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Abstract

Scripted instruction (SI) programs, which direct teachers to teach, even to talk, from a standardized written script, are roundly criticized for inhibiting teacher creativity and teacher learning. In fact, such programs utilize scripting for exactly that reason: to reduce teacher interference with (and presumed weakening of) the prescribed curriculum and its delivery. Yet, two teachers in this 18-month study reported learning much about language and language teaching from scripted instruction programs. Through a sociocultural lens, this article explores how an instructional program so widely decried as de-professionalizing instead became a catalyst for these teachers' professional growth. Exploring the teachers' reasoning about adopting the program and their day-to-day experiences teaching by script yielded new insight into how the language teachers used the script as a meditational tool for their own teacher learning. These teachers' cases underscore the need for formal teacher education to articulate with how teachers learn and to advance teacher development toward adaptive teaching expertise.

Keywords
Sociocultural theory; Scripted instruction; Teacher learning; Language teacher education

Introduction

At first glance, what we might learn about teacher learning through teachers' use of scripted instruction appears to be very limited. After all, scripted instruction (SI) directs teachers to teach, even to talk, from standardized, written scripts, which allow teachers virtually no latitude to make their own instructional decisions. Teachers' thinking about students, content, and pedagogy is obscured, if not outright discouraged, when their every move is directed by a script. Yet, despite the view of SI, as 'an insult to the talents and professional abilities of teachers' (Milosovic, 2007, p. 29), SI functioned as a genuine professional development tool for the two high school English as a second language (ESL) teachers in the 18-month study reported here. In these teachers' cases, teaching by script opened insight into the English language and introduced the teachers to new pedagogical strategies. Analysis of their cases reveals that SI provided the teachers a compelling example of instruction crafted by external experts with whom the teachers were able to engage in dialogue, albeit a lopsidedly one-sided dialogue. Through examination of this dialogue between teacher and script — including the teachers' reasoning about adopting the program and their day-to-day experiences teaching by script — this report details how SI, widely decried as de-professionalizing, instead became a catalyst for these two teachers' professional growth.

Scripted Instruction

Adoption of scripted instruction programs in US school districts is on the rise, as it is in classrooms throughout the world. These programs, which require teachers to deliver instruction by reading and acting from the textbook publisher's pre-written script (see excerpt below), have become increasingly popular in districts looking for ways to raise low standardized test scores. Not coincidentally, many of the school districts adopting SI are also those with new and/or large English language learner (ELL) populations. In my own state, Nebraska, nearly 12% of school districts use SI in at least one content area (Dejka, 2009), with SI in reading/literacy classrooms predominating. Adoption of scripted programs is not a regional but a national trend. Scripted reading instruction was mandated beginning in 1997 for all low performing schools in New York City (with the multi-book textbook and workbook series *Success for All*) and the Los Angeles Unified School District in 1999 (mandating the course series *Open Court*) (Sawyer, 2004; Milosovic, 2007). An estimated one in eight California schools uses a scripted reading program (Milosovic, 2007). The trend is clear: an increasing number of ELL teachers are delivering English literacy instruction through SI.

SI program developers tout the programs' documented history of raising low test scores (Kirby, 2007), a history that is attractive to schools at risk of being labeled 'failing' within the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) school rating scheme. Such a designation could lead to restructuring or eventual closure of the school. To avoid this undesirable circumstance, low performing schools look for reform that can raise student achievement quickly, and many find a promising solution in SI, which has some compelling, though contested, research findings to support its claims of efficacy (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007).

As mentioned above, when instruction is 'scripted,' teachers teach using a script, which directs their speech and actions. A sample from an SI text is illustrative. The following is a script sample from *Corrective Reading* (SRA/McGraw Hill, 2009a), an SI literacy program consisting of a series of textbooks and workbooks used by the teachers in the study reported in this article. In this excerpt, the words the teacher is to say are presented in plain and bold type. The teachers' actions are directed by the commands in parentheses, and student responses are presented in italics. Teachers are to repeat their words and actions until students respond correctly and in unison upon the teacher's signal, typically a snap of their fingers or clap of their hands.

Task A: Irregular Words (SRA/McGraw Hill, 2009a, p. 195)
1. Touch the first word in Part 3. [Visually confirm that all students are touching 'Emma.']
2. That word is **Emma**. What word?
 (Signal.) *Emma.*
• Spell **Emma**. (Signal for each letter.)
 E-M-M-A.
• What word? (Signal.) *Emma.*
3. The next word is **anyone**. What word?
 (Signal.) *Anyone.*

• Spell **anyone**. (Signal for each letter.)
 A-N-Y-O-N-E.
• What word? (Signal.) *Anyone.*

SI is influenced strongly by behaviorist learning theory, which is marked by an emphasis on repetition and micro to macro skill-building. In a behavioral approach to teaching and learning, micro skills such as spelling (above) or decoding of words letter by letter are practiced and perfected as stepping stones to macro skills such as writing paragraphs or reading long passages. In a behaviorist paradigm, instruction progresses in a logical, step-by-step process from micro skill to macro skill, a process that is tightly controlled by the teacher or curriculum expert. This stands in contrast to learning theories (e.g. constructivism) that emphasize a holistic approach in which gaining the gist and conveying meaning (over, but not necessarily at the expense of, enabling micro skills such as spelling) takes precedence. Opponents of SI point out that gains in student achievement are, in fact, limited to micro skills and gains in literacy as a whole are not documented (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007; Duncan-Owens, 2009).

Language from a behaviorist point of view — as in the above SI text — is portrayed as a complex but fixed system of structures. As a content area, language can be deconstructed into its component parts, and language learners are to master these parts one-by-one in order to gain proficiency. Notably, the stability in language embedded within the behaviorist paradigm has been vigorously challenged in recent linguistic and language teaching scholarship wherein language is understood as dynamic (Firth & Wagner 1997; Gee, 2004; Lantolf & Johnson, 2007).

As a result of SI's focus on step-by-step progression through micro skills, the texts and reading sample of SI showcase the targeted skill, which often produces decontextualized readings on topics chosen more for convenience than student interest. Commeyras (2007), a teacher educator observing an SI literacy lesson noted, 'I thought the text bizarre. It was about the adventures of a fly' (p. 405). This lack of connection between classroom curricula and students' lives and interests, Fang et al. (2004) argue, 'increases children's disengagement with school-based tasks and results in less overall learning for them' (Fang et al., 2004, p. 58). Similarly, Hassett (2008) analysed text from the scripted instruction program *Reading mastery* and found that '[t]he lack of complexity in the stories' simple plotlines, if we can even call them that, reduces the chance of activating prior knowledge, determining important themes, or forming significant questions about ourselves and our worlds — all basic comprehension strategies' (p. 311). Therefore, while gains in reading scores have been documented in scripted literacy programs, these gains may be accomplished at the expense of comprehensive literacy, student engagement with literacy, and even their engagement with school.

While the effect of SI on student achievement continues to be debated, opinion of SI's benefit to teachers and to teaching as a profession has trended strongly toward the negative. SI is portrayed as an 'attack' (Milosovic, 2007, p. 28) on teachers and as placing teachers 'on the level of deskilled technicians' (Hassett, 2008, p. 296). Teachers, it is argued, are disallowed to utilize their own knowledge resources when required

to deliver instruction via an external script. 'Scripted teacher-proof curricula do not rely either on teachers' creative potential or their subject matter expertise; the message of these programs seems to be if you can perform well from a script, you can teach' (Sawyer, 2004, p. 12). In fact, SI programs use scripting for exactly that reason: to reduce teacher interference with (and presumed weakening of) the prescribed curriculum and its delivery. The use of a standardization mechanism like scripting suggests that SI developers believe there is either too much variability in teacher performance to ensure quality of instruction across classrooms or that teachers simply do not possess the expertise they need to teach well. Thus, curricula are 'teacher-proofed.'

Further evidence of the deleterious effect of SI on teaching highlights the programs' presumed stunting of teacher development. Fang et al. (2004) argue that a pre-packaged curriculum 'undermines teacher morale and inhibits their development of professional expertise and wisdom' (p. 58). Particularly in situations in which SI programs are mandated against teachers' will (rather than adopted voluntarily by teachers), teacher morale may fall (Hamann, 2003). Resignations and early retirements have followed in the wake of mandated SI reading programs, and a teacher interviewed by Milosovic (2007) felt SI to be 'an insult' (p. 29) on his teaching abilities. The rigid standardization procedures of SI programs — those that limit teacher input into texts, topics, and even teachers' own voice and actions — can, indeed, be demoralizing for teachers. Demoralized teachers who feel their knowledge and expertise are unwanted and unnecessary are not likely to view SI as a tool for their own professional development, whether or not the programs have the potential to encourage teacher learning or develop teaching expertise.

A Sociocultural View of Teacher Learning

From a sociocultural perspective, teacher learning is characterized as 'the progressive movement from externally, socially mediated activities to internal mediation controlled by the individual teacher' (Johnson, 2009, p. 17). Teachers, for example, may internalize elements of externally guided activities such as co-teaching with a more experienced teacher or following the instructional advice given in a teacher's manual. Teachers gain increasing control over their own activity, taking ownership of 'what works' by developing a conceptual map for teaching, which, in essence, allows them to shortcut (with efficiency and innovation) decision-making. This conceptual map is quite similar to the concept of 'adaptive expertise', a term employed by Bransford et al. (2005) to describe an expert teacher's utilization of creativity, flexibility, and a depth of knowledge (in content, pedagogy, and context) in their teaching practice. Hammerness et al. (2005, p. 362) provide an illustrative example of adaptive expertise in practice:

[Let's] assume that a student in a classroom generates an answer to a math word problem that is novel for a particular teacher. If the teacher is able efficiently to predict and understand the range of other answers given by student in the class, it becomes possible to think creatively about the novel answer and figure how and why the student might have generated it.

Teacher learning, then, is the development of a rich, complex knowledge base — alternately described as a map or an expertise — that is both socially mediated and uniquely individual as each teacher learns within their own particular, overlapping ecologies.

Development of adaptive expertise or a conceptual map for teaching requires a teaching and learning space that invites teachers to inquire and improvise, to reason about instruction. Sawyer (2004) writes of expert teaching as disciplined improvisation, wherein teachers plan instruction using their knowledge of content, students, and context while simultaneously opening space for improvisation around that plan, space that invites digression and the 'collaborative emergence' of learning. As disciplined improvisers, 'teachers locally improvise within an overall global structure' (Sawyer, 2004, p. 16). Similarly, development of teachers' conceptual knowledge of teaching requires a space for internalization,

> a process through which a person's activity is initially mediated by other people or cultural artifacts but later comes to be controlled by him/herself as he or she appropriates and reconstructs resources to regulate his or her own activities. (Johnson, 2009, p. 18)

Within a sociocultural perspective on teacher learning, SI programs would predictably restrict teacher development because:

1. teachers interact almost exclusively with a non-responsive script and this limits teachers' opportunity for dialogic mediation;
2. the tight controls on teachers' talk and actions during SI inhibit teachers' ability to improvise; and
3. the script is not designed to turn over control of the activity of teaching to teachers, which keeps teachers bound to, rather than increasingly freed from, the meditational tool of the script.

Despite the stultifying effects SI programs ought to — and reportedly do — have on teachers' development, teachers in the 18-month study presented here testified to their own learning through the use of SI in the high school ELL classroom. In the remainder of this article, I pursue the answer to the question: What and how did two teachers learn from SI? I explore the circumstances of the teachers' adoption and use of the program, the nature of the teachers' learning with SI, and the implications their case holds for second language teacher education.

The Study

Sarah and Stephanie (pseudonyms) — two white, Center[1] English-speaking ESL teachers in a rural Midwestern US town of 6,000 people — reported learning about language and language teaching from the SI literacy programs they adopted in 2007. Sarah and Stephanie were participants in an 18-month ethnographic study of four secondary level ESL teachers in the rural school district.

Accepting the premise that teacher learning is normative and life-long, my purpose was to document, analyse, and interpret teacher development at the school site

through intensive and extended data collection including:

- classroom observation (yielding field notes and classroom transcripts);
- course/curriculum documents (e.g. lesson plans, textbook samples, and teachers' notes); and
- both long and informal interviews (also yielding field notes and transcripts).

The research task was a descriptive one, and I endeavored to understand the teachers' reasoning about their teaching practice and describe the nature of their development. Rather than viewing teacher development prescriptively (e.g. that teachers develop in a predictable, linear fashion and toward a particular expertise), I worked from a sociocultural orientation in which teacher development would necessarily be uneven and nonlinear, and that teaching expertise(s) would necessarily be various and situated. My purpose was to understand how these teachers reasoned and developed, and, in so doing, better understand the possibilities (but not the presumed eventualities) for how other teachers might also reason and develop.

In order to document teachers' development, I spent 18 months conversing with and observing the four study participants, two of whom are featured in this report. During each semester, participants sat for one or two long interviews and allowed three or four observations of their classroom. Observations lasted between 30 minutes and 3 hours each. Sarah participated in three long interviews (lasting 20, 25, and 45 minutes) as well as numerous informal interviews. She allowed more than 15 hours of classroom observations at all levels of ESL instruction, including several levels of SI, intermediate through advanced ESL, and sheltered (ESL-student-only) math and science courses. Stephanie also participated in three long interviews (two of 20 minutes and one of 35 minutes) as well as numerous informal interviews. She opened her classroom to 14 hours of observation across the range of her ESL classes, which included several SI classes, beginning through intermediate ESL, and a sheltered (ESL-student-only) social studies course. During observations, I scripted the action and dialogue of the class, using an audio recorder to assist me in recreating verbatim dialogue. I also audiotaped and transcribed our formal interviews.

Borrowing from Riessmann's (2002) model for building validity in narrative analysis, I employed three tools to bolster my trustworthiness as a collector, analyser, and interpreter of the data: persuasiveness, correspondence, and coherence. Persuasively, I provide narrative data and field notes to demonstrate the plausibility of my analysis and interpretation. Throughout the study I sought correspondence by checking that my data representations were recognizable to participants, even when our analyses of my findings differed. In my interpretation of the data, I worked toward coherence of themes that appeared not just in one data source (e.g. one interview) but in multiple data sources (e.g. across interviews and within field notes). Through iterative readings of data, I identified the recurring themes and continued, throughout the study, to look for supporting (and contradicting) evidence.

The Adoption of Scripted Instruction

In the year previous to the study — and to Stephanie's arrival at the school — Sarah decided to adopt a scripted program, SRA/McGraw Hill's *Corrective Reading*, for the reading instruction of all high school English language learners (ELLs) in the 2007-08 academic year. After three semesters of scripted reading instruction, both Sarah and Stephanie were satisfied with the program and decided to convert another course (ESL writing) to SI (using SRA McGraw Hill's scripted writing program *Reasoning and Writing*) beginning in January 2009. The script served as an external expert for Sarah and Stephanie and provided them with a model for second language instruction that both participants, initially, found compelling. As if the script were, in fact, a more knowledgeable peer, the teachers modeled their instruction on it and engaged in dialogue with it, albeit a one-way dialogue. In light of most of the scholarship regarding SI, Sarah and Stephanie gave SI a surprisingly warm reception. Considering the teachers, their context, and the script from a sociocultural perspective, however, the teachers' warm reception of the scripted program is not so surprising.

Sarah and Stephanie both began their teaching careers in the Athens High School ESL program. Both also came to teaching ESL rather unintentionally, adding an ESL endorsement to initial teaching certifications in secondary mathematics (Sarah) and middle school English and social studies (Stephanie). At the onset of the study, Sarah was in the middle of her sixth year of teaching and Stephanie was halfway through her first.

Athens, a pseudonym for a rural Midwestern town of approximately 6,000 residents, experienced a dramatic increase in its population of Latino newcomers in the 1990s and early 2000s as families, primarily from Mexico and Guatemala, moved within the school's catchment zone to work at nearby meat-packing and pet-food plants. During the decade between the 1997-98 school year and the inception of the study in 2007-2008, the district's Hispanic population rose from 87 students to 660. District-wide, just over 300 students were identified as ELLs in the 2007-08 school year, with 46 in the high school (9.5% of high school enrollment). As a whole, the ELLs in the school district fared much worse in most academic achievement indicators (e.g. standardized test scores, graduation rate, and college attendance) than their English proficient peers.

Sarah's initial decision to begin scripted reading instruction and the teachers' joint decision to add more SI 18 months later were informed by a variety of factors; primary factors among them were:

- the teachers' feelings of inadequacy as ESL teachers;
- the school district's focus on raising ELLs' test scores;
- the teachers' desire to mainstream ELLs more quickly (and thereby increase their chances for academic success); and
- the promise of SI to increase the rate of ELLs' English acquisition.

Both teachers initially prepared to teach content areas other than ESL. In her teacher education program, Sarah trained to teach secondary mathematics; Stephanie to teach middle school language arts and social studies. Within each of their programs,

both teachers added an ESL endorsement to increase their marketability as teachers, but neither expected (or initially desired) to become a full-time ESL teacher. Sarah said of her initial feelings as a full-time ESL teacher, 'Here I was a math teacher trying to teach reading' (field notes, November 25, 2008). Stephanie, a first-year teacher at the inception of the study, was 'overwhelmed' (interview, February 28, 2008, p. 2) by the six different lessons she had to prepare each day and welcomed the break from planning that SI offered her for one period per day, and later for three periods per day.

> [SI] is my crutch. This took away one period of planning for me, because I didn't have to do anything for it. I could just open the book and know where we are. I know what lesson we're on … It's the same thing over and over. Word attack; check out. Stories; check out. Workbook. Homework. And that's the same every single day. They [students] know. They grab their books; they sit down; they know where we're at; they open up. (Stephanie, interview, February 28, 2008 p. 2)

Although Stephanie did not participate in the decision to adopt the programs, she quickly became an advocate for increasing the SI program offerings to include a writing component.

> We're picking up more direct instruction because of how successful it is, and some of the research we've had coming back on it — that it really can help get an ELL student out of ELL and reading at an eighth grade reading level in three and a half years. So, that's what we need to move towards … if it benefits the students, that's what we need to do. (Stephanie, interview, October 28, 2008, p. 1)

Sarah, too, appreciated the structure that SI provided her instruction. She felt that her first years at Athens high school had been chaotic and her instruction ineffective.

> [The school administration] kind of said, well, you can do whatever you want with [the ESL curriculum], which is great to have the freedom, but you give that to two first-year teachers who have no experience and no mentor, and so it's like, 'okay' [skeptical laugh]. We learned a lot just on the fly … but we also had an explosion in our ELL numbers … so the curriculum has just never been established, especially as far as the reading. I have no background in it, so no input in there — I couldn't give input. That's definitely one thing we need to improve. (Sarah, interview, February 28, 2008, p. 3)

As novice teachers (even though Sarah was in her sixth year of teaching, she still considered herself a novice), Sarah and Stephanie felt inadequate. They had not developed the routines and improvisational flexibility that mark adaptive expertise, and they were acutely aware of their lack of expertise. They also felt external pressure from their district to mainstream ELLs faster and from their states' standardized testing regimen in order to raise ELLs' test scores.

One of the big things in our district right now is to figure out how to get our kids into mainstream classrooms faster. And specifically in our own district, our reading levels — the ELDA² scores on our kids — are the lowest, and writing is not too far behind. And so we're trying to, as an ELL team, figure out how we can raise those scores a lot faster knowing that it's going to create opportunities for them to go to mainstream classes sooner as well as succeed in those classes a lot faster. (Sarah, interview, February 28, 2008, p. 3)

When presented with SI, with its highly structured curriculum developed by — in the teachers' understanding — experts in reading and writing instruction, the teachers were impressed. They were also impressed by the SI consultant's claim that the program could raise students' reading level one or even two grades per year, and that with the SI programs even beginning ELLs could be fully mainstreamed in three and a half years. 'Well, you know, if that kind of progress can be made in that amount of time, we'd be doing a disservice to our kids if we didn't offer more of it' (Sarah, interview, November 11, 2008, p. 1). Considering the host of factors involved in the teachers' decisions to adopt and expand the SI programs, their warm welcome of SI is unsurprising. They sought structure for their teaching and external expertise, and they believed they had found it in SI. Their warm reception of SI set the stage for the teachers' earnest engagement with and learning from the scripts.

Script as Content and Instruction Expert

The SI programs served as a much-needed authority on the English language for Sarah and Stephanie. As native English speakers, both had an everyday understanding of English in which they could easily identify learners' errors, but both evidenced a limited understanding of how English was understood by their adolescent English learners. Stephanie, in particular, struggled to explain why English worked the way it did, frequently offering incomplete or even incorrect explanations to students. In the course 'Advanced newcomer writing' before the adoption of the writing SI program, Stephanie corrected the student utterance, ' My sister is courage for me,' by changing it to 'My sister has courage' (field notes, April 10, 2008, p. 1), advising the student only that Stephanie's sentence sounded better. In a lesson on compound sentences, Stephanie offered this rule-of-thumb explanation, 'How do you know if a sentence is a compound sentence? A compound sentence will have a conjunction' (field notes, April 30, 2008, p. 2), and she wrote two examples on the whiteboard to support the rule: *You want a car /and/ a dog. I like to eat ice cream /and/ chocolate* (field notes, April 30, 2008). Neither of these is a compound sentence, which must consist of two independent clauses and often — but not necessarily — joined with a conjunction.

The teachers evidenced an everyday knowledge of English that did not include a comprehensive, conceptual understanding of the language as it was experienced by their students. This inhibited their instruction and played a central role in Stephanie's sense of being 'overwhelmed' and Sarah's sense of her instruction as chaotic and inconsistent. With SI the teachers found an authority on the English language.

Not only was SI perceived as a content expert, but the teachers also received it as an expert model for second language instruction that gave Sarah and Stephanie new insight into English from a learner's perspective, even though the SI texts were not designed for ELLs specifically (*Corrective Reading* is designed to meet the needs of English proficient struggling readers). Sarah, for example, was impressed by the texts' presentation of how root words could be combined with suffixes and prefixes to create multiple parts of speech. The Comprehension B1 text required learners to make nouns, verbs, and adjectives from such words as *protect* and *modify* (e.g. *protection*, *protecting*, *protective*; *modification*, *modifying*, *modified*). Sarah's students did well on these root word tasks in their SI workbooks, and Sarah interpreted her students' workbook success as solid evidence of their English proficiency gains. Sarah was so impressed she exported this technique to her non-SI ESL classes.

The teachers encountered new curriculum ideas in SI such as:

• making analogies: e.g. 'Lazy is to indolent as complete is to *finish*' (SRA/Mc-Graw Hill, 2009b, p. 186); and
• making inference statements: e.g. 'Some planets have many moons. Saturn is a planet, so … *maybe Saturn has many moons*' (SRA/McGraw Hill, 2009b, p. 183).

Each considered these ideas innovative and effective for student learning. Sarah contrasted this innovation and efficiency with her previous, self-created curriculum. 'Overall [the previous curriculum] just wasn't, like, a consistent curriculum. So, there'd be gaps, or I never would have thought about putting in analogies; it wouldn't have crossed my mind to put that in' (interview, Sarah, November 11, 2008, p. 2).

The SI program's repetitive approach to language instruction also impressed both teachers. In most SI lessons there were exercises that required students to repeat answers as part of an extended drill and then to continue repetition until the entire class answered correctly in unison, a process Sarah described as 'hammering it and hammering it until they get it, whether they want to or not!' (field notes, Sarah, November 25, 2008, p. 1). Further, the teachers admired the way content was recycled from lesson to lesson, a revisiting of information that the teachers viewed as highly effective for student learning.

Because they continue to recycle these ideas, we've probably had eight or ten lessons in a row and, by the end of it, they were starting to really get the hang of it. And so that was good because things that I had done in the past, I probably wouldn't have hit eight or ten times until they had it. So, there's some good things about our DI [direct instruction] program that I wouldn't have had in the curriculum I was coming up with. (Sarah, interview, February 3, 2009, p. 3)

With SI, Sarah and Stephanie felt they could also see student learning better, and that student learning was easily and accurately measured in SI. The program utilized an elaborate points system to score students on all aspects of their work, including choral response, individual in-class work, and homework; both teachers initially ad-

opted the points scheme wholeheartedly. There were also lesson 'check-outs' (summary exercises) at the end of each lesson and periodic program-designed quizzes and exams. Student achievement with SI, the teachers believed, was also evident to the students themselves. Sarah observed that, 'the kids themselves can see themselves improving' (Sarah, interview, November 11, 2008, p. 1), and this, she felt, was motivating for the students to continue to engage with the curriculum.

In Dialogue with the Script

Sarah and Stephanie were not passive consumers of SI. Each engaged with the texts and actively evaluated their strengths and limitations. Each also gauged students' interaction with the new curricula and made occasional, minor supplements so the program was a better fit with their students (e.g. by pre-teaching vocabulary). The teachers' experience with SI was not the stultifying experience other teachers reported as they reasoned with and, in some instances, around the script.

Reasoning with the script led both teachers to recognize some minor flaws in the program. The teachers felt that the program, which was not designed specifically for ELLs, needed to be supplemented with grammar mini-lessons or vocabulary pre-teaching in order to be a better fit for their students. The texts, also, did not expose ELLs to a variety of verb tenses, instead heavily using the simple past or past progressive.

> We're on lesson 41 tomorrow of 55 and [the past tense] is all that my kids are expected to know [this semester], and that's not enough for my kids at all. So, I'm like, okay, maybe the next book. But, the next book focuses on only the past tense verbs, too, and I'm like, 'Where's the progressive? Where's the future tense?' So, all my kids can only write is in past tense? (interview, Stephanie, February 9, 2009, pp. 1-2)

Stephanie actively questioned the program's exclusive presentation of past tense verbs, noting her students' need to use a variety of tenses.

The teachers' dialogue with the script (their thinking with and around the script) was decidedly one-sided, wherein the script directed the teachers' instruction yet was unresponsive to their queries and challenges. Largely, the teachers did not challenge the script in either the lessons observed for the study or in their retelling of their experiences through interviews and conversation. However, an incident involving Sarah and the SI program consultant marked a significant change in Sarah's dialogue with SI.

Early in 2009 when the teachers were beginning their implementation of the new scripted writing program, Sarah proudly showed a sample of student writing to the program's consultant. The sample was a three-line sentence written by a reluctant writer. Sarah had praised the student profusely for attempting a long, complicated sentence. The consultant, upon reading the sample, asked Sarah if she had told the student it was a run-on sentence that needed correction. Deflated, Sarah admitted

she had not required the student to fix the sentence or even pointed out the errors. Bemused, Sarah helped the student fix the sentence in the next class period. In telling this story, Sarah related her frustration that the consultant — and by extension, the scripted program — failed to appreciate the student's courage and hard work. For the first time, Sarah experienced a sense of real dissonance with SI's approach to writing instruction, an approach that called for error-free writing.

> And it's interesting, our consultant, she does a great job, but she has no ELL experience. And so sometimes just trying to balance what she's saying with, okay, now how does that work with ELLs or how can I present it or how can I get to that point to make it work for ELLs? So that's been interesting to kind of just say, 'Okay is that realistic, is it feasible, is it worth the extra time or how much extra time is it going to take to get there?' (interview, Sarah, February 3, 2009, p. 6)

Sarah's understanding of the importance of students' affective concerns in learning to write in English ran counter to SI's model for expert instruction. In disagreement with SI, Sarah drew upon her heretofore-unrecognized expertise in teaching ESL to make independent instructional decisions: in this case it was a decision that ran counter to what the script advised. Although Sarah did, in the end, point out the errors to the student writer, she also began to reason around the script, which pulled her off-script with increasing regularity.

Sarah began to assert control over the script by, for example, setting it aside to make space for student free writes at the end of each SI unit. Sarah began to stop recording points for many of the instructional tasks, despite the program's insistence that all activities carry the reward (or punishment) of points. She also relaxed the choral response regimen under particular circumstances. The script directed Sarah to signal students when they were to respond in unison. Teachers were free to choose their signal; Sarah often used a snap of her fingers or a clap of her hand on her book. Teachers were also directed to repeat a question until all students responded in unison. Following is a typical call and response from field notes of the observation of Sarah's Comprehension B2 class of March 3, 2009.

> The teacher writes 'explain' on white board.
> *Teacher*: What is another word to say he is making it easier to understand the test? Get ready. (Snap).
> *Students* (in unison): explain.
> *Teacher*: What part of speech is *explain*? Get ready. (Snap)
> *Students*: verb (only one student responds).
> *Teacher*: It's a verb. What part of speech is *explain*? (Snap)
> *Students* (in unison): verb.
> *Teacher*: Okay.

Later that same day in a more advanced SI class, Sarah did not use signaling (neither a snap nor a clap) and did not require all students to answer in unison. When asked about this off-script instruction, Sarah said, 'I can tell if any of them are not

getting it [comprehending the lesson]' (field notes, March 3, 2009, p. 3). Increasingly, Sarah used her own judgment regarding the necessity of the scripted regimen. Drawing on her own expertise, Sarah began to assert control over instructional decisions, to ask the script, 'okay, is that realistic, is it feasible, is it worth the extra time?' (interview, February 3, 2009).

Meanwhile, in her own dialogue with SI, Stephanie was won over by the script's micro- to macro-skill approach to teaching. In particular, she came to see that in her early teaching experiences, she overestimated students' abilities to comprehend and acquire English.

> I think I gave the kids too much credit. I'm like, 'Okay, you know this.' And then we get into it, and you *don't* know this. Oh, so, was I way over your head before? I think I was skipping necessary steps, where this program really does slow me down and introduce them to words, where I was, like, 'You know that,' and they're like, 'Uh, no.' You don't know the word *suggest* and you don't know … so, it's slowed me down in that sense. Before I was like, 'Let's get you mainstreamed and go, go, go.' But now I'm like, 'No, look at how much we just skipped.' Like, instead of going boom to boom to boom [indicating large leaps], we're on a gradual incline, which is what they needed. (interview, Stephanie, February 9, 2009, p. 4)

For Stephanie, SI provided a model of expert instruction that reshaped her thinking about what good ESL teaching looked like. The SI approach stood in contrast to her previous approach to instruction, which skipped 'necessary steps', moved too quickly, and overestimated students' abilities; but, rather than experiencing dissonance, Stephanie realigned her understanding of just what ELLs could do to accord to the SI program's prescribed incremental approach.

Discussion

Sarah and Stephanie chose the external guide of the script to regulate their teaching, using the script as a tool for learning how to teach. They turned their classrooms over, in essence, to a more expert instructor in the form of the cultural artifact of the script. At the inception of the study, Stephanie, a novice teacher, and Sarah, a teacher with little confidence in her teaching practice, were at critical junctures in their reasoning about second language teaching, each unsure of how to proceed and feeling pressure from all sides to improve their instruction. The teachers found a content expert and an instructional model in scripted instruction, and they seemed eager to internalize elements of the scripts' expertise:

- Stephanie found the scripts' incremental and repetitive approach to language instruction particularly compelling;
- Sarah exported the word attack strategies from her SI classes to her non-SI classes; and
- Each found clarity in the way the scripted program tracked and measured student achievement.

Certainly, however, it is too early to tell what long-term impact the script will have on the teachers' practice.

While the script can be — and was, in these teachers' experience — a tool that regulates teaching and provides firm structure, unwavering content, and pedagogical expertise, it is a tool of limited utility to the teachers in light of a sociocultural theory of teacher learning. SI programs do not gradually turn over control of the activity of teaching to teachers. There is no 'progressive movement from externally, socially mediated activities [teaching by script] to internal mediation controlled by the individual teacher' (Johnson, 2009, p. 17). If the script were to be a fully useful meditational tool, it would necessarily lessen its presence in the classroom as a teacher developed her or his own expertise (by internalizing elements of the script and other meditational tools). This is not how the SI program observed in this study operated. Rather, the entirety of the curriculum and instruction was scripted, and teachers were directed to perform the script indefinitely and without deviation or improvisation.

Sarah and Stephanie were — despite the script's intended control of the activity of their teaching — engaged, inquiring, and learning teachers who found new knowledge in the script and were only beginning — in Sarah's case — to chafe at the controls of the script. '[B]eginning teachers need routines,' observed Sawyer (2004, p. 18), 'but [they] also need to learn how to flexibly apply them.' Sarah, in particular, was at a point in her teacher learning at which she was ready to venture off script. For an SI program to attend to teacher learning, it can provide receptive (e.g. novice) teachers the structure they might crave, but it must also 'allow variation and embellishment' if teachers are to develop.

Teacher learning with SI is certainly an unintended consequence of the programs since they are designed to control, not tutor, the teacher. The script is efficiency that disallows innovation; it provides structure without flexibility. While the script, for example, provided the teachers with an authority on the English language, it did not cultivate the kind of complex, flexible linguistic knowledge characteristic of adaptive expertise.

> To create an improvisational classroom, the teacher must have a high degree of pedagogical content knowledge. To respond creatively to unexpected student queries, a teacher must have a more profound understanding of the material than if the teacher is simply reciting a preplanned lecture or script. (Sawyer, 2004, p. 15)

Without a conceptual, 'profound' understanding of their content, the teachers will likely continue to struggle when called upon to plan and implement instruction. In short, SI does not foster teacher learning at a conceptual level. Rather, the script tells teachers what to do but does not assist teachers in linking the prescribed teaching activity to scientific concepts about teaching; this is a linkage that could build teachers' conceptual map for teaching and enable them to gain increasing control over their practice. As Johnson (2009) points out, 'the kinds of meditational means that are offered to learners must be strategic rather than fixed or random' (p. 20). The script as

a meditational tool for teachers is fixed and does not deploy itself strategically for teacher learning.

As a cultural artifact for the mediation of teacher learning, SI is also a poor one. It is unresponsive to teachers' dialogue, as noted above, and it perpetrates a view of language and language learning that is out of step with much current scholarship (Firth & Wagner 1997; Freeman, 2004; Gee, 2004; Johnson, 2006; Lantolf & Johnson, 2007). SI promotes an understanding of the nature of language as fixed, stable, and eminently learnable through repetition and rote memorization. What teachers might learn about language through a one-sided dialogue with the SI text is that language can be broken into its component pieces; those pieces can be learned, and the pieces can be reassembled to a coherent, stable whole. From a contrasting sociocultural perspective,

> the activity of teaching and learning language is not focused on language as a stable rule-governed linguistic system that must be acquired before people can engage in communication. Instead it is concerned with enhancing language learners' communicative resources, which are formed and reformed in the very activity in which they are used, i.e. in concrete linguistically mediated social and intellectual activity. (Lantolf & Johnson, 2007, p. 878)

Language in SI is stable and rule-governed. Further, learner engagement with language is restricted to script-sanctioned utterances and topics. The script separates teacher from learner, much as it separates learner from authentic meaning-making. Both of these circumstances hinder teachers' development within a sociocultural frame. 'In a sociocultural and social constructivist theory, effective teaching must be improvisational, because if the classroom is scripted and directed by the teacher, the students cannot co-construct their own knowledge' (Sawyer, 2004, p. 14). The model of language and language teaching presented by SI discounts both teacher and student backgrounds, restricting — from a sociocultural viewpoint — the development of each.

SI's antithetical stance toward student co-construction of knowledge is further evidenced in its content choices. *Corrective Reading* and *Reasoning and Writing* are populated by Clarabelle, an accident-prone cow that falls down ladders, trips into mud puddles, and breaks chairs; children who dream of using invisible paint to pull a prank on friends; and retirees who escape from and later joyfully return to *Happy Hollow* retirement home. Topics are inane, and links to students' individual interests or background are not made or invited.

Interestingly, both participants largely accepted the knowledge-transmission style language education that the SI program promoted. Critical analysis of the teachers' narratives reveals their general adherence to a view of teaching as 'a technical, clerical task' (Sawyer, 2004, p. 18) in which knowledge is transmitted to passive recipients. Such a view eschews the messiness of creative teaching, of disciplined improvisation where lessons cannot be fully planned because knowledge is co-constructed, and where assessing student learning is a complex, nuanced endeavor. Sarah and Stephanie indicat-

ed their discomfort with such messiness. Sarah derided her pre-SI curriculum choic-es as 'inconsistent', while Stephanie praised the program's 'gradual incline' of micro to macro skill-building. Neither questioned the authenticity of the learning tasks, the lack of connection the program made to students' prior learning and backgrounds, or the kinds of literacies their students were (and were not) learning from SI.

Implications and Conclusions

The findings of this study indicate that teacher learning can occur even in the least conducive of circumstances. Sarah's and Stephanie's learning by script reinforces the situated, mediated nature of teacher learning. Although the meditational tool of SI was an unresponsive interlocutor, the teachers still engaged it in a one-sided dialogue about second language teaching. The teachers gained new knowledge about language and language teaching, but critical questions remain: was their new knowledge help-ful in their development of adaptive expertise or a conceptual map for teaching, and what role should formal teacher education play in light of the situated, lifelong na-ture of teacher learning?

These two teachers' experiences with SI expose either missed opportunities in their formal teacher education or a misalignment between the teachers' formal teacher ed-ucation and the teachers' readiness to engage in conceptual learning about teaching.

> The responsibility of education, according to Vygotskian sociocultural theory, is to present scientific concepts to learners, but to do so in a way that brings these concepts to bear on concrete practical activity, connecting them to the everyday knowledge and activities of learners. (Johnson, 2009, p. 21)

Sarah and Stephanie were presented with everyday teaching activities during SI, but the teachers did not have a responsive guide to help them connect these activities to the scientific concepts from which they came. The teachers could, perhaps, infer some concepts about language and language teaching from SI, namely that language is a fixed, stable system most effectively taught through repetition and explicit error correction. Stephanie's acceptance of the program's activities might lead to her in-ternalization of just these concepts, while Sarah came to reject at least some of the program's activities, presumably because her developing conceptual map conflicted with a tenet of the SI program.

Teacher learning can and, as this study demonstrated, does occur outside of formal teacher education programs, but teacher education could play a critical role in helping teachers develop adaptive expertise and a conceptual map for teaching. In order for teacher education to play that critical role, it must address an enduring dilemma.

> Given the relatively short period available for preparing teachers and the fact that not everything can be taught, decisions must be made about what content and strategies are most likely to prepare new entrants to be able to learn from their own practice, as well as the insight of other teachers and researchers. (Hammer-ness et al. 2005, p. 359)

Placing this imperative within Sarah's and Stephanie's cases, formal teacher education ought to have, at minimum, engaged them in reasoning about just the kinds of dilemmas they were faced with as early career teachers, helped them develop pedagogical content knowledge for teaching ELLs in the US K-12 schooling system, and provided them with insight into their own teacher learning process. Rather than transmitting particular, favored conceptual knowledge from the teacher educator to the teacher candidate, teacher education ought to invite teacher candidates to engage in conscious, critical deliberation on their own teacher learning process.

> The role of teacher education is not so much to apprentice fledgling (or practicing) teachers to particular cultural models of teaching and schooling, as it is to facilitate critical understandings of the implications and consequences of the decisions they make as to what they do, and how they do it. (Hawkins, 2004, p. 90)

Facilitating teachers' critical understandings and inviting such deliberation could take teacher education into uncharted territories, even into the seemingly enemy territory of scripted instruction.

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Notes

[1] The term Center, following Canagarajah (1999), is used here to reference first language speakers of English who are also members of the dominant linguistic and cultural groups of the U.S.A. The term stands in contrast to Periphery speakers of English who speak English as a second language or who speak non-dominant varieties of English as a first language (e.g. Black Vernacular English).

[2] ELDA (English Language Development Assessment) is the standardized test of English language achievement used with all ELLs statewide in the study locale.