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Foreign Language Teachers' Struggle to Learn Content-Based Instruction

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Research has shown content-based instruction (CBI) to be effective in various language settings, yet this promising curricular approach remains rarely implemented in mainstream foreign language educational contexts. While the existing body of research has identified important barriers to the implementation of CBI, it has neglected the problem of meaning, which is essential to understanding educational reforms. This phenomenological study explores the meaning that the experience of learning CBI had for in-service foreign language teachers in traditional teaching contexts who were once enrolled in a year-long professional development program specifically designed to help them become familiar with CBI core principles and to create CBI curricular materials. Findings suggest that teachers struggle mainly with the idea of teaching language through content, a concept that they have difficulty grasping or even accepting as a possibility. Professional development programs must be designed to respond to this specific challenge if they are to help teachers explore new instructional possibilities.

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INTRODUCTION

If foreign language (FL) education is no longer considered trivial within the educational lives of students, the "goals and means of language study, however, continue to be hotly debated" (Modern Language Association [MLA], 2007, p. 2). Conflicting views regarding the nature and function that language plays in society are at the origin of the divide between those who view language as an instrument to communicate with and, thus, believe that language learning is principally about the development of skills necessary to communicate with others, and those who, in contrast, emphasize the role of language in the development of human consciousness and, thus, believe that the language learning experience should focus on the development of a certain form of intellectual sensitivity, cultural awareness, critical thinking abilities, and creativity. The latter view has been at the origin of a recent call for change toward more meaning-oriented curricula in the field of FL education in order to promote what is referred to as the development of *plurilingualism* in Europe—defined as "the lifelong enrichment of the individual's linguistic and cultural repertoire" (Council of Europe, 2006, p. 5)—and *trans-lingual* and *trans-cultural competence* in the United States, which emphasize the development of learners' ability to "operate between languages" (MLA, 2007, p. 3) as well as between their associated cultural frameworks.

While the promotion of plurilingualism and plurilingual education has led to important educational and curricular reforms in Europe since the early 1990s, no

such reforms have occurred in the U.S. to date. This study explores the challenges of operationalizing the type of curricular changes required for FL education to be supportive of the development of learners' translingual and transcultural competence by focusing on teachers' experience of attempting to reform their own practice toward content based instruction.[1]

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Toward the development of plurilingualism: The CBI alternative

Reforms such as those fostering the development of plurilingualism or translingual/cultural competence inevitably call for the integration of meaningful and relevant content into the FL curriculum so that, "[i]n the course of acquiring functional language abilities, students [may be] taught critical language awareness, interpretation and translation, historical and political consciousness, social sensibility, and aesthetic perception" (MLA, 2007, p. 4). As a result, it becomes essential to consider the curricular alternatives that make possible the concurrent development of linguistic skills and (critical) thinking skills as well as the availability of professional development geared toward preparing teachers to implement them.

In recent years, the increase in popularity of many alternative educational models (e.g., "one-way" FL immersion programs, "two-way" immersion programs), commonly referred to as "strong" forms of bilingual education, have challenged the vision of learning and teaching foreign languages generally found in mainstream education where *drip-feed* language programs rarely produce functionally fluent second language learners (Baker, 2006). They also provide valid curricular alternatives for educators desiring to promote plurilingualism. These alternative programs distinguish themselves from drip-feed *conventional,* or *traditional*[2] ones by teaching content through a second language and by considering content as the primary instructional focus (Eskey, 1997). In order to reach their goal of providing a more authentic language learning experience, they utilize a content-based approach to curriculum design, which aims at integrating language and cognitive development by treating both *meaning* and *form* as primary instructional goals (Lyster, 2007). It is this specific aim that clearly sets content-based instruction (CBI) or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), as it is most commonly referred to in Europe (Jäppinen, 2005), apart from traditional approaches to language teaching commonly found in mainstream educational contexts in the U.S. today (Met, 1999; Stryker & Leaver, 1997 a & b), where "language form is the primary focus of the syllabus and of classroom teaching" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 209).

Content-based instruction: Origin and implementation

The origin of CBI as we know it today is most often associated with the Canadian experiment with French immersion schooling (O'Maggio-Hadley, 2001; Swain & Johnson, 1997), initiated in 1965 in St. Lambert (Lambert & Tucker, 1972). CBI is, in fact, credited as one of the main ingredients that explain the success of language immersion education (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 2003; Genesee, 1994).

Since then, experiments with the implementation of content-driven curricula in other educational environments have also proven successful (Brinton et al., 2003; Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Hall Haley & Austin, 2004; Klee & Tedick, 1997; Mohan, 1986; Murphey, 1997; Snow & Brinton, 1997; Snow, Met, & Genesee, 1989). This has been particularly true in the context of English as a second Language (ESL) in the U.S., whose latest proficiency standards (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 2006) build on the existing World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment Consortium (WIDA) English Language Proficiency Standards. These Standards are content based as they officially establish clear connections between language and the specific core curriculum content areas of English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. In fact, aside from immersion, illustrations of CBI found in the literature most often depict implementation within ESL secondary or post-secondary instructional settings (concrete illustrations can be found in Snow & Brinton, 1997; Brinton et al, 2003).

When it comes to the implementation of CBI in FL instructional contexts, a few noticeable experiments that have occurred at the post-secondary level over the past two decades in the U.S. and elsewhere have led to research and publications. One of the most successful and well known examples of FL CBI post-secondary implementation in the U.S. to date is the Developing Multiple Literacies curriculum renewal project by Heidi Byrnes and her colleagues in the German Department at Georgetown University. This project, which led to the elaboration of a 4-year undergraduate genre-based curriculum, has yielded much research in this particular context.[3] Other illustrations of successful CBI implementations at the post-secondary level in the U.S. and abroad also include the University of Minnesota's undergraduate Foreign Language Immersion Program (FLIP) in Spanish (Klee & Tedick, 1997), a two-year CBI course sequence in a French for journalism and telecommunication program at Ohio University (Vines, 1997), and a graduate-level CBI Spanish Immersion through Contemporary Mexican Topics course for the school of International affairs of Columbia University (Klahn, 1997), only to name a few. It is important to note that data gathered through evaluations of the aforementioned programs provide clear evidence of the effectiveness of using such a curricular approach within this particular instructional context. Nevertheless, although these studies have generated much interest in the field in recent years, it remains that CBI programs within the FL post-secondary context in the U.S. are still rare.

While research investigating CBI implementation and effectiveness at the post-secondary level is available, little to no research on its implementation at the K-12 level has been published to date. Even in Europe where much experimentation with CLIL has occurred in recent years at the secondary level (for some illustrations see European Commission, n.d.), there is still "considerable scarcity of CLIL research" (Jäppinen, 2005, p. 149) because such programs are still a recent phenomenon.[4]

Content-based instruction: Nature and primary mission

Defining the nature and mission of CBI is a complex undertaking because not everyone agrees on what CBI is and what it aims for. The crux of the issue lies in the fact that, when it comes to implementation, program models based on CBI can vary

greatly depending on the instructional contexts for which they have been designed (e.g., immersion, ESL, FL). Instructional contexts and their underlying purposes will affect the importance given to content, for instance, within immersion programs content instruction is primary, whereas in conventional high school language programs, language remains the primary focus regardless of whether or not content is integrated in the curriculum.

CBI is an approach to curriculum development, not a methodology per se. In other words, it is mostly about the *what* of the curriculum while also including a focus on *how* balancing language and content instruction can be accomplished. To date Grabe and Stoller (1997) have identified nine distinct CBI program models, including their own. Other scholars (e.g., Dueñas, 2004; Met, 1999) have placed various programs along a continuum based on whether they are more or less content-driven or language-driven and have labeled them as *weak* or *strong* to illustrate the particular emphasis given to content and language instruction within each particular context (Dueñas, 2004; Wesche & Skehan, 2002). Many scholars in the field have attempted to identify characteristics essential for programs to be considered content-based (e.g., Brinton et al., 2003; Dueñas, 2004; Leaver & Stryker, 1989; Met, 1999; Snow, 2005; only to name a few). When it comes to FL contexts, many agree with the idea that CBI is most often equated with theme-based instruction (Dueñas, 2004; Met, 1999).

Content-based instruction: Theoretical foundations and core principles

The emergence of CBI is clearly related to the increasing influence of sociocultural theory in the language education field. Sociocultural theory and the associated field of sociocultural linguistics emphasize the interrelation between language and thought as well as between language, culture, and society. Reflecting on the interdependence between linguistic activities and the sociocultural and historical contexts within which such activities take place, Thorne (2000) notes: "[l]anguage patterns of some durability are the sedimented product of historical and sociocultural activity, which in part structure current contexts, and reciprocally, such contexts in turn co-structure interactional and communicative practices" (p. 237). By positing that context and language impact each other and by recognizing that the sociocultural context is an essential factor in shaping individuals' consciousness and linguistic/communicative practices, sociocultural theory thus rejects the idea that *form* and *meaning* can be treated in isolation from each other.

Operating within the sociocultural theoretical framework implies a broadening of the definition of language, which calls for the adoption of a view of language and its use in context. This view does not take the role of language for granted; rather, it emphasizes the central nature of discourse and the way context is constructed through discourse. As Wells (1999) explains, "it is in learning and using language that we enter into and participate in the ongoing dialogue of meaning making in the communities to which we belong"(p. 119). The key principles that shape the CBI curricular approach align with the view that defines "language learning as the acquisition of new forms of discourse" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 4) and, thus, considers language *form* (e.g., syntax, grammar, lexicon) as an inseparable component of

communicative practice and its associated *meaning* (i.e., a focus on language in use, the creation of discourse as well as its interpretations). van Lier's *ecological approach* further clarifies the inseparable nature of the *form-meaning* relationship CBI calls for by positing that meaning is essential to the study of language. Ecological theory argues that:

> if you take the context away there is no language left to be studied. It's like an onion. You can't peel away the layers and hope to get to the 'real' onion underneath: it's layers all the way down. So it is with language: it's context all the way down. (van Lier, 2004, p. 20)

Thus, I argue that the notion of language as discourse, which considers individuals as agents in the meaning making process and posits that context is central to any meaning making activity, represents the foundation that guides many of the principles at the core of CBI. In the FL context, such principles underscore the need to:

1. balance two instructional missions at once, that is, to consider both the mastery of content and the learning of language as equally important goals within the context of learning an additional language (Lyster, 2007);
2. let content guide decisions as to what linguistic knowledge needs to be integrated and covered in the curriculum while also building in more language (see Snow et al., 1989, for a discussion on content-obligatory and content-compatible objectives);
3. align instruction with the principles of the authenticity-centered approach, which calls for the use of authentic *texts*, be they linguistic, non-linguistic, or multi-modal as well as the use of authentic *tasks* (see Mishan's criteria for text and task authenticity, 2005, p. 18, 75) that will stimulate genuine communication in the classroom through the use of materials relevant to learners here and now;
4. make use of content appropriate to the specific needs of students, that is, the selection and organization of the content should respond to students' personal interests while appropriately challenging their cognitive abilities, level of maturity, and level of proficiency in the target language;
5. adopt a learner-centered approach to ensure that learners remain engaged and motivated to manipulate and use language to share, construct, and negotiate meaning with their peers;
6. utilize a cooperative approach to ensure that learners can support each other in the learning process as the learners evolve through *the spiral of knowing* (see Wells, 1999, p. 585 and onward) and increase their personal understanding "through engagement in collaborative knowing" (p. 87).

Such principles align with a call for reform initiated in part by the release of the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (1996, 1999), which stresses the importance of interdisciplinary connections and the integration of meaningful cultural content into the FL curriculum. This call for reform parallels a

similar one for the use of CBI in FL classrooms in the U.S., as CBI is the curricular approach best suited to operationalize such goals.

Why a focus on teachers' experience of change?

While a focus on integrating meaningful content in the traditional FL classroom was formally recognized by the field as an important instructional mission as early as the 1980s and well into the 90s (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996, 1999; Snow et al., 1989), and while the last two decades of research in the fields of second language acquisition (SLA), education, and cognitive psychology support CBI (Grabe & Stoller, 1997), the absence of the CBI approach in most K-16 FL programs in the U.S. today underscores the complexity that such a transition represents. As argued elsewhere (e.g., Fullan, 2001; Richardson & Placier, 2001), reforms such as the one proposed by advocates of CBI take a long time in part because teachers' experience of changing their practice is rarely taken into account. In the particular case of FL education, questions regarding the meaning of teachers' experience of curricular change are rarely asked (Cammarata, 2009) and, therefore, the field is still ignorant as to what it means for middle, high school, and college FL teachers working in conventional language-driven programs to adopt new curricular visions such as the one required by CBI. Attempting to answer questions such as these, I argue, requires nothing less than the creation of an entirely new research agenda that sees teachers as agents of change (Freeman, 2004; Hargreaves; 1992, Hawkins, 2004). Such an agenda is particularly relevant to teacher educators who aim to help FL teachers learn and implement CBI in order to develop the translingual and transcultural competence of their students.

The current study contributes to this new research agenda by focusing on the subjective meaning and lived experience of FL teachers attempting to learn CBI. Such a research agenda, which is driven by epistemological questions endeavoring to explore teachers' ways of coming to *know,* is essential because these questions represent the foundation of any pedagogical practice. As Reagan (2004) pertinently reminds us: "[t]he way in which we think about *knowledge* and what it means to *know* are directly and necessarily linked to all aspects of how we teach" (p. 51). Understanding the challenges related to CBI learning, thus, must begin with an exploration of what it means for teachers to consider changing their practice to accommodate a new curricular vision. Only then, I argue, will we be able to fully capture the complexity of the experience of change that lies at the heart of any curricular reform.

This study adopts a phenomenological approach because phenomenological inquiry specifically aims to answer epistemological questions that focus on teachers' experiences. This study strives to gain a better understanding of the many factors that might influence high school and college foreign language teachers' experiences learning about CBI. It focuses only on those teachers evolving in what could be qualified as *traditional* or *conventional* instructional environments. It builds upon the findings of a preliminary study (Cammarata, 2009) that helped to clarify important struggles teachers experienced as they attempted to *transition* toward CBI. This study raised new questions regarding the nature of teachers' struggles in relation to

integrating content into existing language-driven programs. The following unanswered questions warranted further exploration:

- What is public high school and college foreign language teachers' *experience of learning to integrate language and content* within the context of designing CBI curricular material?
- What is the nature of the struggles these FL teachers experience when attempting to weave together language and content in curricular planning?

These are the research questions that guided this follow-up study, whose aim was to further explore and describe the phenomenon of learning CBI from the perspective of foreign language teachers.

METHOD

Context of the study

The context in which this study took place was a grant-funded, year-long professional development (PD) program at a major university in the Midwest that was specifically designed to help K-16 world language teachers develop CBI curriculum units with a strong commitment to curricular coherence both in the area of content and language instruction.[5] The curricular units, composed of multiple lessons and accompanying instructional materials, embedded the concurrent teaching of both content and language within logically sequenced and cognitively engaging lessons as well as a summative assessment plan. Although the teachers were encouraged to teach the units and thus attempt to implement CBI, most did not choose to do so during the PD experience.

All teachers enrolled in the professional development program did so willingly and because of a particular interest and desire to explore alternatives to their everyday practice. Findings of a previous study (Cammarata, 2009) as well as part of the findings of this current study (Cammarata, 2006), which will not be commented on in detail in this report, clearly underscore teachers' initial willingness to engage in exploring new ideas as well as clear hopes that CBI would allow them to 1) make language instruction more interesting and motivating for students, and 2) make the language teaching experience more motivating and enjoyable for teachers.

During the course of the PD program, teachers first began their work by exploring the principles of CBI and becoming familiar with their theoretical foundations. Teachers then followed a rather specific curriculum development template that led to the creation of a CBI curricular unit. During the curriculum development process, teachers were able to consult a plethora of CBI curricular units developed by former students using the exact same curricular model. These units, which the teacher educators identified as stellar models, acted as a scaffold during the curriculum development process. While working on their CBI units, teachers learned to use lesson and unit templates specifically designed to help them identify both content as well as language objectives for each of the lessons and to plan tasks and instructional strategies consistent with CBI. Teachers enrolled in the program for credit were assessed on the quality of the CBI curricular unit they developed as a final project as this represented the core of their learning experience.

Methodological considerations

This study is representative of descriptive phenomenology, a research approach that originates from Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, also known as lifeworld research or the reflective lifeworld research approach (Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nyström, 2008). Phenomenological inquiry,[6] which aims at revealing the structures that produce meaning in consciousness (Polkinghorne, 1989), focuses on human experience because all human knowledge is considered to be grounded in it. Although it is descriptive and qualitative in nature, the exclusive focus of phenomenological research on the subject's experienced meaning distinguishes it from other approaches that focus instead on descriptions of subject's actions or behaviors (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 44). The knowledge claims that phenomenological inquiry generates when exploring human learning experiences (Colaizzi, 1978) as well as teaching experiences (van Manen, 1997) can give us unique insights into why curricular innovations succeed or fail. Thus phenomenology was selected as a research approach for this study because it is particularly well suited to answer questions that explore the nature of FL teachers' experience of learning CBI.

Selection of participants

Phenomenological inquiry, like many other forms of scientific research, requires the selection of particular subjects as opposed to a randomized/neutral selection. As phenomenological inquiry seeks "concrete detailed description of the subject's experience and actions, as faithful as possible to what happened as experienced by the subjects" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 245), a researcher needs to insure that the selected participants 1) have lived the experience that is the object of scrutiny (Wertz, 1984), 2) are willing to talk about their experience (ibid), and 3) are diverse enough from one another so that rich and unique stories of the experiences under study can be collected (Dahlberg et al., 2006; Laverty, 2003).

FL teachers who were once enrolled in the PD program and who were teaching in conventional FL programs were invited to participate to ensure that all had the same experience with learning about CBI. In addition, only the teachers matching the following specific criteria were invited: teachers were all 1) experienced middle school, high school, or college FL teachers (i.e., having a minimum of five years teaching experience) and had participated in the PD program, 2) teaching at the time of the study in an environment that could be characterized as traditional according to the criteria mentioned earlier (see endnote #2), and 3) willing to talk about their learning experiences. Four female French or Spanish teachers matching these selection criteria agreed to participate: one middle school, two high-school, and one college teacher.[7] Two of the four, one middle school and one high school teacher, had had some experience with immersion teaching in the past and, thus, began their CBI learning experience at a more advanced stage than the others.

Data sources

When it comes to phenomenological inquiry, it is essential "that the description be as precise and detailed as possible with a minimum number of generalities or abstractions as possible" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 243). In this study, the data gathering process aimed at eliciting experiential data by asking participants to reminisce and describe in concrete and everyday language specific episodes of their learning experience. It consisted of asking participants to write an initial written description of their experience following van Manen's (1997) Lived Experience Description (LED) protocol[8] (Appendix A), which was used as a trampoline to *jump start* the interviews. They were also asked to participate in two phenomenological interviews aimed at eliciting rich descriptions of their lived-experience. (Appendix B provides examples of the type of questions used in phenomenological interviewing). Each interview session lasted approximately an hour and a half.

The data collection process was conducted within six months to a year after participants had completed the program. Additional knowledge of the context was provided from informal observations conducted while I was personally involved in the development and implementation of the PD program.

Data analysis and report

Giorgi's (1997) analytical approach to phenomenological text analysis was adapted to suit the particular needs of this study. The aim of phenomenological analysis is to identify core constituents or essential characteristics/features of a particular experience under study. Thematic classification following this approach is based on differentiating between essential and incidental themes related to a phenomenon being studied, a step that van Manen (1997) argues is the most challenging part of the phenomenological data analysis process. A detailed description of this process follows.

The analysis was conducted following a *whole-part-whole* process common to holistic approaches to inquiry. This process is done in order to first identify *core constituents* of the phenomenon and then validate them. *Constituents* in phenomenology are somewhat equivalent to essential themes in other forms of qualitative inquiry and represent the most invariant parts that constitute the structure of a phenomenon under study. Taken together, core constituents provide a faithful depiction of the lived experience as a whole. In this particular case, the core constituents were the essential characteristics that define or constitute the lived experience of teachers from conventional FL programs learning CBI.

Following Giorgi's approach, during the *whole-part* phase of the data analysis process I conducted repeated readings of the teachers' written descriptions and interview transcripts in order to first immerse myself in the textual data and gain a global sense of the texts prior to engaging in actual data analysis. Following this initial phase, I then parsed textual data into sections with the aim of distinguishing rich lived experience descriptions (labeled R-LED, thereafter) from others. Next, I performed a micro textual analysis to break each R-LED section into distinct meaning units. Once R-LED sections were dissected and the various meanings

embedded within them were identified, I then categorized meaning units that appeared to clearly shed light on the phenomenon of learning CBI into larger themes. I considered these larger themes potential constituents ready to be probed to evaluate their strengths as essential or primary characteristics of the experience under study. I tested the strengths of those potential constituents through the process known as *imaginative variation*, a method for discovering essential features of a particular phenomenon under study that consists of modifying parts of a phenomenon to see if the phenomenon still remains identifiable after it has been transformed. (For an extended discussion on this topic see: Dahlberg et al, 2008; Giorgi, 1997; van Manen, 1997). This phase corresponds to a cyclical *part-whole* and *whole-part* analytic movement as questions such as the following must be asked of the experience as a whole: Is this thematic element essential to the experience as a whole? Could the experience still be described fully without the inclusion of this aspect/dimension? Is it an essential characteristic of the experience or simply a relational component? The analytical reading process ended when I was convinced "the most invariant meaning" for the context had been identified and when I determined that I had arrived at a structure of the experience where "essences and their relationships" could be appropriately described (Giorgi, 1997, p. 242).

The following section details teachers' experience of struggle as they tried to learn CBI.[9] The report is accompanied by supporting textual quotes[10] describing some of the most important challenges that teachers who participated in this study experienced while attempting to develop CBI curricula. I conclude with key implications for the field of language teacher education and professional development along with propositions for possible improvement of programs aimed at fostering the CBI approach in K-16 educational contexts.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study that explores teachers' lived-experience of learning CBI are reflected in four distinct though intricately connected struggles teachers faced as they tried to learn how to implement the approach. The following provides a detailed description of each.

Letting it go: Confronting established beliefs about language learning

Learning CBI for the participating FL teachers was lived as a difficult experience because they wanted to find ways to embed content within their existing language-driven and language-focused curricular framework, regardless of the attempts made by the teacher educators to discourage them. They did not realize that content was another word for the context of language use that CBI asked them to teach in addition to the forms of the language itself (see CBI core principle 1). As the following section will illustrate, teachers' struggle to maintain an already established linguistic scope and sequence reveals a deeper struggle related to their difficulty in confronting and letting go of their beliefs about how languages are learned.

Attempting to make content fit within their existing curricula led teachers to struggle as they tried to maintain the existing scope and sequence of language

instruction:

> The biggest and most difficult thing was this idea of finding a scope and sequence for grammar instruction because it seemed like an impossible task with CBI… for me, scope and sequence of grammatical instruction, my knowledge of it, is rather traditional like "in this chapter we are going to teach the present tense, and then now we're going to teach…" With CBI there's none of that. [P#3 – INT#1]

More specifically, teachers struggled to ensure that the academic or cultural content they had selected did not call for language that they felt would be too advanced and therefore inappropriate for students' proficiency or cognitive level:

> The question is: "does this content-based lesson point students in a direction to require them to use vocabulary that they aren't ready to learn?" So, for example, in the final project for [the unit I developed] students were to talk about how you got ready for the trip, what you did on the trip, and then what you did after the trip, but I didn't really want them to learn reflexive verbs or … that wouldn't be an appropriate thing because that doesn't reflect the language I want them to know. It reflects language they don't know yet, they'd have to teach themselves, and it's not really appropriate at that level. [P#4 – INT#2]

This particular excerpt underscores teachers' belief in the existence of an ideal linear grammar sequence of language instruction that, if not followed, can be detrimental to language learners. Such a belief is pervasive in the field even though "assumptions that the arrangement of the language in carefully graded steps would correspond to the natural learning sequence of language acquisition is disputed [which implies that] no principle for sequencing language experiences can be offered with any certainty" (Mohan, 1986, p. 100). Holding such beliefs renders the actual implementation of CBI difficult because they relegate content and context to a secondary plane and neutralizes the major instructional aim of CBI, learning language through content (see CBI core principle 2).

As soon as teachers attempted to place content knowledge at the center of language instruction, an exercise they engaged in during their participation in the year-long PD program, they were forced to interrupt the predetermined grammatical scope and sequence provided in the textbook. This move was experienced as a risky undertaking since it meant jeopardizing *what is perceived as* a logical flow, a perception that again points to teachers' belief in an ideal and prescriptive sequence of language instruction. One teacher explained:

> The chapters are connected. That means that if one chapter teaches the past tense, the next concept has to be connected. It's structured in a way that you have to do A before you do B and C. That means that, if you wanted to embed a CBI unit into this, you would need to connect it to all of this, the grammatical forms especially because it's a sequence. The textbooks that I use are well designed, there's a continuation of learning… You have to know that this is the present tense before you do the past, and so on. If I were to use [a CBI unit] I

would have to create the chapter and [write the curriculum]… can you imagine? [P#1 – INT#1]

The question asked at the end of this excerpt highlights the daunting task that CBI represents for FL teachers working in conventional programs who have to cope with the lack of already developed and appropriate CBI materials and textbooks. It also underlines, once again, the difficulty FL teachers have engaging in the type of curricular work that is required with a CBI approach. The study participants resisted giving up what they perceived as linguistic harmony, a harmony that they felt must constantly be recreated regardless of the type of content they had selected to integrate.

The experience of struggle to let go of the existing scope and sequence is also clearly illustrated by participants' difficulty in finding a way to teach meaningful content while remaining faithfull to a textbook curriculum organized around grammatical points and functions where content is usually "pasted on." The teachers' conflict resides in their desire to expose students to more meaningful content while still ensuring that doing so will facilitate the linguistic practice recommended by the textbook framework:

> Learning the theory of CBI or learning to apply it is very, very difficult. The difficulty is that the curriculum [I use] is basically organized around grammar and function. And the content feels pasted on… How on earth can we [introduce content] so that there is really some connections with language, so that content goes to the next level and becomes more meaningful while still allowing [students] to apply that grammar? [P#3 – INT#2]

Finally, the struggle to let go of the existing curricular structure is directly connected to FL teachers' understanding of their role and primary mission, a mission that their community of practice has clearly defined as teaching language (i.e., a focus on form) and for which they are held accountable. Utilizing CBI, which represents a redefinition of this primary mission to include a focus on meaning as well, is thus experienced as a potential danger to one's professional existence. As the following teacher explains, the primary mission, as well as the risks associated with not pursuing it, are clearly understood within this context:

> With CBI, what was difficult was finding a project that I could teach to my students, finding things that would work with what they know and finding things that would work in a traditional setting where I'm ultimately expected to teach Spanish. You know ultimately they need to go out of my room and know Spanish. Nobody's asking me to teach them content like math, science, or else but the language itself and so there's always a risk, you know, that I won't be able to manage both. [P#2 – INT#1]

Teachers struggle with the type of mission CBI proposes because the content integration it calls for renders the overall language agenda as it is prescribed by textbook curricula difficult if not impossible. As one teacher explained, "particular language you have to teach might not just surface naturally from the content you're

teaching. You may have to sort of twist the content to make sure that it's done."
[P#2 – INT#1]

Trapped in the content: Losing the sense of curricular freedom

Designing FL curricula with content at the core and providing balanced instruction where both content and language are considered two equally important instructional missions (see CBI core principles 1 and 2) means having to dedicate important instructional time to content teaching. In addition to having to re-establish what they believe is an essential language scope and sequence as described earlier, teachers struggled with the fact that planning with CBI involved sustaining their instructional focus on one specific overarching theme for a long period of time and ensuring appropriate sequencing at the conceptual level (e.g., connecting all lesson topics to an overarching theme, sequencing lessons to scaffold learning by moving from concrete to abstract knowledge). This was lived as an additional constraint as teachers felt that CBI prevented them from moving freely from one topic to another as they typically would with a language-driven unit:

> [With CBI] I was just focusing on one thing, one theme. I felt like I wanted to jump out of there. I thought it was too specific like focusing too much on one thing. Like I said, in the textbooks we use, we have [content], but we don't just focus on one thing. I remember that with CBI it was different, it just had to be so much more focused on the content itself and I got frustrated, I guess. [P#1 – INT#1]

This constraint translated into teachers feeling somehow "trapped" in content:

> Content-based, like I said, is different in a sense that I feel like I'm trapped in the content, really. I feel that the content traps me… Getting back to my unit, I felt like I was trapped in the art of the [target culture] for the week without being able to expand on something else. And I didn't want to spend that much time on it. [P#1-INT#2]

This last excerpt points to the difficulty teachers experience considering content and context as key elements of language instruction, a view that the use of the *imprisonment metaphor* clearly depicts. The description of how CBI was lived as a limiting and even entrapping experience came in the context wherein one of the participating teachers was discussing difficulties she had had teaching the specific language structure while covering the topic she had selected for the week. The art-related content the instructor had selected required her to be "much more focused on the content itself" than she normally would be. The need for more in-depth treatment of content and extensive planning for content instruction led the teacher to fear that it would be at the cost of language instruction and instructional variety. Being trapped in the content in this context, thus, can be understood as not being free to teach language following a predetermined scope and sequence, be it one that a teacher believes in or one that s/he is used to. It can also be understood as not

being free to incorporate a range of topics and tasks to engage learners and to allow them to practice language structures in several contexts.

This particular struggle again reveals the difficulty that teachers have grasping how language instruction (a focus on *form*) can emerge from content instruction (a focus on *meaning*). Their difficulty when it comes to envisioning how the discourse view of language at the heart of the CBI approach can be operationalized in their practice illustrates the influence of a well established dichotomy in the field that builds on the premise that language can be treated as an object of study disassociated from its context and subjects so that it can be better analyzed and manipulated (Reagan, 2004; Tedick, 2003; Tedick & Walker, 1994). This dichotomous thinking about language and content is often reinforced by the teacher preparation process where content often receives the least attention (Lafayette, 1993). In this regard, the findings of this study echo recent works exploring the context in which teacher learning occurs and that "is inextricably connected to school culture, instructional mission, and organization, as well as teachers' knowledge and the learning and achievement of students" (Ancess, 2001, p. 61).

The taming of content: Identifying and aligning content and language

The nature of the content itself represented a challenge for teachers when it came to ensuring that instruction was balanced and effective in the context of FL teaching. Selecting appropriate content meant also identifying content that would be neither too difficult (e.g., beyond students' cognitive and/or proficiency level) nor too simplistic (e.g. inappropriate content for learners' maturity level). Integrating content in a FL curriculum is difficult because the abstract nature of some content can be cognitively challenging to learners who might not have the appropriate proficiency and maturity level to handle it:

> It's hard to put language in there for real beginners because certain content like cultural stereotypes is very complex and very abstract... a lot of abstract thoughts are involved and, even though I want my students to learn about that content because I think it engages them, I also want them to use the language so I end up doing these sort of weird translations for them...You know there were things that would teach way too much specialized knowledge that was just inappropriate for the kids to learn. [P#2 – INT#1]

Other content, in contrast, might be too simplistic and, therefore inappropriate for certain groups of learners:

> [Some content] would be too babyish, you know, like animals and that kind of stuff. In animals and habitats, I think my students would be bored by those because I think that's stuff they learned in kindergarten, I mean, that's younger stuff. [P#2 – INT#1]

The difficulty for the teachers was to find the right equilibrium between authenticity and complexity as they struggled to find a way to simplify the content in order to make it comprehensible to students while keeping it interesting, cognitively engaging,

and within the realm of the proficiency level of the learners (see CBI core principles 3 and 4):

> On one level you constantly have to simplify the content, but on another level you want to go deeper and more complex so that you get their interest. So it's just this constant balancing. And of course it depends on what you're teaching as well. [P#3 – INT#2]

Reinventing one's practice: Moving away from the instructional safety zone

Learning CBI and making the curricular and instructional changes it calls for, that is, modifying existing instructional routines teachers have developed over a long period of time, is lived as a complex undertaking because it requires teachers to transform their practice and even, at times, leave many of their instructional routines behind. As the following excerpt illustrates, transforming one's practice means, in some ways, being willing to venture into the realm of the unknown:

> Being able to balance all those things [language and content] that's what was really distinctive about CBI. I write curriculum all the time, but in general, whenever I do lessons, it's usually pretty clear cut like I want to introduce students to the vocabulary about the house. You know, they need to learn about the different pieces of furniture and that's something where I show them the pictures… and then that's it. I mean it's a very clear thing… [With CBI] it was really different from what I had done before. I really had to think through what I would be doing. I really had to sort of research and understand what [the content was about] and where to go with it with my students… it was much harder to write. [P#4 – INT#1]

Having to reinvent oneself is a difficult experience for teachers who have strived for so many years to develop skills that allow them to anticipate potential pitfalls and feel safe and successful. The following excerpt illustrates this point:

> I keep falling back in that hole… you know, using things I'm familiar with and things that I'm used to, I just seem to fall back in the old routine. It's like you are already familiar with it, you can do this in your sleep. It takes an effort to change. It takes an effort to say: "Okay, today I'm going to do this totally differently: I'm going to try to focus on content and that's it." But it takes an effort to change…I guess it's like people who are used to drinking coffee. You know you just say I'm quitting because of caffeine, and you really try but eventually you sit around, everybody's drinking coffee and you want some and you fall back into the old habits. I think that if I was totally to change to content based I would have to do it over and over until it became kind of an almost automatic thing … until I would feel more comfortable. Maybe that is the point, feeling comfortable with it, because I feel comfortable with my old style of teaching, really comfortable…. Maybe that's why you fall back into it - 'cause you feel really comfortable. You say "oh, I know how to do this and I do it so well." [P#1 – INT#1]

When asked by the interviewer what "comfortable" meant, the teacher explained:

> Comfortable means that you understand the material really well. You know how it went before. You have found the pitfalls…maybe it's safer and that's comfort to me. [P#1 – INT#1]

This particular excerpt clearly illustrates the influence of teachers' schemata on the way they approached the learning of CBI. It highlights in particular the teachers' need for predictability and control in an endeavor that they feel responsible for. CBI core principles 5 and 6, with their focus on a learner-centered, cooperative approach, risk threatening the safety and predictability of their teaching environment and thus jeopardize their self-esteem as teachers.

The impact of preconceived knowledge on the acquisition of new concepts and theoretical frameworks has been extensively explored (Greeno, Collins, & Resnik, 1996; Recht & Leslie, 1988; Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1999; Shuell, 1990), and most current cognitive views of learning depict existing schemata as key elements that control learners' future learning experiences (Alexander, 1996). Veteran teachers differ from others because they possess extensive and well-organized professional knowledge of both teaching process and content (Shulman, 1987). Unlike pre-service teachers, experienced teachers have developed elaborate means of coping with the daily challenges of teaching over the years. This experience allows them to effectively orchestrate the overall delivery of their planned instruction and function in what Rymes (2004) describes as a *"zone of comfortable competence* (ZCC)" where "all expectations are predictable and unproblematic" (p. 327). The presence of a zone of comfort complicated greatly and even jeopardized teachers' overall attempt at exploring and experimenting with CBI.

DISCUSSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

For the most part, findings from this study are consistent with previous research in the field of both foreign and second language teaching that has highlighted major challenges accompanying CBI curriculum development efforts, such as difficulties related to 1) identification and development of appropriate content as well as identification of appropriate language to teach stemming from content (Stryker & Leaver, 1997), 2) alignment of content with structures and functions emerging from the subject matter (Short, 1999; Stoller, 2004), and 3) time demand and required curricular flexibility to enact a planned CBI curriculum (Huang, 2003; Stryker & Leaver, 1997). The findings of this study are also consistent with those revealed in a previous study conducted with a similar group of participants (Cammarata, 2009). The 2009 study also pointed to teachers' struggle to reinvent their practice when attempting to transition to CBI.

By focusing the exploratory lens on the *meaning* FL teachers attributed to their learning challenges, the findings of this study further clarify the complexity that the CBI curricular reform represents for teachers practicing their trade in conventional FL programs in the U.S. today. These findings highlight some important points to consider for educators who wish to promote CBI and want to present it as a valid

alternative for mainstream FL educational programs. Primary among them is the need for teacher educators to acknowledge the complexity of the type of change CBI requires. Indeed, the multiple struggles experienced by teachers throughout their attempts to learn to teach with CBI as documented here clearly illustrate this complexity.

Knowledge of the limitations imposed on FL teachers' practice in most conventional programs indicate that, for the most part, they are required to utilize textbook curricula based upon language-focused and language-driven teaching approaches (e.g., communicative, notional-functional). As a consequence, FL teachers are used to thinking about planning in terms of using short chapters from textbooks that are based on grammar, notions and functions, or speech acts. Content treatment in such texts consists typically of sequences of unconnected topics or themes that superficially contextualize the grammatical forms (Walz, 1989). Conventional university-based licensure programs designed to prepare teachers to utilize such curricular materials as well as teachers' own experience as learners in traditional language programs further reinforce the notion that the methods proposed by commercial textbook packages are optimal and should, therefore, remain central to the FL teaching trade. Considering this, the *struggle to let go* is quite understandable and comes as no real surprise; rather, it is the *depth* of teachers' struggle that is of utmost significance here and which, I argue, can inform teacher educators interested in helping teachers explore instructional paths less traveled by.

What the findings of this study have clearly brought to light is the fact that learning CBI is, in essence, a revolutionary shift from what is advocated in conventional practice. As such, learning CBI represents more than the study of an approach, method, and accompanying techniques; rather, it requires teachers to engage in introspective work as well as confront their own beliefs regarding the teaching and learning of foreign languages. It is this particular aspect of the learning experience that seems to be the major cause of the various struggles teachers face during their learning experience. In this regard, the findings of this study are also consistent with the body of literature related to research on teacher beliefs and teacher change, which underscores the importance of the relationships between teachers' beliefs and instructional practices and points to the impact of teachers' beliefs in implementing curricular change and educational reforms (e.g., Allen, 2007; Richardson & Placier, 2001; Williams & Burden, 1997, to name only a few). As Williams and Burden (1997) note, "teachers' deep-rooted beliefs about how languages are learned will pervade their classrooms actions more than a particular methodology they are told to adopt or coursebook they follow" (p. 57). In a similar way, Allen (2007), commenting on the slow pace of change in teachers' practice since the publication of the national standards in 1996, whose core goals are in harmony with those fostered by CBI and whose framework has been widely adopted by most states, points out that "[u]nless teachers' own theories of learning match the theories upon which the innovation is based, it is not likely that the teachers will implement the change in a manner that is consistent with the innovation's theoretical framework" (p. 45).

As it is the case for the adoption of standard-based curricula, this study's findings suggest that learning CBI requires that experienced teachers who are working in conventional instructional environments reconsider their primary role as language

teachers. As the findings illustrate, the questioning of teachers' professional identity begins with their need to break away from the textbook curriculum, which in essence means revisiting their beliefs about how languages are learned and what their role is as language teachers. This move provokes teachers to consider essential questions regarding their practice and their identity as professionals such as: What does it really mean to be an *effective* language teacher? Can I and should I be both a language and a content teacher? Is it my role to teach more than "language"? Am I still going to be an *effective* language teacher if I teach content as well?

The incompatibility between teachers' existing practice and the requirements of CBI helps teachers to become aware of their own professional identity as they must (re)consider their taken-for-granted everyday instructional practice in the process. The questioning of one's own practice and underlying beliefs that results from the study of a drastically different way of conceiving practice pulls teachers out of their *zone of instructional comfort* (Rymes, 2004) and opens them up to a world of previously unforeseen possibilities. Learning CBI for traditional FL teachers is, therefore, an activity that can be characterized as having a high level of *cognitive dissonance* (Thompson & Zeuli, 1999). Such learning experiences have the potential to raise teachers' awareness of their practice because, as Thompson and Zeuli (1999) argue, they can disturb in some fundamental way teachers' beliefs and, as a result, "provoke a transformation in teachers about knowledge, learning, and teaching" (p. 355) that would otherwise unlikely occur without this intervention. The teachers' struggle to let go of their existing beliefs clearly depicted in the research findings is an illustration of the potential that the CBI learning experience affords when it comes to stimulating teachers' awareness.

However, if learning experiences with high cognitive dissonance such as CBI can lead teachers to become more aware of their identity as professionals and better able to reflect on their practice, it remains that, if not well negotiated, such learning experiences can also lead teachers to reject what may appear to them as a type of curricular indoctrination (Boote, 2001). Teachers' search for opportunities to develop as professional educators often presents them with great difficulties that may constrain or hinder their learning attempts. In this particular case, difficulties are manifold and include, among others, teachers' difficulties in reconciling the work CBI calls for with the language teaching mission they believe must remain primary, difficulties in straying away from a certain level of instructional comfort inherited from years of teaching experience, and difficulties in grasping the true meaning of contextualized, content-based language instruction. Such difficulties may lead teachers to engage in conflicts whose outcomes can vary greatly as "[t]eachers may view their engaging in conflict in a negative or constructive way" (Grimmett & Neufeld, 1994, p. 3). Therefore, teacher development work must ensure that the scaffolds in place can effectively accompany teachers throughout their experience of learning CBI so that the conflicts they experience in the form of challenges to their existing practice and professional identity can be lived as a meaningful and worthy adventure.

LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

This study had limitations that most likely impacted the nature of the findings presented in this report. As the aim of phenomenological inquiry is to explore the nature of human lived experiences and, more precisely, describe the essential characteristics that define a particular lived experience under scrutiny, participants must be carefully selected so as to ensure that they have had that same experience and can, thus, share it with others. As a result, I recruited participants that shared the same CBI learning experience because they were once enrolled in the PD program described earlier. Although this choice allowed me to conduct this phenomenological study, it also inevitably narrowed the phenomenological lens to an exploration of the CBI learning experience within a specific instructional context. The result is a much narrower focus than that of a typical phenomenological study, as it has led me to explore and describe teachers' CBI learning experience within the particular context of the PD program rather than considering CBI learning in general (regardless of the PD experience). This brings me to reflect on the impact that such a choice might have had on the findings with regards to the potential use of the CBI approach within conventional secondary and post-secondary programs.

It should be noted that the constraints imposed by the nature of the PD program itself most likely impacted students' experience and should, thus, be acknowledged. Among the constraints that might have complicated the teachers' overall CBI learning experience, I include a lack of opportunities for teachers to observe CBI in practice. As CBI is so rarely implemented within conventional instructional contexts there are limited opportunities for teachers to observe its use in the classroom. The PD program tried to remedy this issue by making previous curriculum projects available to newer cohorts via a freely accessible, online platform and by identifying stellar models so as to give the teachers an idea of what effective CBI curricular materials might look like. Nevertheless, such materials cannot replace the lack of more concrete models of CBI in practice via live observation or videos. Another related constraint imposed by the nature of the PD was the absence of an implementation phase followed by a debriefing wherein teachers could have tried CBI on their own and then reflected on their experience with an opportunity for feedback and mentoring. In addition, because the PD program was designed mostly for in-service practicing teachers, it provided an intensive curricular development session during the summer when teachers would have the time necessary to develop original CBI curricula. Although there were three follow-up sessions scheduled throughout the year (fall, winter, spring), these were not lengthy enough to allow for more than quick checkups and troubleshooting as well as additional instruction involving the design of effective CBI curricular units. As a result, very few teachers actually moved from the curricular design phase (the focus of the PD program) to actual implementation, a phase in the learning process that is essential if they are to fully understand and appropriate the new curricular framework. This limitation can partly explain why some teachers still struggled with what CBI might look like in practice and how they could use it within their own instructional settings even though they understood the basic principles and were able to design curriculum. In a nutshell the process remained abstract for them and never became concrete, which inevitably influenced the CBI learning experience.

Although the findings of this study should be interpreted with the aforementioned limitations in mind, they provide much food for thought when it comes to identifying key issues in the learning process of experienced teachers desiring to explore curricular alternatives. The following section will underscore some aspects of the findings that I believe are very useful to the field of FL teacher education in general, and to teacher educators (like myself) who strongly believe in the potential of meaning-based approaches and who advocate for a transition toward such educational models.

WHERE SHOULD WE GO FROM HERE?

Using the findings of this study to inform professional development practice aimed at helping teachers to integrate the core CBI principles and implement CBI in mainstream language programs leads me to make several propositions. These may help resolve some of the issues brought to light with regard to teachers' struggles and may help guide them toward more content-based, meaning-oriented curricula.

In order to facilitate teachers' understanding of the CBI approach, I argue that more emphasis needs to be given to clarify what truly contextualized language instruction means at the task level and how it can be operationalized in the FL classroom (see CBI core principle 3). In addition to work at the macro curricular level (e.g., development of CBI curricular maps, units, and lessons), the findings of this study underscore the need for teachers to engage in deeper curricular analysis at the micro level (the task and activity level) so that they may develop a deeper awareness of how their existing practice could be modified to accommodate CBI. This implies engaging teachers in an exploration of what makes a CBI task what it is (i.e., structure, components, the ways in which content and language instruction are woven together). Activities that may deepen teachers' awareness may include, but are not limited to, 1) building from what teachers already *know*, *believe in*, and *do* by asking them to transform non-CBI tasks into qualifying ones and then asking them to reflect on the potential impact of such change on practice, 2) exploring varied ways in which language instruction can be meaningfully contextualized at the task level by asking teachers to deconstruct activities that have been identified as particularly effective in this domain and, later, asking them to compare these tasks with the ones they commonly use in their own practice, and 3) developing teachers' overall sense of awareness and autonomy by requiring them to utilize sets of criteria specifically designed to assess the *CBI-ness* of developed CBI curricular materials and later critically reflect on their findings (i.e., assess appropriateness of texts/tasks, consider conceptual and linguistic sequencing of tasks at the lesson level). This last proposition is essential because, as Huang and Morgan (2003) note, even though teachers may understand and believe in the inseparable relationship between language and content, their actual practice might not align with and reflect this. Thus, scaffolds must be in place to help teachers develop an awareness of the gap that may exist between their own teaching philosophy and their teaching *prejudices* embedded within their actual practice. Only then, I believe, will FL teachers in conventional contexts where language is the primary goal of instruction be able to really appropriate CBI.

Among the many difficulties teachers face when attempting to plan CBI curriculum, and that the findings of this study clearly underscore, is the challenge to identify specific language to teach in the context of content instruction as well as identify ways to integrate language that teachers *believe* or *know* must be taught (e.g., language required by an imposed syllabus or assessments). Another connected challenge is the difficulty for teachers to plan content exploration and task complexity so as to align instruction with learners' cognitive and linguistic abilities (see CBI core principle 4). The integration of complex content into the language curriculum introduces a new layer of instructional complexity and blurs teachers' vision as to what language needs to be taught in the context of content teaching. It challenges in many ways teachers' ability to frame instruction within learners' zones of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wells, 1999).

As CBI fosters the integration of meaningful authentic content and tasks in the FL classroom, and because the similar missions highlighted by the MLA report and the European Council call for the integration of such content, it ensues that CBI curricular units tend to require learners to utilize higher level thinking skills than typically required in conventional FL programs (e.g., a focus on complex cultural content associated with in-depth exploration, such as the study of perspectives underlying essential cultural practices). The crux of the issue for FL teachers that want to implement CBI so that it supports the development of translingual and transcultural competence is to realize that the cognitive complexity of a task, as evidenced by the type of thinking skills that it calls into play, has a direct impact on the degree of linguistic engagement required of learners (see CBI core principle 5). Thus, a task that asks students to make judgments or to evaluate as it is commonly found in a learner-centered approach also demands that learners utilize complex language in order to perform the task successfully (i.e., to be able to criticize, debate, argue, make recommendations, etc.). Since learners' successful performance is directly connected to their ability to perform linguistically, it is essential for teachers to realize that, as task complexity increases, learners will need increasingly more elaborate scaffolds. This is especially true if learners (even those with a lower proficiency) are to engage in more meaningful and authentic tasks in the FL classroom, a central aim of CBI, which perfectly aligns with reforms that aim at the development of competencies that would enable FL education to take an active role in learners' overall intellectual development (MLA, 2007).

The findings of this study reveal that one of the principal difficulties teachers experience while weaving complex, authentic materials into their curriculum is to assess the right level of linguistic and conceptual complexity for their students to tackle; FL teachers typically rely on textbooks to prescribe increasingly challenging linguistic content and thus are usually not experts at gauging how to bring learners to higher levels of content and linguistic sophistication by themselves. As argued earlier, being able to find the appropriate difficulty level is, nevertheless, essential for teachers to ensure that instructional aims are not set too far ahead of learners' development, that is, away from their ZPD. This is important because there is a complexity threshold where the potential of scaffolding (be it verbal, procedural, or instructional) is neutralized and where learners cannot benefit from it any longer. In other words, complexity can no longer be mediated by language and interaction with more capable peers (see CBI core principle 6). Thus, one helpful lesson which can be

learned from the findings of this study is that FL teachers that want to learn how to implement CBI need a concrete framework to guide them to identify an appropriate level of linguistic-conceptual complexity so that they can not only begin to develop an awareness of the interrelationship between cognitive and linguistic demands, but also ensure that instruction remains within the boundaries of their students' ZPDs as they integrate and utilize complex authentic texts and tasks.

One example of such an instructional scaffold that I created helps FL teachers identify, in an initial phase, the specific content that they want learners to explore along with the level of cognitive engagement that they expect from their students as they tackle this particular content. In a later phase, teachers are to utilize another scaffold for creating language objectives (developed by Fortune, 2002), which guides them in zoning in on/eliciting critical language functions, grammatical structures, and vocabulary items that need to be integrated with the content at the particular level of cognitive engagement defined by the task itself. The use of such scaffolds allows teachers to see the direct connection between content and task complexity as well as to develop an awareness of how language preparation is a sine-qua-non condition to any content exploration. The use of such scaffolds, I argue, is also necessary if teachers are to successfully develop the skills they need to be able to quickly evaluate what language their students need to tap into and use in order to manipulate selected content (see CBI core principles 2 and 5).

Other scaffolds such as the one proposed by Snow et al. (1989) can also guide teachers in the identification of appropriate *compatible* language so that they may find ways to continue to integrate the specific language they are required to teach. Combining the use of instructional scaffolds to help teachers gauge task complexity in terms of conceptual and cognitive demand and the use of Snow et al.'s framework to help them tease out essential and compatible linguistic features to focus on during CBI implementation, would go a long way in easing teachers' anxiety to operate without the support of the textbook, which was revealed in this study as a major impediment to teachers' CBI learning experience.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is clear that today the field of FL education is in the midst of an important paradigm shift, a transition fueled by the awareness that FL education offers the potential not only to help learners develop linguistically but also, and probably more importantly, help them develop essential thinking and discourse skills necessary for them to thrive in increasingly complex 21st century communities that are multiethnic, multilingual, and multicultural. The call for change in the field that the recent MLA report clarifies is, in essence, a call for a type of contextualized language instruction capable of stimulating students' (critical) thinking skills while helping them develop proficiency in the target language. This goal perfectly aligns with the mission that meaning-based curricular approaches such as CBI foster. Although this paradigm shift has been discussed for decades in the field, little has changed in the FL language classroom. Those agreeing that FL education as a discipline could and should play a much more important role within the lives of 21st century learners have, therefore,

the right to ask: What will it take for the field to complete its long awaited paradigm shift?

In this study I attempted to tackle this question by exploring FL teachers' lived-experience of trying to learn CBI, a curricular approach consistent with the aforementioned recent calls for change. The exploration of traditional FL teachers' experience of learning CBI exposes this process as a complex undertaking that *reformists* (be they teacher educators, FL educators, scholars) need to better understand if they are to successfully transform the field. Consistent with the findings of a previous study (Cammarata, 2009), this study illustrates how FL teachers' attempt to make content instruction an integral part of their everyday language teaching practice can result in a difficult psychological confrontation. This confrontation, originating from teachers' need to learn how to do things in a drastically different way, demands that they re-conceptualize the nature of their trade; in essence, it engages them in a struggle to explore, rearrange, and even reformat preconceived notions regarding language teaching and learning. The fact that similar themes have emerged from both studies exploring teachers' lived experience of learning CBI adds strength to the validity of the original findings and robustness to the two studies. This new exploration provides, nevertheless, a much richer description of teachers' actual experience of attempting to weave academic/cultural content into the FL curriculum as well as a much richer account of the nature of their struggle during that process.

The findings of this study have, thus, underscored some additional important challenges that lie in the path of implementing CBI in conventional FL programs. This curricular reform can succeed only if we are able to find better ways to help teachers experience what integrated content and language learning looks and feels like in practice. Future research needs to be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the propositions made, which include:

- increasing work at the micro-level of curriculum development;
- using instructional scaffolds to help teachers better understand the connection between language and cognition, and help them tease out core language demands made by subject matter and tasks selected for instruction.

Also important, I argue, future research should explore the potential of using interactive multimedia cases and hypermedia environments to support teachers' learning of CBI. Such materials could help immerse teachers in CBI classroom environments and, thus, expose them to best practices within that context.

Finally, it is important to note that teachers are only one link in the chain of change and that CBI's call for curricular reform will succeed only if important school-based reforms are in place to support teachers. Such reforms will need to acknowledge teachers' agency and rights to appropriate curricular matters, promote their attempts at manipulating curricular content, and support their efforts as they begin to explore alternative ways of defining and teaching language and language use. Research should be conducted to further our understanding of how current policies and visions as well as public school constraints impact teachers' desires to explore

new instructional possibilities supportive of the development of *trans-lingual* and *trans-cultural competence*.

NOTES

[1] I am grateful to Diane Tedick and Linda Harklau for the insightful comments and feedback they provided on an earlier draft of this manuscript.

[2] Drip-feed is a label attributed to language programs where FLs are offered as one subject matter in the curriculum in the same way mathematics or science subjects are (Baker, 2006). The terms "conventional" or "traditional" FL programs also refer to instructional contexts where language is offered as a subject matter and where the curriculum is largely textbook- and grammar-driven. These terms will be used interchangeably throughout the article to describe FL programs commonly found in mainstream schooling.

[3] For a detailed description of the project and research associated with it, consult the Georgetown German Department official website at:
http://www1.georgetown.edu/departments/german/programs/undergraduate/curriculum/

[4] An overview of current research on CLIL is freely accessible online via the Vienna English Working Papers (VIEWS) venue (see special issues volume 15(3), 2006 & volume 16(3), 2007) at:
http://www.univie.ac.at/Anglistik/ang_new/online_papers/views.html

[5] This study was not designed as an evaluation of the professional development program. The program simply allowed me to identify teachers who had shared the same professional development experience, an experience this study endeavored to explore and describe.

[6] Phenomenological inquiry departs in many ways from more commonly used descriptive or interpretive research approaches. It is impossible to appropriately introduce phenomenology as a research approach within the space allocated in peer-reviewed journals. For a detailed discussion of key concepts that pertain to this research approach such as reduction, lifeworld theory, natural versus phenomenological attitude, openness, and more consult Dahlberg *et al.* (2008), who propose one of the most concise and clear introductions to lifeword research available to date. Moran (2000) and van Manen's (1997) works also provide good introductions to phenomenological inquiry.

[7] I am indebted to the four teachers who agreed to participate in this study, without their support and willingness to share this study would not have been possible.

[8] Although journal entries were used in the data collection process as a trigger to jump-start interviews and used as part of the data in the complete original report (Cammarata, 2006), no journal sections were included in this particular report.

[9] The current paper departs from conventional phenomenological reports in various ways to align with space limitations: the report of the findings merges description and interpretation into one narrative and only concentrates on aspects of the findings whose implications, it is felt, are most likely to inform teacher educators. Thus, the report focuses only on teachers' experience of struggle learning CBI. There are important implications associated with these choices, one of which is the fact that the report, in its present form, does not align with typical practice in phenomenology and does not qualify as a phenomenological report produced in lifeworld research. A more purely phenomenological analysis and reporting were conducted prior to crafting this manuscript. For a complete report, readers are invited to consult: Cammarata (2006).

[10] Because the focus in phenomenological inquiry is on *experience* and not the subjects themselves, quotations are not usually attributed to specific individuals. The source of each quote has, nevertheless, been labeled according to the following coding scheme in order to facilitate retrieval of the voices they

belong to if need be: P# 1-4 (for participant), INT# 1 or 2 (for interview session).

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Appendix A: "Description of teachers' experience of learning to teach using CBI"

Adapted from material originally developed by van Manen (1997, 2003)

Description of the task:

The objective of this brief written account you are being asked to write is *to recall in writing an episode of your CBI learning experience* as you lived through it. Select an episode of your experience *that still remains vivid in your memory and try to describe it in as* concrete terms as you possibly can. To that end, avoid as much as possible introductions, rationalizations, causal explanations, generalizations, or interpretations. As well, avoid trying to embellish your writing or creating a short story plot in a literary sense.

The description can be long or short and there does not have to be a beginning, a middle, and an ending. Here are some guidelines that you might want to follow to describe a particular learning experience to teach you have selected to share with me:

- Try to think of a particular event or situation, a single occasion where you where involved in learning to teach with CBI. Try to recall one moment that still stands out in your memory for its vividness or as it happened.

- Try to describe from the inside almost like a state of mind, a mood, a feelings, emotions. You might even want to try to write it in the present as it might help you provide a more vivid account.

- If appropriate, start with a bodily experience, how you felt physically, how things felt, sounded, etc.

- You may also want to attend to the way that space, time, or other people were experienced (the place where the learning experience occurred, etc.).

- Finally, do not attempt to beautify your description with poetic phrases, but rather aim to render a simple description of the experience of learning to teach with CBI as you lived through it.

Feel free to write as much or as little as you want in whatever style you feel most comfortable with.

Appendix B: "Example of Interview Questions"

The following list provides an example of the type of questions that were asked to participants in order to elicit rich descriptions of their experience of learning to teach with CBI:

- Could you tell me a little about what you wrote in your journal entry: Why did you select this particular episode? Why do you consider this a pivotal moment to share?
- Are there any anecdotes or stories that you could share with me that would best describe your CBI learning experience?
- Is there a particular moment during your learning experience that stands out, a moment that still remains vivid in your memory? Can you try to describe this to me as concretely as you can?
- What it is really like to learn CBI for you/from your own perspective? Is this experience similar or distinct from others you've had in the past? How?
- Can you remember the place you were at, how you felt, the atmosphere during those moments you were engaged in learning CBI? Try to describe these to me as if you were there at this precise moment.

Examples of follow-up questions:

- Could you tell me more about X?

- What does X really mean to you?

- Could you give me a precise example/illustration of X?

- Could you try to describe X more concretely?