities have shown that both can be limited and that neither might be a priority for participants (see also Ginsberg & Miller, 2000; Jenkins, 2000; Kinginger, 2004, 2008, 2009; Levin, 2001; Pellegrino Aveni, 2005; Wilkinson, 1998.). Given these findings, scholars (e.g. Block, 2003; Kinginger, 2009; Wilkinson, 1998; Willard-Holt, 2001) have called for alternative research approaches, such as narrative inquiry, that explore the broader extent of participants' experiences, including the program structure, educational settings and sociocultural contexts, and consider participants' expectations, intentions, and positioning as well as the perceptions of program designers, facilitators, and hosts, in order to better understand the relationship between certain aspects, activities, and attitudes and learning outcomes. It was in this spirit – to attempt to understand the breadth of the experience from the perspective of participants' meaning-making and position-taking – that we began and continued our narrative inquiry of the participants on this international SL teacher professional development program.

2 The second part of the study

The current article presents the narratives of the second two participants with the primary aim of understanding their experiences in their own right. As in the first part of the study, we are concerned with the breadth and depth of the participating Mexican English teachers' experiences of an international professional development program in which they teach Spanish at a university and in public schools in Canada and live with a Canadian colleague or family. We are also interested in whether the curriculum structure of the program leads to professional learning (i.e. pedagogical, linguistic, cultural, and intercultural), especially as the participants perceive it.

Here we also take up the issues and questions intrinsic to or arising in the first part of the study. These include:

- How do the participants see themselves as teachers? How do the participants see themselves on this program? From their perspective, do the host teachers and administrators recognize their personal, cultural, and educational backgrounds? Do the host teachers and administrators recognize their professional status and objectives? Also, do the participants see themselves as participants, co-participants, co-teachers, assistants, observers, learners, and so forth?
- How do the participants see their English language competences before, during, and at the end of the program? Do they have clear objectives for further acquisition of English and how do they express or pursue them?
- How does teaching Spanish (the participants' first language) in Canada contribute to their English SL teaching in Mexico? Do they have clear professional and pedagogical objectives and how do they express or pursue them? How are these discussed and negotiated with their home institutions and administration, and the host institutions and administration? Which interactions in the classroom, on the homestay, or with education administration lead to professional learning?
- How do the participants see Canadian culture? Do they have clear objectives for cultural learning and how do they express or pursue them? What aspects of everyday or highbrow Canadian culture do they experience? How do they live Canadian culture and do they come to feel they belong to Canadian culture? Do cultural routines, events, and matters represent special linguistic learning? If so, how?
- How do the participants find time for critical reflection, especially with a senior colleague or mentor?

By focusing on the second two participants' individual experiences at work, on a professional homestay, of English language immersion and continuing acquisition, of living in Canada and becoming more familiar with Canadian culture, and of professional and personal learning, the current article explores different stories and sets up points of comparison with the stories of the first part of the study. This allows us to add to the initial individual findings, trace emerging or changing patterns, and so broaden and deepen our understandings of the program overall. As such, the current article also reviews the abovementioned recommendations. Thus, the narrative accounts of the second two participants' experiences provide further opportunities for determining whether there are truly varied or common and repeated experiences across all four participants. On the one hand, variability among similar types of people – in terms of profession, nationality, gender, native language and culture, and target language and culture – on the same program may suggest the significance of personality and disposition, prior life experiences, previous learning, and commitment to current intentions, and future goals and plans. On the other hand, the presence of commonalities or patterns across the participants' experiences might lead us to understand international SL teacher professional development more broadly in terms of archetypal experiences.

3 Method

Research acts are guided by the nature of the research topic and the researcher's purpose and questions (Ellis, 1998; Packer & Addison, 1989; D. G. Smith, 1991). Since our research interests are the same for the sequel as for the first part (notwithstanding our five recommendations), we were consistent in our approach to make possible cross-case comparison and to provide transferability and dependability when comparing the narrative analyses. By researching the Mexican English teachers' experiences as Spanish language monitors in Canada, we hoped to understand both what it is like for them to work rather as teachers of their native tongue while living in an English-speaking environment and how they make sense of such a curriculum arrangement for professional development. Our inquiry focused on the nature and quality of their experiences with the intention to offer our findings to encourage best practices for such programming. Since we are interested in potential personal, social, and (cross-)cultural aspects of SL teacher professional development, our study is associated with the participation approach to SLs (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Sfar, 1998) and requires a non-reductive method that is sensitive to the subjective processes and complex situ-

ated nature of human activity. While experimental designs have yielded many positives outcomes regarding study and residence abroad, they have been shown to be problematic (Rees & Klapper, 2008) and to fall short of assessing the development they set out to measure as well as the actual nature of participants' target-language-related activities and their understandings of their contexts and interactions (Kinginger, 2009). Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) maintain that interpretive research methods such as narrative-based approaches not only complement the traditional experimental methodologies of the hard sciences, but also are more insightful regarding questions concerning the social and personal or psychological dimensions of SL learning and use. Indeed, a number of SL education scholars have made effective use of narrative inquiry (e.g. Bell, 2002; Barkhuizen, 2008, 2010, 2011b; Barkhuizen & Gough, 1996; Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott, & Brown, 2013; Coffey & Street, 2008; Mello, 2012; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Phillion & He, 2007; Plews, 2010; Yang, 2008). The constructivist paradigm informing interpretive and narrative approaches maintains that meaning is created in the dialogic encounter between the interpreter and a text, phenomenon, or social situation; this encounter occurs in the context of a particular time and place, and so meaning is apprehended as relative, socially specific, multiple, and perhaps conflicting (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 1998; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; D. G. Smith, 1991; J. K. Smith, 1993). Thus, to best engage with how the Mexican teachers made sense of their experience, we chose to conduct an interpretive inquiry influenced by philosophical hermeneutics (D. G. Smith, 1991; J. K. Smith, 1993) and to present this inquiry by means of "narrative configuration" (Polkinghorne, 1995).

D. G. Smith (1991) contends that central to the creation of meaning by interpretation are the relational processes of conversation and researchers' self-reflective accounts of the dialogical transformations that they experience as a result of their conversations with others. Thus, our research acts started with two think aloud sessions to establish our preconceptions, one early in the fall term before interviewing the first two participants and one early in the winter term before interviewing the second two participants. We interviewed all four participants individually for up to 90 minutes, beginning by discussing pre-interview participant expressive art exercises and participant schedules. The artwork was used to attain focus as well as provide a further layer of qualitative data. During the interviews, we referred to a set of prepared questions, but, in seeking a genuine conversation, we maintained a degree of openness, returning to the questions only in cases of extended digression. After the formal interviews, we continued to meet with the participants less formally for a total of six hours. For the informal conversations, we met in pairs. Our data was gathered on eight occasions over six months. After transcribing the interviews, we undertook several rounds of rereading the transcripts and our notes and several rounds of individual and team writing in order to configure our conversations with the participants as narratives and to reflect on our preconceptions as they re-emerged or changed. The narratives were not presented to the participants, since they were composed after their departures.

Together, the abovementioned acts represent how we have come to new understandings of international professional development. We analyzed the interviews by following Polkinghorne's (1995) concept of "narrative configuration," which uses events and actions as data, looking for their particularities, and composing stories to explain certain outcomes. Riessman (2008) and Barkhuizen (2011a) point out that the synthesizing approach of *narrative analysis of eventful data* is more seldom than the classifying *paradigmatic analysis of narrative*. Polkinghorne promotes the value of narrative analysis for presenting qualitative research data, since storytelling is able to show and represent the complexity of human existence as situated action that is motivated yet contingent and changing. Narrative analysis relies on the process of "narrative configuration" or "emplotment" by which the researcher arranges events and actions into a coherent whole organized according to time and an overarching theme or plot. In this approach, interpretation and evaluation occur by means of the researcher's construction of narrative based on data episodes; researchers as interpreters or storytellers create new meaning by selecting, synthesizing, and describing the episodes and actions in research participants' lives that the researchers see as significant in forming a particular outcome. Furthermore, presenting research data through storytelling enables an immediate connection with the readers of research, for, as Frank (1995) explains, "[t]he moral genius of

storytelling is that each, teller and listener, enters the space of the story for the other” (p. 18). Polkinghorne encourages researchers to use given “organizing templates” (p. 16); thus, we chose especially a fairy-tale format to present and analyze the participants’ stories, since they resonated with us through familiar, archetypal story features and frames that we identified in the transcripts. Furthermore, the structures and morals of fairy tales are both widely known and frequently found in cross-cultural variations specific to time and place. Thus, by drawing on the outlines of such existing and evocative stories of human experience and adapting them according to our understandings of our participants’ particularities, we hope to engage the future readers of research more effectively and set up continuing resonance between them and the participants’ experiences. The creativity required in constructing fairy tales means that researchers analyze content and characters not in ways that seem to be indifferent to language and the broader world, but rather in ways that necessarily draw attention to the linguistic forms and performance of the participants’ tellings, the social context which conditions their speech or which their speech might disrupt, and the connections with the current (us) and future audiences (readers of research) (see Barkhuizen, 2010; Chase, 2011; Pavlenko, 2007). Finally, when reflecting on their narrative configurations, researchers also seek confirmation, expansion, re-evaluation, and amendment of their preconceptions in order to advance the research question.

4 Narrative analysis of data

Generally speaking, the outcomes of the second two participants’ experiences echoed the poem “Little Orphant Annie” and the fairy tale “The Story of the Three Bears” or “Goldilocks.” The original poem “Little Orphant Annie” was written and published by the American “Hoosier Poet” James Whitcomb Riley in 1885 under the title “The Elf Child.” But it is better known in its adapted form as the comic strip “Little Orphan Annie” (1924) by Harold Gray, which was itself adapted as the Broadway musical “Annie” (1977) by Thomas Meehan, Charles Strouse, and Martin Charnin and subsequent Columbia Pictures movie (1982). The original poem consists of four stanzas and tells of a girl servant who is occupied with endless menial chores and yet still finds the time to inspire other young children with the stories she tells. The first stanza introduces Annie, while the following ones tell stories of ill-behaved children and end with the moral that children should obey their parents and teachers, cherish their loved ones, and help the less fortunate.

“The Story of the Three Bears” was an oral narrative first recorded by the English Romantic poet Robert Southey, who published a written version in 1837. The story has since become known as “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” or just “Goldilocks.” The original story tells of three friendly male bears of different sizes (small, medium, and large) and an unpleasant old woman. One day, while the bears are taking a walk as their porridge cools, the old woman intrudes on their property, eating the small bear’s porridge, breaking his chair, and falling asleep in his bed. When the three bears return, the small bear discovers the old woman in his bed. She wakes up to his cries, flees, and is never seen again. Later versions turn the original three male bears into a family of father, mother, and baby bear; the old woman is substituted by a girl with blond hair who at the end runs into the forest, is rescued by her mother, or returns home promising to be good. Over its various reiterations, this originally cautionary and potentially scary story has become more innocent. On the one hand, the original version conveys the hazards of wandering into the unknown and disrespectfully using others’ property (Tatar, 2002); also, the girl protagonist’s rejection of the adults’ things and settling for the baby bear’s property could be interpreted as a child’s struggle to face personal human development into adolescence (Bettelheim, 1976). On the other hand, the later Goldilocks can be regarded as an initiative-taker and problem-solver: having chosen one wrong way and then another, different wrong way, she comes to discover a third way that is “just right” (see Booker, 2004).

We invoke the abovementioned poem and fairy tale loosely as frames with which to account for the participants’ lived experiences in Canada, their commonalities and differences, in events and actions. We adapt the narratives of “Little Orphant Annie” and “Goldilocks” to emplot and help illustrate the particularity of each of the two participants’ stories. We organize the two stories

into eight intersecting chapters each in order to show stages that reflect both their shared and particular experiences, identifications, and understandings of international education experiences.

4.1 The stories of “Annie” and “Golda”

4.1.1 Annie: Before departure

Before departing on her journey to Canada, this beginner teacher in Mexico has only one apprehension about living in Canada. Little Annie isn't concerned about the school or university, because she likes to learn; she is always learning something new in Mexico, such as handicrafts or cooking. And in Canada, she hopes to take a university course in Education or Literature or Second Language Pedagogy or Applied Linguistics. Besides, it's always been her goal to come to stay at someone's house in Canada, though why she couldn't say.

But in Mexico she hears tales about how it's cold in Canada: “Watch out, it's really cold in Canada, like, *really cold*.” And Annie would reply, laughing, “Yeah, but what it means really cold? ... Like, *really cold*?” Well, she'd soon learn the difference between cold and *really cold*.

And so Annie begins her journey to Canada to be a Mexican Spanish language monitor. Perhaps she doesn't really know what she's gotten herself into – without further preparation.

4.1.2 Golda: Before departure

Before departing on her journey to Canada, this experienced teacher in Mexico has many concerns: “Canada. What do I really know about this big place? How will the people there treat me? Are they nice? Will I get along with them? How will be the university? How does it work? What will the Spanish class I am teaching be like there? And the schools? And what about the students and teachers I will meet? Also, how will be the city? Will it be easy to go around and see the city? And the homestay – this is my first experience in a homestay and I am used to living on my own! – I like my privacy and I am going to be with a family, so what will that be like? My English, also: Will I be able to communicate? Will people understand what I want to say?” Golda's head is full of questions: “What was going to be this? And what was going to be that? ... What to bring in Canada for my classes?”

Golda doesn't really know exactly what she is going to do in Canada. She has a briefing with administrators in Mexico, but gets only a vague idea of the tasks she will do or the class materials she will require: “Just bring something that you think you might need, OK?” she is told.

So Golda departs with many unanswered questions, a bag of materials – including music and games – which she ultimately wouldn't use, and a very big coat to protect her against the cold – that she would use a lot!

4.1.3 Annie: Looking around

After traveling for eighteen hours, with two delays, one in L.A. and one in Seattle, Annie finally arrives in Canada. It's midnight, December 28. But her hosts had not been told to expect her until January 6. Annie has no idea who to contact, where to go, or what she's supposed to do. She has no friends or relatives in Canada and her hotel hasn't sent her any confirmation. So she sits for a while at the airport, looking at the snowy landscape floodlit yellowy-white by the airport lights. She reflects, “I knew it was really cold, but not how really cold.” She has no idea what she was going to do in the coming three months, what she was going to learn, especially about the culture. She recalls what she studied about Canada at school and pointing to Canada on the map. But now she is faced with the people and the weather, and it feels different.

The next day, she lets her hosts know she's arrived and they come to her hotel to take her to a warm welcome at her homestay. The local administrators give her directions to the school and university. Excited, Annie asks about the university class she can take. “But that isn't part of the program,” comes the reply. “Hmm, but maybe you can take a class, not for credit, as an auditor.

You don't get a grade. You just sit and listen. We'll send you a schedule and you decide which one you want." Annie doesn't quite get the idea of auditing and the administrators never do send her a course schedule. She thinks it's not her place to ask again: she had better mind her Ps and Qs. Maybe she'll look around for something else.

4.1.4 *Golda: Wandering around*

Wrapped up in her big coat, Golda steps off the plane into the airport building, and looking through the windows, she exclaims a little in shock, "Oh my, what am I doing here?! The cold is so white. Everything is so white! It's going to be very cold." Golda had known that it was going to be very cold, but hadn't imagined what it was really going to be like. She gets a little concerned, because she is not at all accustomed to temperatures as low as minus 30 centigrade. She thinks, "That's just too cold."

Golda's impression of people in Canada is that they are very busy. This is especially the case at the university, where she also has to get busy straight away. She is expected to register as a fellow, obtain her student card, access the library, and find her way to classes. She also has to find her way to the schools where she is teaching and the Federal Government Office. She's instructed, "OK, you have to do this and you have to do that and that." But Golda doesn't really understand what she has to do or where she has to go. The university department secretary points at a campus map and tells her, "Go to this building, the Administration Building, and you need to get a card, it's like a student card, and go here because you are a fellow, and then you can access the library, you do this for that, then you have access to this place and that place. And you have to go to the Federal Government Office. In town. For your Social Insurance Number. Take a look on the map. You here, go there." But Golda does not know how to read maps and everyone's too busy to walk with her and show her exactly where to go. So she wanders around campus in minus 30-degree weather.

Golda's experiences with university administration do not go so well. The administrator asks, "Well, what do you want?" "Oh, I don't know, I am a fellow and I need a card," Golda replies. "Well, let me call somebody ... I have a *Mexican* here and ... blah-blah-blah ... and I don't know what to do with her." The voice over the phone tells the administrator she needs a student card. Then the administrator asks for her papers, which she doesn't have with her. She thinks, "That's just too awkward."

She fares no better at the Federal Government Building. First, Golda wanders for a long time, unable to find the right building. She is feeling increasingly stressed and cold and lost. When she does find the right place, she doesn't know what she is to ask for. The man behind the counter just says, "Huh?" and tells her to go away because she isn't able to say exactly what she wants. She tries again, "They told me to come here and ask for something, but I do not know what it is." He tells her to go away and come back later. She manages to get what she needs in the end, but thinks, "OK, he was friendly, but just not too helpful."

Golda also seems to be at cross-purposes with her homestay family, the Kodiaks. Though she is learning a lot with them, she finds it very hard to live with them, because they are so different from her, and sometimes she doesn't understand them and they don't understand her. It is especially difficult for Golda, as a Mexican, to get accustomed to people giving their opinions and instructions all at once; she is more used to taking her time to say what she really wants or needs:

"Do you like this food?" Mr. Kodiak asks.

"I don't know, I never tried it."

"OK," continues Mrs. Kodiak, "So try this to see if you like it. OK?"

Even little Ted Kodiak, Golda's host brother, asks her, "You like this?"

So Golda tries the food: "Yes, I like it."

And then the Kodiaks ask her the same thing every mealtime in the beginning and Golda says the same thing: "I like it." And then every day she gets the same food, because they think she likes it. But what she cannot bring herself to tell them at first is that of course she likes the food, but not that much!

Mr. and Mrs. Kodiak also tell Golda that she can use everything they have in the house, but at

the same time she doesn't feel too at home, because the Kodiaks are keeping an eye on her all the time, just to see if she can use things properly or in case she breaks anything or mixes up their stuff.

"Oh, did you need the DVD player?" asks Mr. Kodiak.

"Be careful with the big-screen TV, just in case ..." says Mrs. Kodiak.

Ted chips in, "You know how to use that washing machine? Are you sure you can do that?"

"Yes, I do," Golda asserts coolly, hiding her annoyance, "Yes, I can do it."

Of course, these are just silly little things, but Golda feels them getting to her. It's cold outside and she finds she has to spend a lot of time at the house. It's not like the Kodiaks aren't nice people; but Golda is not sure what she can say in this situation. She wants to respect what other people want, but she also wants her ways to be respected.

Meanwhile, back at the university, Golda talks with Dr. Kidd, the Spanish language program coordinator, about taking a class, "Obviously I want to teach all these Spanish classes, but I want something for me also, you know? Like my own interests." "Well, probably you can do something like that," Dr. Kidd replies. But when Golda doesn't hear back from Dr. Kidd, she tries again, "How can I do this? Take a class?" "Well ..." says Dr. Kidd, "You aren't really allowed to do it. You can try and look what you want to do and if you see anything, probably we can arrange it." Golda looks through the online calendar and finds all sorts of Film Studies courses: "Oh I want to do this. This is just right for me!" ...

4.1.5 *Annie: The errand girl*

Soon after beginning her job as a Spanish language monitor, Little Annie quietly questions her role and the meaning of "monitor," or "assistant." She has different expectations of being an assistant as compared to her reality working with or *for* her Canadian colleagues. In the schools, she works with four teachers: one morning with one, one afternoon with another, and Friday morning and afternoon each with a different teacher. For the first two weeks, she just makes copies of materials to supplement the books.

"I need this copied," says one school teacher. "It's no problem," replies Annie.

"An' I need you to copy this material," says another. "No problem."

"An' I need you to make a copy of this picture." "No problem."

"An' put these copies on the table." "No problem," she replies each time.

But she knows it is a problem: "They don't know what assistant means," she says to herself. But she doesn't complain; she doesn't like it, but she doesn't mind; she tends to her chores and respects her cooperating teachers' needs. "I can learn anyways," she thinks, "What materials the teachers prefer and what they give priority to in the school curriculum." She thinks the teachers think she is there to do or finish things that they don't have time for, but she believes it's not her place to say anything.

One day, there is a teacher meeting. Annie shows up, but it seems as if she isn't there. One of the teachers tells her, "We are discussing things that you wouldn't be interested in, so why don't you go to the classroom and record the dialogues from the books?" "Yes," another teacher says, "an' I need some materials put together. Can you cut it up and glue it with this note on it?" Annie does not take part in the meeting, but she is glad to help.

Despite the refrain of "An' copy this, an' copy that," Annie completes every task without complaint. Annie takes her place as an errand girl rather than as the teaching assistant she was expecting to be; she can only imagine the missed opportunities for her and for her Canadian colleagues, but thinks it's not her place to speak up.

The university doesn't seem to know what to do with Annie either. She works with three university instructors. At the beginning of the semester, she is given the task of walking around the classroom and asking the students if they need any help. Then one instructor takes Annie aside, "I have a special task for you. I need you to, um, check all the homework." Every time the students have homework from that instructor, Annie hears a new refrain: "An' I need this marked, an' I need that marked." But she is glad to help the instructor in that way.

Buoyed by the instructor's gratitude, Annie approaches the other two to ask them if they need anything. One lights up, "Ah, we are talking about food in class. Can you make something Mexican? An' can you bring in a recipe, an' can you talk about it for ten minutes?"

The next class, Annie brings in some traditional food and tells the students how it is typically Mexican and eaten at particular times. She explains all the ingredients, how to make it, and why it is popular. She tells jokes about the food and the students ask her questions.

But another time the instructor tells her: "An' just play hangman in Spanish."

4.1.6 Golda: Taking initiative

Gradually, Golda is integrated into the school and university classes by taking on an instructor's role. In the primary and high schools, she first just observes the classes and takes notes on how the teachers work, how they interact with the students, and how the students behave. After about a month, she takes the initiative to introduce some simple activities to reinforce skills the students are learning. In one class, she notices they were interested in vocabulary; so she asks the teacher if she could look into it. "Oh yes," the teacher says, "You can do it next week." So Golda starts improvising with games, stories, and exercises. Realizing that her teaching English in Mexico and the teaching of Spanish in Canada use the same communicative approach, she switches the activities she uses for English in Mexico into Spanish. At first, her activities last 20 minutes, then longer, and finally sometimes even 40 minutes.

In the university classes, Golda starts by leading activities for 20 minutes. By the third month, she is responsible for 40 minutes of the class. And in the last month, she is in charge of one whole class for one and a half hours, while the university professor, Dr. Andrews, takes notes. Dr. Kidd also puts Golda fully in charge of a series of weekly conversation classes and a biweekly Mexican movie screening, since she is an experienced teacher. Given no syllabus, she designs the conversation classes on the fly: she has four to six classes per week and chooses a new topic for each week. About ten to twelve students show up for each class, which are usually around 80% in Spanish. Golda often uses songs from Mexico to introduce a topic and puts the lyrics on WebCT. She always has a stock of ice-breaker questions for the students: "What kind of music/movie do you like? What is the difference between this song or movie and that one? This is what we call pop music. This is what we call folkloric music. What do you think about this topic?" The students enjoy listening to the music or watching video clips and talk just a little. Golda finds that the hour always goes by fast and asks the students if they like the conversation class and if there's anything she should change. They all say they like the class and her jokes but want to talk more; a lot of the same students come to Golda's class every week; they're often the most motivated ones.

When screening movies, Golda always follows with a discussion and tries to explain crucial cultural and historical aspects that students should know in order to better grasp the plot. Group size varies from the occasional big crowd to days with just four students. But the students are always very interested and enjoy talking and laughing so much that sometimes they don't finish until 8 p.m.

None of the university professors come to the conversation classes or the movie screenings despite saying they would.

4.1.7 Annie: All alone

On one occasion, one of the elementary school teachers calls in sick and Annie finds herself all alone with a kindergarten class. "Wow! I'm all by myself. That's different!" All the kids look at her with only one word in their eyes: Teacher! So Annie has to think fast what she needs to do, "How do I keep the kids active, to keep them from being rude to one another, to stop them from fighting? But I don't even know these kids. I've never worked with kindergarten kids!" Quickly, yet calmly, she sets up the kind of learning centres she's seen in other elementary classes to keep the students moving. The next time the teacher calls in sick, Annie is prepared.

Meanwhile, at the university, Dr. Kidd calls Annie and Linda, a Canadian graduate student, to

her office to tell them that they are to start a conversation club similar to Golda's. They are to let the other graduate teaching assistants as well as another language monitor from Spain know how to contribute.

Annie and Linda leave Dr. Kidd's office empty-handed; they look at each other: "Wow! We are alone!" they laugh. "Yes, we're alone!" "Good for us!" Without information, materials, or directions from Dr. Kidd, Annie and Linda set to work. First, they send emails asking for copies of the textbooks used in the Spanish language and culture courses so that they have an idea of topics familiar to students. Since none of the professors or instructors respond to their requests for suggestions, they consult with Golda and choose the conversation club themes by themselves, selecting varying textbook topics so that the club has a different focus each week.

Annie is pleased that Dr. Kidd has left her and Linda to their own devices, but she also finds it curious that she has not checked to see how they are doing. "Maybe she thinks we are professionals," she wonders. But she hasn't even received an email asking about the club. "Surely, she needs to ask how we're doing, how the students are doing." Annie considers sending Dr. Kidd an email to make an appointment, but she doesn't think it is her place. In Mexico, she wouldn't need to make an appointment.

4.1.8 Golda: Behaving just right

One day after classes, Dr. Andrews debriefs Golda using the notes he's taken while observing her teach his class. "Golda, there are things that you really shouldn't say to the students. Because the students may be offended."

"Oh my goodness!" Golda is shocked. "Have I done something that was very bad? Can you give me an example?"

"Like when you were asking the students to participate in the activities. You said, 'Could you speak louder please?'"

"They were speaking so quietly and I couldn't hear anything. How come I cannot tell them to speak louder?"

"Just don't say that, because the students may be offended."

"Come on, I mean, they're in a language class. They're supposed to speak. What are they doing there if they don't want to speak?"

"And don't make them write stuff down. Just don't ask them to do stuff they don't want to do."

"But I'm the teacher and they are the students. Like, if I want them to write this down and they say 'Oh I don't want to do that' I'm not supposed to say do it? I mean, go to the board and write this? Don't say this? Oh please?"

"We have to be careful here."

"How can you do it then, if they are going to be your friend? It's different the way you teach here. Well, not teach. It's different the way you teachers behave with the students. You're not too strict. You let them do a lot of stuff that we don't in Mexico."

"They can write a report about you and send it to the chair or the dean and they are going to make trouble. I was in big trouble last semester."

"But what if I am offended to have to ask you to speak louder? What about me? What about my rights as a teacher? I do have a right also. You know, it's the same at the primary school."

"Yah?"

"There are a lot of policies and rules in the schools that you have to follow. By law, you are not allowed to do things. You let the kids get away with everything and they, not all, know they can do it."

"Is that so different from Mexico?"

"Here's the difference, because I notice that the students want to be at school. Some of them really want to be at school and learn and in Mexico some of them don't. They are in school because they are sent. It's different. You have to push them a little harder in Mexico. You have to push them to learn. You have to do this and you have to do that. But here in the schools you just say it and they do it. They are different, you know. So probably it has an effect. I'm not sure."

Maybe if you were allowed to be stricter, it's just my opinion."

"So have you seen your opinion change throughout the program?"

"Yah, yah, a lot. I have a true understanding of how students are in another culture."

4.1.9 Annie: Learning by doing

Annie enjoys working with Linda on the conversation club; it is the first time she has the chance to genuinely cooperate with a Canadian colleague and she feels she's making a contribution and learning. Although Linda is also not an expert teacher, she and Annie are responsible for the course and must cooperate to develop it and coordinate other instructors. They decide on weekly topics and construct a general syllabus with learning outcomes. They design lesson plans and develop materials. Then, they send all the professors and other teaching assistants a weekly schedule of topics, drop-in times, and names of conversation partners. For example, Annie is responsible for leading the conversation class on Mondays at 3 p.m. The themes include winter sports, government systems and kinds of political leaders, childhood pastimes, food and agribusiness, and social issues faced by the homeless and sex trade workers. Annie always likes to start with small talk, asking the students what they have done at the weekend and about other things from real life. This way the students learn to ask her similar questions about her life and Mexican culture; she tells them all sorts of tales and, in turn, gets them to tell tales about their own culture in Spanish.

4.1.10 Golda: Being just right

The students in Golda's conversation classes always eagerly ask questions about Mexican culture: "Is it true that the Mexican people always drink tequila? Is it true that you are always having fun? Is it true that you don't work much?"

Golda is not at all surprised by any of the questions or the students' perceptions of Mexico, and she usually laughs and goes along with the stereotypes: "Sure! Maybe I'm like this. ... Ha. On the weekends. On Independence Day probably. Ha-ha." Golda likes playing along with the stereotypes, because she can tell the students that not all Mexicans are alike. She jokes, "You know guys, every country has its stereotypes and you don't have to believe them, but at the same time you kind of ... You know, it is probably true what you say! But not all Mexicans are like me, ha-ha." This then gives her the opportunity to explain what Mexico is really like.

Golda feels good about the attention her presence brings to Mexico and a bit of pressure both to perform the person who represents the students' idea of Mexico and to give them a positive alternative impression of her people. She knows that many of the students have been to Mexico, even the school kids have been on holiday to Puerto Vallarta and Mazatlan with their parents. But others aren't going to Mexico anytime soon, so she knows she has to bring Mexico to them. "I'll do it with the accent and everything. It's only for four months," she thinks, "But for a year it would be like, 'Oh come on, stop asking me those questions! I'm just like everyone else.' But for four months, I can be just right."

4.1.11 Annie: Inspiring by doing

One day, Allison, one of the senior school teachers, asks Annie to do more classroom teaching assistance: "Annie, you know, I don't know how to explain this in Spanish," she admits, "Would you like to?" This simple invitation leads to other activities for Annie. "An' would you like to talk about your city in class? An' would you like to give a class on this topic?"

Annie likes working with Allison, because she's not just photocopying and she notices that the students are learning something different. When she tells her stories about Mexico, they ask her all sorts of questions: "Is it true that you eat fruit with chili and lemon? What are the people like? How do you live in Mexico? What is television like there? Annie, is it true that Mexicans don't have cats and dogs? Can you teach us some slang? Do you like tequila and tacos?"

Annie notices the students enjoy these conversations, but they are more comfortable conducting them in English, although it is Spanish class. So Annie begins mixing the languages into a kind of Spanglish with *los alumnos y las alumnas*, then she *habla* more Spanish, still *lentamente* and keeping the vocabulary *fácil*, until eventually they switch to *practicar* more Spanish and Annie is speaking at her normal speed – fast. The students notice that their Spanish is improving, and that they are speaking faster too.

Allison notices that she too speaks more Spanish, when Annie is around. She remarks on the difference Annie is making: “Annie, I’m changing my role. I’m speaking only in Spanish now and this has helped a lot of the students.” She tells Annie, “I saw my mistake and so I don’t want to speak English anymore with the students. So I’m going to carry on speaking Spanish, and now you can see the students are speaking Spanish, the students! And they like working in class, because we are working together, we bring different things to the classroom.”

Still the other teachers only tell her: “An’ I need you to go get this copied; an’ I need you to go get that.”

4.1.12 *Golda: Chance encounter*

... As the semester progresses, Golda is disappointed that she still doesn’t hear back from Dr. Kidd about whether she can get into the Film Studies course she found in the calendar. Before coming to Canada, she had expected that, in addition to teaching Spanish, she would be taking a class in ESL or second language teaching methods and she had hoped she could take a film course. The focus at the university has been more on what she can offer the program and less on what the program can offer her.

By chance, Brenda, an undergraduate student in one of Golda’s conversation classes, befriends her: she tells Golda, “I love all the clips you show in class.”

“I’m very interested in movies,” Golda replies.

“Yeah? Well, that’s my degree, in fact. You should come to one of my film courses.”

“I can go?”

“Oh, I think so. I think you can come to my film theory class. You can just sit down and listen to the class. I’m going to ask my instructor.” And she does. And he says yes. So Golda goes.

The course is about how to analyze a film. The students are given film theory to read and then they watch movies and comment on them. Golda could not be happier. She goes to all the classes, reads the materials, and watches the movies. She doesn’t do the assignments, but she does talk to Brenda about her assignments and they exchange opinions about the theory and movies. The film course is also helpful to Golda with her own duties as a monitor: when she discusses the Mexican movies, she integrates some of what she is learning in the film course.

4.1.13 *Annie: Ghost in the machine*

As her stay draws to a close, Annie jokingly reflects with Allison on her experiences and laughs, “OK, I’ve had good experiences, I learn how to use a photocopy machine!” Half serious (so as not to embarrass her Canadian colleague), she adds, “No, cuz I was *IN LOVE* with that photocopy machine! Cuz you can photocopy and make a book, or you can staple and punch holes in all the photocopies. It was really good. I learned, when it misfeeds the paper, how to open and check all that stuff.” Then she points out the irony, “But in my school in Mexico, we don’t have a photocopy machine, so ...”

She tells Allison what she has really learned: “In the university, they give the students a lot of grammar, so I can’t use that in Mexico. But from the schools, I have teenage students too, and I liked the learning centres. I have a lot of students and I am going to be working like that, dividing them in groups with some reading and some writing to increase and improve specific skills. I like how in the schools here you work in centres, stations. But you have a lot of resources, books, we don’t have it, we have one copy, we use everything from real life like magazines, newspaper, music.” Annie has collected a lot of pictures, recipes, and other materials that she can use in station

learning or presentations in Mexico. “I have taken a lot of photos too, of poutine and calamari, a pint of beer, the City Hall Square, at parties, of the winter and spring.” Allison and Annie discuss setting up a centres project to teach the students in Canada and Mexico to write and send emails, and to get them to correct each other’s writing.

For Annie, the accumulation of knowledge is like a tree with many branches, with each branch influencing the growth of her knowledge. One branch is her family. Friends and people she meets are others. School, her studies, and books she has read are others. Teacher education is yet another. As is what she has learned from her students since she has been working as a teacher. Her trip to Canada and the cultural exchange she has experienced, how people think and live in other places like Canada, and especially Canadian diversity, multiculturalism, and its difference from the USA, are now also branches on her tree of knowledge. Even her kindergarten and conversation club experiences – in Mexico, she would not have the opportunity to do such things. Annie thinks fondly of her experiences integrating into her homestay family, meeting “grandpa and grandmother,” and the challenges of understanding another culture: “Like how they have supper time, like, ah, the weird vegetables or weird meat,” she laughs. For Annie, all of these things are connected and in turn connect her to the world. From the perspective of seeing that she has had the opportunity to practice and learn new things about education and about how students are in Canada, that she feels she has benefitted from participating in the program.

4.1.14 Golda: Knowing just right

As the program nears its end, Golda starts packing her bags. Content with her experience, she believes that she now has a good idea about how differently Canadian school teachers and universities function vis-à-vis Mexican ones.

“You learn a lot *if you want*,” she reflects; she has learned a lot about family life in Canada from the Kodiaks; used to living alone in Mexico, she now knows how to live by the rules in another family’s home, not to mix up the routine they’re accustomed to. She also knows how to cope with cold weather and snow. And she has made lots of friends and through them has experienced everyday Canadian culture. Above all, she is happy to have experiences to share with her students and colleagues in Mexico.

Her bags are stuffed with objects to use in Mexico as realia with her students. With attention to her everyday environment, she collected a wide variety of objects unavailable in Mexico: leaflets, store catalogs, menus, bus tickets, and so on, which are full of vocabulary and demonstrate how different Canadian culture is. She imagines talking with her Mexican students: “Look! This is a real ticket from Canada.” And if they ask her whether all Canadians are blond, she can hold up a picture in a government pamphlet and tell them Canada has people from different ethnicities with different immigration stories. And she can show them a book about the forts built by the early settlers. She also has a tourism brochure with information and historical pictures about the building of the railways. Postcards of buffalo in a national park and a booklet about the discovery of oil in Alberta are also included.

Golda collected part of this material while on excursions with her homestay family. Her time was also spent reading the daily newspaper, learning from books, asking her homestay family all sorts of questions, and watching local television. She recorded some TV commercials and even bought the first season of the Canadian TV sitcom *Corner Gas* to take back home. “This is small town, Dog River, it’s supposed to be rural Saskatchewan,” she can tell her Mexican students, “This is the simple life. Look how they behave. That’s very Canadian.” And she hopes they’ll understand the funny jokes.

By taking the initiative to engage with the local Canadian culture, Golda creates the conditions to make her trip just right.

4.1.15 *Annie: Departing with feedback*

In preparing to return to Mexico, Annie writes a feedback letter for the program organizers and future participants. She lists her anecdotal advice with a warning in a humorous refrain:

Before you come you should identify what are your goals in Canada;

What d'you wanna learn from the homestay family?

What d'you wanna learn from how other people live from the other culture?

What d'you wanna learn about professional ways?

Cuz if you don't watch out, the copier's gonna getcha!

An' about the job, they need to ask you or say exactly what they want,

Cuz sometimes they don't know how to have an assistant.

An' if the schools had a definition or concept of how the assistant is to work,

They could teach how the students can learn Spanish in Spanish, an' talk in Spanish.

Cuz if you don't watch out, the copier's gonna getcha!

An' if you don't like something you need to tell,

Cuz sometimes you don't say nothing to be nice or cuz you're shy,

So you need to say it in the moment. Don't wait!

Ask for clarity, take initiative.

Cuz if you don't watch out, the copier's gonna getcha!

Make special events with the students since they're stuck in routine,

Always the same schedule, the same habits.

They're worried about grammar, but it's not everything when learning a language.

They're going to Mexico and worry about good grammar when they need to speak.

Cuz if you don't watch out, the copier's gonna getcha!

An' maybe you can stay for one year and experience all seasons.

An' if someone goes the opposite way and teach the Mexican students with her English,

Or to the Teachers College for teaching teachers about Canada,

An' they can learn how we have different kinds of schools and our different culture.

Cuz if you don't watch out, the copier's gonna getcha!

4.1.16 *Golda: Holding onto the dream*

On her last night in Canada, Golda has a very strange dream where it was as if she were in a movie or a TV show. Sitting in an old-fashioned diner, the kind you'd find next to a rural gas station, a snowstorm blows outside and the place is quite busy. To Golda, it seems she is at a side table, away from the centre of action. Looking across the diner at people eating lunch, she recognizes the Man from behind the counter at the Federal Building, then Dr. Kidd, and Mr. and Mrs. Kodiak with their son Ted, except, instead of being humans, they're all disguised as bears. Golda looks at the menu on the table in front of her and realizes it's actually the university calendar. She scans the course list, but finds nothing in the area of Second Language Pedagogy, or Film Studies, or anything else she's particularly interested in. Looking up, she finds the waitress in front of her, ready to take her order. "Brenda! Brenda, is that really you?" "Morning, Golda, can I take your order?" "Oh my goodness, I don't know what to expect, I wasn't given any information about this." "Well, let's see if I can help. Why don't you just choose one class?" "Ok, one class. Yes, that would do me just right." "And pick anything you want, even if it's not on the menu. Our chef's really good. He's called Andrews. I think you know him, right?" "Yes! He's the instructor I was helping in the class. He knows what to do with me. He's really helpful and with him I got to use all this computer stuff, PowerPoint, the LCD projector." "Well then?" "Well, probably, I'll take ESL or TESL, because that's what I do. That would fill me up. Or, something in Second Language Education, how to teach literacy and creative writing, or combining film and language education, because that's my own interest. But I do need to update my TESL." "Would that be the regular-size undergraduate level or the special-size Master's level?" "Not the undergraduate level, because that's for pre-service teachers, right?" "Yes. But it's individual: some people want ESL

and some prefer something more advanced. So a Master's class, right?" "Yes, something formal." "Right, and you know you have to share that, but not with Spanish teachers. So you'll have to change tables. You'll have to go over there where the network of teachers of English sit." "Great! I can make friends with them like I did with my students." "Yes. But that's in another section. So someone else will be taking care of you, OK?" "OK."

5 Discussion

The lived experiences of the two Mexican English teachers explored in this article provide a sequel to an earlier inquiry into the experiences of two previous participants in the same international professional development program (Plews et al., 2010). The program aimed to increase the foreign language and cross-cultural competences of participating Mexican English teachers and cooperating Canadian Spanish teachers while enabling the Mexican teachers to develop further knowledge of SL education and Canadian Spanish classes to benefit from authentic input. Given that such foreign language assistantship programs are often characterized by a *laissez-faire* curriculum of general exposure to an immersion setting for chance encounters and a busy work schedule, and that the Mexican English teachers would be teaching Spanish rather than English, our study was concerned with exploring how the participants made sense of the program, what they considered learning, and which program structures facilitated that learning. We were especially interested in issues identified in the first part of the study, including recognizing participants' professional identity, planning individual and institutional pedagogical goals, setting personalized language and culture learning outcomes, making the most of homestay and interaction with education administration, and finding time to reflect critically on experiences. Also, we wondered about the extent to which the different participants' experiences would resemble one another.

Annie's and Golda's stories of learning in immersion are as similar both to each other and to the first two study participants' as they are particular. In the first part, one participant's story – *The Princess and the Pea* – is about seeking rightful recognition; the other's – *Cinderella* – is about the emergence of inherent ability. Here, one participant's story – much like *Little Orphant Annie* – is about the benign neglect of a young female teacher required to do chores, who nonetheless inspires others with her stories and her way of working; the other's – similar to *Goldilocks* – is about an initiative-taker losing her way in the world of "big people," yet managing to make it just right for herself in the world of "little people." For all four stories, professional identity in relation to the immersion context – or more precisely, to how they are received in the host community – has played a fundamental role in the construction of meaning for the participants' varied experiences (see also Jackson, 2010; Kinginger, 2004, 2009; Pitts, 2009; Trent, 2011). The established teacher *Princess* and novice teacher *Cinderella* strove at a psychological-professional level, respectfully, to assert or to develop their professional identity in response to particular exterior circumstances that were not only foreign, but professionally rather inappropriate (see Plews et al., 2010). In the sequel, novice Annie and established Golda were both more concerned with accommodating the same kind of exterior circumstances by drawing on their personal-professional identity and attitude. This meant, Annie humbly got on with the job and Golda discovered a fit through exploration.

Much like the first two participants, the second two value their international professional development experiences and consider the program a qualified success. Even though some of their personal interests were not considered, simply coming to Canada to live and work temporarily is a valuable life experience and personal achievement in and of itself for the participants as in-service teachers of English. They have made considerable gains in cultural knowledge about Canada through personal experience, interaction with Canadians, and reading while in situ. They have collected numerous useful artefacts, a common habit among SL teachers when traveling that becomes especially germane on international programs (see also L. Q. Allen, 2010; Rissel, 1995; Walker de Félix & Cavazos Peña, 1992). They have made contacts and friends in the schools and at the university, have enjoyed the special status of representing Mexico that the students in Canadian Spanish classes afforded them, and contributed positively to their students' learning and some col-

leagues' in-target-language teaching practice by transferring their experience and skills as in-service English teachers to their role as Spanish language monitors. They benefited from unique opportunities that they would otherwise not have had without the program, such as living with a Canadian family, working specifically in a kindergarten, and organizing a university-level conversation course.

Also, Annie made some modest gains in professional knowledge by learning about teaching through group learning stations and being required to co-design a syllabus. While Golda has developed a deeper level of intercultural awareness: through cross-cultural encounters – such as struggling with local educational and federal government bureaucracy, living and negotiating with a host family, reflecting on local teachers' attitudes regarding student behavior and classroom management, and both accommodating and gently critiquing students' stereotypical or ill-informed perceptions of Mexicans with humor – Golda took significant steps toward recognizing how her own everyday and professional perspectives and attitudes have been culturally determined, questions them, and perhaps even begins to modify them. Golda overcomes the practical difficulties of a strange bureaucracy. She also comes to terms with her almost hypervigilant homestay family, transforming the situation into an exercise of cultural enrichment (see Iino, 2006). While she is initially uncomfortable with her sense of diminished classroom authority and “rights” of Canadian teachers, she integrates her observations and understanding of Canadian classroom behavior into her classroom practice and adjusts part of her teacher identity (at least while she is in Canada) (see Barkhuizen & Feryok, 2006; Lee, 2009; Marx & Moss, 2011; Trent, 2011; Willard-Holt, 2001). Without dismissing Canadian students' stereotypes, she remains open-minded and learns through such intercultural encounters to the point of bracketing her personal cultural identity. She achieves this by being willing to consider others' projections, no matter how crass, as part of her cultural self-image, while also perceiving and sharing her individual identity within or apart from her culture. Thus, depending on the occasion, Golda operates from one culture or another, through both at once, or at places between them (see Kramsch, 2009; Plews, 2013; Shardakova, 2005); she embodies the dispassionate rather than judgmental disposition that Kinginger (2009) wishes study abroad participants would adopt.

Annie's and Golda's stories also point to several issues, evoking Tyler's (1949) basic principles of curriculum, concerning planning, orientation, reception, organization, content, and quality control. The second installment of the program began like the first with insufficient direction both from the sending Mexican state administration regarding pre-departure preparation and from the Canadian hosts in terms of orientation upon arrival and assistance with local bureaucracy. The participants' roles and duties and the aims of the program, whether for their personal professional gain or for the linguistic and cultural gain of Canadian students and colleagues, were not clearly articulated in pre-departure meetings. This contrasts with the successful program discussed in Brindley et al. (2009) that included pre-departure seminars, structured expectations, formal orientation, supervision, and post-sojourn debriefing (see also Barkhuizen & Feryok, 2006; Brierley & Coleman, 1997; Chieffo & Zipser, 2001; Freed, 1995; Ginsberg & Miller, 2000; Gorka & Niesenbaum, 2001; Jackson, 2004; Trent, 2011; Wilkinson, 2001). Thus participants arrived with uncertain expectations and no *specific goals* for personal language growth or professional practices for application later at home.

Indeed, focused attention on developing advanced and disciplinary English language proficiency was conspicuously absent from the participants' narratives again (see Plews et al., 2010), either by choice since they had other priorities (see Kinginger, 2008, 2009), or by personal or administrative negligence since it was not incorporated explicitly in the curricular structure of the program (Wilkinson, 2000, 2001; see Harbon, 2007). Roskvist et al. (2013) reported that some of the New Zealand foreign language teachers who taught their native English as part of their international professional development program found their target language ability suffered. In our study, the participants never indicate that teaching their native Spanish has a negative impact on their English language acquisition. We suspect this is because they were already highly proficient (which, of course, is not the same as not still needing to develop language ability) or there was a sufficient amount of other professional as well as social interaction in English; certainly, access to a range of

social groups in study abroad leads to gains (Castañeda & Zirger, 2011; Dewey, Bown, & Eggett, 2012). It might be significant that English was our participants' target language, while it was Roskvist's participants' native language (see Tang & Choi, 2004). Perception of linguistic gains and successes on SL teacher international professional development might be linked to the lingua franca between participants and cooperating host teachers: if they use the participants' target language, the participants might have a greater sense of usage and gain; if they use their native language, often more likely for native English speakers, given the pressure of its global presence, they might feel that they are missing opportunities to develop especially disciplinary language in the target language. Ironically, the minimal orientation upon arrival may well have had a positive linguistic and intercultural learning effect on the participants through the necessary engagement with the foreign culture in its language (see Engle & Engle, 2003).

The regrettably poor immediate reception in Canada was determined by the nature and structure of the program. As with the first two participants, the second two were not recognized as qualified, in-service English teachers. No guidelines were apparent for institutional coordinators, cooperating teachers, or the monitors, no targeted SL pedagogical learning outcomes for the monitors or planned process to attain them (except for the gradual integration into classroom instruction) were set. Hosting education institutions made no purposeful language planning to capitalize on the additional contributions of a Mexican Spanish native speaker. The inferior positioning of the Mexican teachers by busy and unknowing or perhaps discriminating Canadian colleagues and the *laissez-faire* structure of work placement without a planned and purposeful curriculum of teaching roles clearly limited the kind, extent, and effect of both the benefits the participants could receive from the program and the contributions they could make to students and colleagues through it. Indeed, this attitude and structure led to Annie being assigned demeaning tasks void of pedagogical content for her, let alone for her students. Meanwhile, Golda did not acquire new, advanced pedagogical and disciplinary knowhow despite her more positive and beneficial experience of gradual integration into classroom instruction by cautious local teachers, since she ultimately practiced instructing Spanish, a language that she ordinarily does not teach, using exactly what she already knew from being a master teacher of English in Mexico. Neither participant learned much in the way of new SL pedagogy that would provide new support for their teaching in Mexico. We note that the reception the Mexicans got and their perception of it were, in our opinion, not simply results of cultural misunderstanding or conflict (i.e. Canadians value working independently and being responsible for oneself vs. Mexicans understand teachers to hold a certain social status). Rather, from the perspective of the standard Canadian value of respecting and helping others – a value Mexicans share – the reception was entirely unacceptable. Annie's and Golda's narratives raise a fundamental concern for the success of international education programming that recent scholars have highlighted: just as in the cases of Churchill's (2006) and Kinginger's (2008) student-participants and Gorsuch's (2003) and our (Plews et al., 2010) own previous two teacher-participants, a considerable, positive difference is made to the quality of experience, when participants are recognized by and subsequently integrated into the host education institution according to their given status (i.e. as students or in-service teachers) with the clearly stated and valued purpose of learning and/or contributing instead of being stereotyped as, and subsequently treated as, inconsequential temporary visitors (see also Roskvist et al., 2013).

Despite the aforementioned disappointments and constraints, Annie's and Golda's narratives contain two aspects that may be crucial for meeting professional learning needs in international education programming. The first is participants' agency, their determination and effort to assert themselves in the foreign environment and take initiative and responsibility for their own learning (see also Ife, 2000; Klapper & Rees, 2012). When Golda says, "You learn a lot *if you want*," she echoes Kinginger's (2009, p. 151) analysis that some study abroad students tend to "shy away" from more challenging encounters, while others make it their "personal mission" to get specifically what they want out of a program. Both participants requested and attempted to access relevant university courses (in ESL, TESL, SLA, etc.) that would provide them with level-appropriate linguistic and/or pedagogical content knowledge. Unfortunately, Annie's and Golda's attempts were thwarted by a combination of university red tape and the lack of will or motivation on the part of

their coordinating professor to complete the necessary administration to enable them to enrol in scheduled courses as university fellows. Equally regrettable, Annie and Golda did not persist in speaking up for their wishes, either for reasons of cultural difference or personality or due to frustration and the power relation between supervisor and participants. For Annie, this was a refrain that was significant in limiting her experience to simply international rather than more complexly intercultural.

The second facilitating aspect is the mindfulness to realize the potential of chance encounters and, again, consciously act on them. This is best demonstrated by Golda's friendship with a student, which leads to her fulfilling her primary personal professional objective in coming to Canada, namely, to obtain continuing education on how to work with film. Once again, host recognition of the participants' professional standing and concomitant educational interests could have led to an improved program for all stakeholders. If the Mexican teachers had accessed level-appropriate university courses as part of a planned professional development curriculum, not only would their professional desire to find new ways to support their domestic roles have been met, but their Canadian students would have been the first beneficiaries of their new and potentially improved teaching approaches.

Another beneficial chance encounter resulted from Golda's assisting a particular professor. His diligence in giving Golda feedback partly compensated for missing evaluation and was the only instance of quality control in the program. This partnership was crucial for the program curriculum as an opportunity for a participant to reflect formally on her professional development (see H. W. Allen, 2010; Barkhuizen & Feryok, 2006; Brindley et al., 2009; English, 2002; Kinginger, 2011; Marx & Moss, 2011; McGill & Harbon, 2006; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Plews et al., 2010). Yet even this professor's feedback was enriching only to a degree: while she made sense of cultural differences in teaching through their exchanges, his comments otherwise concerned norms and protocols for teaching Spanish. This sole source of feedback thus draws attention to the critical need for the participants to access a professional network that more appropriately includes Canadian ESL teachers and not only teachers of Spanish. While we have no data showing that teaching one's native language in one's SL environment necessarily hinders SL development (cf. Roskvist et al., 2013), our narrative inquiry indicates that such a setup can hinder the development of an optimal professional network, that is, one with other teachers of the relevant SL (see L. Q. Allen, 2010; Gleeson & Tait, 2012; Trent, 2011).

6 Conclusion

Our narrative study of the second two of four Mexican English teachers participating in a SL international professional development program in Canada contributes to the growing body of SL study abroad research that indicates the benefit of such programming for linguistic, cultural, intercultural, and professional learning and that explores the features and factors that enhance or limit such outcomes. Our study shows that the standard foreign immersion program structure of general exposure to another language and culture through work placement and homestay inherently provides some conditions for learning. Yet, the specific narratives here clearly underline the issue that, without particular curriculum structures, there are no guarantees that participants will develop their SL, cultural, and professional knowledge and identities much beyond what they already know. Indeed, Annie's and Golda's narratives of benign neglect and accommodation – of humbly getting on with the job (Annie) or of curiously finding out what fits (Golda) – show that exposure to an immersion setting leads to some kinds of learning, but also that, with poor reception and integration into the host education institutions, individual agency and chance coupled with a disposition toward taking initiative provide only uncertain and opportunistic means of achieving more appropriate outcomes.

With a view to securing successful outcomes for participants and hosts, our earlier study (Plews et al., 2010) recommended that:

1. host institutions recognize the in-service teacher-participants' qualified professional status,

2. sending and receiving education administrations conduct a pre-departure dialogue to set individual and mutual institutional pedagogical and language policy goals,
3. participants identify and pursue personalized language and culture learning outcomes,
4. homestay service with a professional colleague should be maintained and complemented with interaction with education administration, and, finally,
5. participants should be given the time and appropriate guidance for critical reflection.

These recommendations are strongly supported by the second two narratives; they also correlate with the reasons for the success of the program discussed in Brindley et al. (2009). The failure of most colleagues at host institutions to recognize Annie's and Golda's professional status, contributions, and needs limited the opportunities available to them and hindered their development. This finding supports Churchill's (2006) study that identified the immediate and appropriate recognition, reception, and integration of participants as individuals with a function and purpose for being in the new education institution as a leading factor in activating participant success. The absence of formal curriculum provisions by Mexican and Canadian administrations and the lack of specific learning goals on the part of the participants also meant they spent more time than was otherwise necessary deciphering how to integrate and contribute. Being forced to occupy themselves with accommodating to their hosts and their circumstances may have made for interesting learning, but it also delayed, diluted, or denied the satisfaction of professional interests. As shown by our earlier study, Barkhuizen and Feryok (2006), Marx and Moss (2011), and Roskvist et al. (2013), SL teachers on international professional development directly benefit from interaction with teachers and homestay hosts. It would be favorable to promote this aspect of the international experience with explicit plans to optimize the amount and quality of interaction. In briefings before and during the program, institutions on both sides and the individual participants would formulate goals for that interaction and identify the roles the participants might productively assume and the individual interests that could be pursued. This approach could involve pre-arrival distance discussions between respective administrations on matters of language planning, pre-arrival and immediate post-arrival sessions between participants and cooperating teachers to discuss qualifications, experience, contributions to class activities, and learning needs, and ongoing supervisory meetings for debriefing, critical reflection, and revising or resetting goals.

Our narrative understandings of the international professional development program also deepened with the opportunity to analyze further participants' experiences; Annie's and Golda's narratives raised two further points on which we recommend action. First, both participants desired some kind of further education course, but the program structure did not integrate their interests (see Spaulding, Mauch, & Lin, 2001). Their learning in such a course would likely transfer immediately to Canadian classrooms where they were assisting as well as to their Mexican classrooms at home. Second, their temporary function as Spanish monitors obscured their usual professional role as teachers of English. While they were introduced to Canadian Spanish teachers who could profit tremendously from their authentic presence, they were far less inclined to meet ESL or even English language arts professionals. These two issues could be resolved by allowing participants to enroll in a graduate-level course on SL pedagogy or a specific topic within TESL as the focal point of program structure. Others enrolled in the course could serve as an immediate relevant network of professionals with whom future collaboration might also be possible. The course professor could become the local mentor, thus finally assuring that the participants' reflection would be assessed within the relevant area of SL expertise. Thus, to the previous five recommendations, we add that:

6. hosts make available to the participants a graduate-level course in an aspect of SL education and, in this case, preferably TESL.

We wondered whether archetypes would emerge in the narrative analysis of all four participants' experiences. Despite similarities in planning, reception, integration, organization, content, and evaluation, we were able to emplot four different stories using extant fairy-tale frames (e.g. the re-asserted expert, emerging inherent goodness, the giver/collector-not-receiver, the initiative-taker/problem-solver). These narratives varied depending on individual disposition (assertiveness, enthusiasm, humility, curiosity) as well as agency and chance, that is, the corresponding degree to

which each was *able* or *wanted* to advance along two axes of development: *international/intercultural* and *professional*. By going abroad, the participants faced the choice of seeking international knowledge or developing intercultural thinking and the challenge of remaining a visitor or becoming a colleague. Thus, among our participants we saw the four variations: a master teacher who gathers international experience and negotiates her status as colleague; a novice who develops an intercultural perspective and colleague status; a novice who is satisfied with her international experience and visitor status (despite perceiving shortcomings); and a master who develops intercultural awareness and remains a visitor (albeit as a position serving her investment in interculturality). Regarding the four variations, the greater number of years of prior work experience is not necessarily a predictor of the ideal outcome of both intercultural (self-)repositioning and becoming positioned (by others) as a colleague: after all, the novice Cinderella's narrative is the only one indicating a considerable advance along both axes. We suggest that if external circumstances could be improved as per our recommendations, future participants on such programs could be encouraged to advance along both axes of international (intercultural) and professional development no matter the personality.

Briefly, we would like to address two limitations to our study that are typical of much study abroad research. First, our study is limited to the time the participants spent in Canada. We did not investigate their professional lives after their return to Mexico to see if they implemented changes in course content, teaching style or approaches, or classroom language. Nor did we learn whether they accessed further education at home or abroad, as a couple intimated. We also do not know whether they sought promotion or the role of teacher educator. Future studies could provide considerable new insight by interpreting relations between findings from in-sojourn lived experiences and empirical data concerning post-return changes.

Second, our study may strike some readers as one-sided, since we did not directly seek the perspectives of cooperating teachers, host institution administrators, or homestay families and, consequently, their voices and actions seem to be represented only by way of the participants' experiences of them. While studies involving all parties to the program are useful, attaining an insider perspective is often only possible by providing a framework within which participants can speak knowing they will be listened to without being judged or corrected, that is, a dialogic encounter. Nonetheless, the second two narratives might be regarded as more negative and perhaps representing a biased airing of dirty laundry. Certainly, our impression while gathering data was not that the participants were censoring themselves before us as members of the host culture; on the contrary, they were forthright. Given the obvious asymmetrical power relations in the program structure, which contributed much to their narratives, we wonder if they would have been quite so forthright, if other parties had been included in the study. While it is important for study abroad researchers to embrace a broad range of perspectives beyond those of only participants (Kinging, 2008, 2009; Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004; Trent, 2011) – especially to avoid merely reporting unchallenged cultural stereotyping (Block, 2007; Kinginger, 2009) – it also behooves us to pay attention to and represent the voices of various groups who find themselves in particular (social, cultural-ideological, institutional, academic-educational) relations of power. The difficulties and oversights raised here are meant as an invitation to reflect on and adopt better practice in the interest of improving the kind of benefits also already identified in the study. After all, we should remember that, while Golda, for example, does not credit the international professional development program per se for the growth of her cultural knowledge (e.g. of Canadian bureaucracy, history, and multiculturalism) or professional knowledge (e.g. of cultural difference in classroom management, of film analysis), pointing instead to her reading and her contacts or friends, it was nonetheless the program that facilitated the circumstantial opportunities for her to live with a homestay family and to work at a foreign university and so borrow or buy particular books to read and also come into contact with Canadian students whom she could befriend. The challenge for these kinds of programs remains, however, of committing people, thought, and resources so that international programming is less a question of haphazard learning through exposure that relies on chance and individual initiative for substance and more a period of planned,

guided, and critically reflective professional engagement. The shift from circumstantial to intentional engagement can only make these programs more worthwhile.

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