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International Teaching Assistants' Experiences in Educational Cultures and Their Teaching Beliefs

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Abstract

In the early heyday of ITA education, English as a second language (ESL) educators played a key role in defining three basic learning needs for ITAs: Language, teaching, and culture. Of this model, culture is the most broadly defined and least developed component. It was predicted by some, apparently on the basis of nationality, that ITAs would have trouble interacting with U.S. undergraduates because of different ideas about teacher and student roles, and unfamiliarity with "interactive" teaching styles. The current study revisited an earlier study by the author on the intersections between educational cultures of ITAs, with the purpose of further investigating salient aspects of individual ITAs' educational experiences (teaching experience, etc.), and how these experiences mediated ITAs' teaching beliefs at the outset of their teaching careers at the university where the study took place. The current study went further by conceptualizing ITA "nationality" as a context for possible educational experiences, and by exploring this variable with a larger sample size (N = 202) in which questionnaire responses of ITAs who had earned their bachelor's degrees in China, India, Korea, Sri Lanka, Turkey, or the U.S.A. (international students earning their degrees in the U.S.A.) could be considered. Results suggested that these differences might be partly explained by whether ITAs had opportunities, either in the L1s or L2s, to develop procedural knowledge with teaching. This research supports proposes a central role for development of language and procedural knowledge for ITA adaptation to their professional roles in U.S. higher education.

Introduction

In American higher education, international teaching assistants (ITAs) continue to be important players in the internationalization of U.S. universities. Currently international graduate students comprise 15.5% (242,061) of all students at U.S. graduate schools (Council of Graduate Schools, 2010, p. 1). In the 2008-2009 academic year, 152,457 international students were funded by a "U.S. College or University" many, presumably, as ITAs (Institute

of International Education, 2009, p. 14). It is common knowledge "that U.S. research universities depend on international teaching assistants to teach American college students…basic undergraduate courses in…technical areas" such as engineering, biology, and physics (Chiang, 2009, p. 461). From the early 1980s, concerns about ITAs' English ability gave rise to ITA education as a field (Gorsuch, 2003; Chiang, 2009; see also Hinofotis, Bailey, & Stern, 1981; Smith, Byrd, Nelson, & Barrett, 1992), as well as to legislation on English proficiency requirements for ITAs (Hoekje & Linnell, 1994).

In the early heyday of ITA education, English as a second language (ESL) educators played a key role in defining three basic learning needs for ITAs: 1. Language, 2. Teaching, and 3. Culture (Civickly & Muchisky, 1991; Constantinides, 1987; Ford, Gappa, Wendorff, & Wright, 1991; Hoekje & Williams, 1994; Myers, 1994; Sequeira & Costantino, 1989). To ITA educators, language, teaching, and culture have deep practical and theoretical connections. In terms of "language" and "teaching" for instance, many ITA developers focus on ITAs' English language use as teachers, employing teaching simulations, and authentic classroom dialogs and recordings for instruction and assessment of ITAs' English communication skills (Gorsuch, Meyers, Pickering, & Griffee, 2010; Halleck & Moder, 1995). In terms of "language" and "culture," one ITA program has used theoretical understandings from sociolinguistics to explore "the various contextualization cues (rhythm, intonation, lexicon) that contribute to miscommunication between speakers from different cultures" (Tapper & Kidder, 2006, p. 17; see also Tyler & Davies, 1990). This is a rare treatment of "culture," however.

Of the "language, teaching, and culture" model, culture is the most broadly defined and least developed component. Common conceptualizations of ITAs' need to learn "culture" are information to be presented as formal knowledge (e.g., how American students behave in college classrooms; Costantino, 1987; using interactive questions; Smith, Meyers, & Burkhalter, 1992). Underlying these conceptions is the notion that U.S. universities present a distinct educational culture. It was predicted, apparently on the basis of nationality, that ITAs would have trouble interacting with American undergraduates because of different ideas about "authority relationships with students" (Madden & Myers, 1994, p. 1; see also Althen, 1991; Pialorsi, 1984) and unfamiliarity with "interactive" teaching styles (e.g., Sarkasian, 1990).

In 2003, Gorsuch noted the lack of empirical evidence for suppositions that "Asian" ITAs, among others, had ideas about teaching that were different from those held by faculty members in the U.S.A. She hypothesized that "nationality" was too simplistic a category with which to explore ITAs' attitudes in terms of their previous educational experiences. Indeed, the literature suggested that individual ITA characteristics such as gender, previous U.S.- or home country-based teaching experience, and experience as a student in the U.S.A. would shape teaching beliefs. Survey research carried out with 62 ITAs and eight faculty members at a U.S. university suggested that overall, ITAs and faculty members had similar levels of approval and disapproval of 27 statements which captured beliefs about teaching, presentation of information, and teacher and student roles. For ITAs, gender, teaching experience, and previous U.S. study experience significantly mediated their responses on a number of

questionnaire items. Because of a small sample size, however, Gorsuch could not make comparisons based on nationality (2003, pp. 7-8).

The current study revisits the question of intersections between educational cultures of ITAs, and of U.S. universities, with the purpose of investigating salient aspects of ITAs' educational experiences (teaching experience, etc.), and how these experiences mediate ITAs' teaching beliefs. The current study goes further by conceptualizing ITA "nationality" as a context for possible educational experiences, and by exploring this variable with a larger sample size (N = 202) in which questionnaire responses of ITAs who earned their bachelor's degrees in China, India, Korea, Sri Lanka, Turkey, or the U.S.A. could be compared.

Literature Review

Conceptions of culture underpinning the study instrument. Four conceptions of culture were operationalized in the questionnaire used to collect data on ITAs' teaching beliefs: Sociolinguistic competence, textual competence, non-verbal communication, and values of the local university educational culture. This replicates the model used in the 2003 study. A detailed description of the process by which items were generated, piloted, and revised within this four part conception is given in the 2003 study, and also below. No attempt was made here to create four discrete or internally cohesive variables to be used as dependent variables in a quantitative analysis. Data reduction was not the object. Rather, these conceptions comprised a framework that was used to generate items to capture a broad array of beliefs for the purpose of discussion by multiple audiences.

Sociolinguistic competence refers to the speaker's ability to use language appropriate for given social settings (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Madden & Myers, 1994). This touches on what is said (particular forms of address, small talk with students) but also tone choices used (which indicate engagement, friendliness, distance, authority, e.g., Brazil, 1997; Gorsuch et al., 2010) which result from ITAs' assumptions about relationships in classrooms. Of great interest to ITA educators is developing ITAs' ability to establish rapport with U.S. undergraduates (e.g., Brown, 2001). Gunthner (2007, p. 131) noted studies that found that Korean ITAs and U.S. undergraduates had differing expectations about appropriate language for discussing bad lab report grades that resulted in a lack of rapport. An example item was: *A good teacher has a higher position and students should respect them*.

Textual competence refers to the ability of a speaker to organize spoken language at a discourse level (Bachman, 1990) according to commonly accepted academic communication genres, such as lectures and office hours. This includes what is said (summarizing, calls for questions, e.g., Halleck & Moder, 1995). Strongly implicated in textual competence are communicative genres, which are "historically and culturally specific, prepatterned and complex solutions to recurrent communicative problems" (Gunthner, 2007, p. 129). Thus while students and ITAs from different cultures may share a similar repertoire of communicative genres ("the lecture," Flowerdew & Miller, 1996), how information is organized within these genres may be different, leading to miscommunication (see for example Young, 1994, Gunthner, 2007). An example item was: *A good teacher verbally explains graphs, diagrams, or photographs used in class*.

Non-verbal communication refers to the appropriateness of a person's non-verbal behavior and appearance. This includes eye gaze and dress. ITA education has tended to focus on culture in terms of familiarizing ITAs with North American undergraduates' classroom non-verbal behavior (e.g., Costantino, 1987; Le Gros, 2010; Pialorsi, 1984), and commenting on what non-verbal behavior U.S. undergraduates expect from university instructors (Althen, 1991; Sarkasian, 1990; Zukowski-Faust, 1984). In communication studies McCroskey, Richmond, Sallinen, Fayer, & Barracough (1995) associated tense body position and looking at the board or notes while talking to students with bad teaching in university classrooms, while associating eye contact with good teaching. Roach, in studying undergraduate perceptions of ITAs' attire, found that instructors with "professional attire" were seen as "competent, professional, caring, and knowledgeable in the subject" (1997, p. 138). An example item was: *A good teacher looks at students during lectures*.

Values and mores of the university educational culture refer to an instructor's awareness of the significant rules present in an academic culture. These can include values and rules about grading, assignments, cheating, transmission of learning expectations, and assumptions about how students best learn. Such rules may be transmitted through formal TA/ITA handbooks (e.g., LeGros, 2010; Sarkasian, 1990), or through socialization processes involving peers and faculty members (Alhija & Fresko, 2010).

Questionnaire items capturing ITAs' predispositions towards the values and mores of university educational culture were developed through a comprehensive, iterative process involving a literature search of "good" teaching practices, culture-specific teaching practices, and official documents and websites from the university where the 2003 study took place. Sixty items were generated. For a full list of annotated references see Gorsuch (2003). The sixty items were presented to eight faculty members from a variety of departments, who then ranked them in terms of their appropriateness. Twenty-two (22) items with average rankings above 4 ("appropriate") and below 2.5 (between "unsure" and "inappropriate") were thought to represent salient aspects of the university educational culture and were thus retained in the 2003 instrument, which formed the basis for the "values and mores" subsection of the current instrument. An example item was: *A good teacher lectures and has students take notes most of the time*.

Second language use, cultural adaptation, and building procedural knowledge about teaching. In all four conceptions of culture captured in the questionnaire, ITAs' second language use is a pervasive subtext. ITAs may have teaching beliefs in common with U.S. college instructors. Beliefs in common may be viewed as propositional knowledge, described by Chiang as "factual knowledge about the world" (2009, p. 464). But a more salient question is raised by the current study: How do ITAs gain procedural knowledge "about how to perform things?" (Chiang, 2009, p. 464). In other words, how do ITAs learn how to act on their belief about the need to summarize information in lectures, for example, *in their second language*?

Many scholars point out a close relationship between second language learning and cultural adaptation (which, I would argue, also means developing procedural knowledge about how to accomplish things). Brabant, Watson, and Gallois (2007) note: "Contact with the second-

language speaking group in naturalistic contexts is a key part of L2 acquisition" (p. 64). It is within verbal, social interactions that culture is instantiated (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 2007). As Kim (2001) argues, one main means of cultural adaption "occurs in and through communication" (p. 36). Thus, in order to adapt to a new culture and gain procedural knowledge about teaching, ITAs must use their second language (English).

Experiences in educational cultures. Four categorical variables were operationalized in this study. These were country in which ITAs earned their bachelor's degree, teaching experience in the U.S.A., home country teaching experience, and experience as a student in a U.S. university. Such variables likely capture salient aspects of educational experiences ITAs have had as individuals, which may mediate their teaching beliefs. Such information is important for several reasons. First, beliefs of teachers are shaped by their experiences in classrooms and schools (Alhija & Fresko, 2010; Holliday, 1994). Second, beliefs contribute to behavior (Ajzen, 1988). Knowing ITAs' beliefs will be more informative than a single observation of teaching behavior (Gorsuch, 2003). And finally many learning theories emphasize the importance of what learners already know (e.g., Ausubel, 2000), and building upon that.

It is difficult to escape the importance of nationhood as a context for the development of cultural patterns as they relate to the organization of education systems (Schwartz, 1999). While individuals vary in their experiences, they are still shaped by "the contingencies to which people must adapt in the institutions in which they spend their time" (Schwartz, 1999, p. 25). Thus, in the current study, ITAs were asked to identify the nation in which they had earned their bachelor's degree. ITAs were also asked about their previous teaching experience in the U.S.A. or in their home countries. Teaching experience influences teachers' level of procedural knowledge (Gholami & Husu, 2010). Some ITAs at U.S. universities may have more procedural knowledge for teaching than others, gained through home country or U.S. teaching experiences. Their "path" through ITA education programs and other mentoring processes may proceed differently than ITAs who have no teaching experience. Finally, ITAs were asked whether or not they had been students at U.S. universities. U.S. study experience seemed to have created changes in second language literacy (Spack, 1997) and outlook of international students (Leathwood, 2006).

Research Questions

In the previous study (Gorsuch, 2003), the sample size for ITAs was not large enough to permit comparisons between ITAs in terms of what country they got their bachelor's degree in. The current study seeks to further explore ITAs' teaching beliefs using a larger sample size and thus this variable was added to other characteristics which were previously found to mediate ITAs' teaching attitudes, including U.S. teaching experience, home country teaching experience, and experience being a student in the U.S.A. Thus RQ #1 was:

1. What were ITAs' responses on a teaching attitude questionnaire in terms of where they earned their bachelor's degree, and whether or not they had U.S. teaching experience, home country teaching experience, or experience being students in the U.S.A.?

Of additional interest were intersections between where ITAs got their bachelor's degrees, and the other variables. For instance, would an ITA who earned a bachelor's degree in Korea be more or less likely to have U.S. teaching experience than an ITA who earned a bachelor's degree in India or China? In other words, how might educational contexts, defined as an education system within national borders, be characterized to reveal how ITAs' experiences were constrained? RQ #2 was:

2. What intersections occur between which country ITAs earned their bachelor's degree in, and variables of U.S. or home country teaching experience, and U.S. student experience?

Method

Participants

Participants were 202 ITAs attending an ITA workshop in 2008, 2009, and 2010 in a large southwestern university. Seventy-four (74) cases were removed from a larger set of $N = 274$ as they had not earned their bachelors' degrees in the six nations which emerged as having comparable numbers. The remaining 202 ITAs had earned their bachelors' degrees from China ($n = 90$), India ($n = 39$), Sri Lanka ($n = 24$), Korea ($n = 21$), Turkey ($n = 15$), and the U.S.A. ($n = 13$). 100 were males and 102 were females. There were 89 Mandarin speakers and one Cantonese speaker. Thirty-six (36) participants were speakers of Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu. Twenty-five (25) were Korean speakers, 24 were Sinhala speakers, and 15 were Turkish speakers. The "U.S." group reported their first languages to be English, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, and Swahili.

Materials

A full description of the development of the instrument is given in Gorsuch (2003). The current instrument had some items that were worded differently in accordance with comments made by 80 faculty members who took the survey as part of a larger study in 2009. For instance, *A good teacher is easy for students to talk to* became *A good teacher has friend-to-friend relationships with students*. Some items from the 2003 instrument were deleted, and 12 items were added to the present study in accordance with faculty members' comments. Examples of added items were *A good teacher writes newly introduced technical terms on the board* and *A good teacher gives assignments which lead students to use concepts taught in class*. The current instrument had 44 statements capturing ITAs' beliefs on sociolinguistic competence, textual competence, non-verbal communication, and values of the local educational culture. Participants circled their level of agreement to each statement using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = do not know; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree). All 44 items appear in the Appendix, along with descriptive statistics for participants' responses to each item as a whole group. Space does not allow for a discussion of these results. Three items captured categorical variables: where ITAs had earned their bachelor's degree, whether or not they had U.S. teaching experience, or home country teaching experience, or experience being students in the U.S.A.

Procedure

The instrument was administered for three consecutive years to participants in an ITA workshop on the first day. Responding to the instrument was optional, and anonymous. As some ITAs were attending the workshop for a second time, respondents were asked not to complete the survey if they had completed it the previous year, thus eliminating duplicate responses.

Analyses

To determine whether data from 2008 ($n = 66$), 2009 ($n = 87$), and 2010 ($n = 49$) could be merged into a single data set ($N = 202$), homogeneity of variance tests were done for the 44 five-point Likert scale items. Three items had significantly different homogeneity of variance between the three groups ($p < .05$). Compared to the five-point Likert scale for these items, however, these differences were small (less than 1/4 of a Likert scale point), and the three groups were merged.

For RQ #1, to determine whether participants responded differently according to where they had earned their undergraduate degree, a one-way ANOVA was calculated on each of the 44 items with p set at .0023 (.10 divided by 44). Bonferroni's and Tamhane's T2 post hoc tests were done to identify which groups were significantly different from each other in the event of a statistically significant overall effect. For the remaining grouping variables (U.S. teaching experience, etc.) three independent sample t-test procedures were done. Each of the 44 items were compared for differences with p set at .0023 (.10 divided by 44). Eta^2 effect size was estimated to learn how much variance in each comparison could be attributed to the group variable in question. In terms of the grouping variable on U.S. study experience, participants who had completed their bachelor's degrees in the U.S.A. were removed from the data set for the t-test mentioned previously. This was done to capture any effects from attending a U.S. university without necessarily earning an undergraduate degree.

For RQ #2, in order to estimate any significant interactions between the frequency variables, chi square analyses were done with country in which participants earned their bachelor's degree in as a "base" variable. This variable was then crossed with U.S. teaching experience, then with home country teaching experience, and finally with U.S. study experience. A significance level of $p < .05$ was set for interactions between the variables, such as whether participants who earned their bachelor's degree in China were more or less likely to have home country experience than participants who earned their bachelor's degree in Sri Lanka.

Results

For RQ #1, see Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Statistically significant group differences by country in which bachelor's degree was earned

Attitudes pertaining to textual competence

Item/Overall effect	China	India	Korea	Sri Lanka	Turkey	USA
A good teacher writes newly introduced technical terms on the board. Overall p=.001 eta^2=.102	*M*=4.21**	*M*=4.67**	*M*=4.05**	*M*=4.67**	*M*=4.60	*M*=4.31
	SD=.776	*SD*=.530	*SD*=.740	*SD*=.565	*SD*=.632	*SD*=.751
A good teacher gives definitions for the concepts being taught. Overall p=.001 eta^2=.101	*M*=3.97*	*M*=4.33	*M*=4.62*	*M*=4.50*	*M*=4.33	*M*=4.46
	SD=.867	*SD*=.577	*SD*=.498	*SD*=.722	*SD*=.816	*SD*=.660
A good teacher speaks quickly to cover content during lectures. Overall p=.000 eta^2=.171	*M*=2.66**	*M*=1.97**	*M*=3.14**	*M*=1.92**	*M*=2.00**	*M*=2.08
	SD=.929	*SD*=.743	*SD*=1.062	*SD*=.881	*SD*=.655	*SD*=1.382
A good teacher communicates to students the course grading system. Overall p=.002 eta^2=.096	*M*=3.99	*M*=4.42	*M*=3.81*	*M*=4.42	*M*=4.00	*M*=4.67*
	SD=.814	*SD*=.683	*SD*=.928	*SD*=.654	*SD*=.845	*SD*=.888

Attitudes pertaining to non-verbal communication

Item/Overall effect	China	India	Korea	Sri Lanka	Turkey	USA
A good teacher looks at students during lectures. Overall p = .001 eta^2=.096	*M*=4.17**	*M*=4.49	*M*=4.62	*M*=4.75**	*M*=4.47	*M*=4.38
	SD=.735	*SD*=.601	*SD*=.590	*SD*=.442	*SD*=.516	*SD*=.768
A good teacher wears jeans or shorts and t-shirts, the same as students. Overall p = .000 eta^2=.116	*M*=3.47*	*M*=2.95	*M*=2.62*	*M*=2.71	*M*=2.80	*M*=2.00
	SD=.922	*SD*=.769	*SD*=1.117	*SD*=1.083	*SD*=.941	*SD*=1.044

Attitudes pertaining to local educational culture

Item/Overall effect	China	India	Korea	Sri Lanka	Turkey	USA
A good teacher lectures and has students take notes most of the time. Overall p=.001 eta^2=.095	*M*=2.64*	*M*=3.49*	*M*=3.38	*M*=2.96	*M*=2.80	*M*=2.85
	SD=1.104	*SD*=1.189	*SD*=.973	*SD*=1.197	*SD*=.941	*SD*=1.345
A good teacher demonstrates knowledge of the subject being taught. Overall p=.001 eta^2=.103	*M*=4.27**	*M*=4.72**	*M*=4.43	*M*=4.46	*M*=4.80**	*M*=4.85**
	SD=.765	*SD*=.560	*SD*=.507	*SD*=.658	*SD*=.414	*SD*=.376
A good teacher gives assignments which lead	*M*=4.02*	*M*=4.45*	*M*=4.19	*M*=4.50*	*M*=4.60*	*M*=4.42
	SD=.694	*SD*=.645	*SD*=.602	*SD*=.511	*SD*=.507	*SD*=.900

Item/Overall effect	China	India	Korea	Sri Lanka	Turkey	USA
students to use concepts taught in class. Overall *p*=.001 eta^2=.105						
A good teacher treats all students the same. Overall *p*=.002 eta^2=.092	*M*=4.17** *SD*=1.085	*M*=4.84** *SD*=.370	*M*=4.43 *SD*=.978	*M*=4.75** *SD*=.532	*M*=4.47 *SD*=.915	*M*=4.58 *SD*=.669
A good teacher tells a student how he or she ranked in a test compared to other students. Overall *p*=.001 eta^2=.102	*M*=3.01* *SD*=1.067	*M*=3.47 *SD*=1.179	*M*=2.95* *SD*=1.244	*M*=4.04* *SD*=.908	*M*=3.33 *SD*=1.047	*M*=2.75* *SD*=1.357
A good teacher has students learn by having them memorize what the teacher says. Overall *p*=.000 eta^2=.134	*M*=2.98* *SD*=1.061	*M*=2.58 *SD*=1.130	*M*=3.48* *SD*=1.030	*M*=2.96 *SD*=1.301	*M*=1.87* *SD*=1.246	*M*=1.92* *SD*=1.084
A good teacher expects students to do their own assignments without help from other students. Overall *p*=.002 eta^2=.095	*M*=3.02* *SD*=.983	*M*=3.67* *SD*=1.034	*M*=3.19 *SD*=.981	*M*=3.71* *SD*=.859	*M*=3.00 *SD*=.877	*M*=3.67 *SD*=.985

Item/Overall effect	China	India	Korea	Sri Lanka	Turkey	USA
A good teacher awards points for all assignments. Overall *p*=.000 eta^2=.110	*M*=3.65** *SD*=.798	*M*=4.33** *SD*=.737	*M*=4.14** *SD*=.573	*M*=4.00 *SD*=.780	*M*=4.14 *SD*=.770	*M*=3.83 *SD*=1.337

Note: **M* is different than other means at $p < .05$ Bonferroni post hoc test, ***p* < /05 Tamhane T2 post hoc test.

Because of the stringent $p < .0023$ value set for the comparisons for all 44 questionnaire items, only 14 statistically different responses were found according to country where the bachelor's degree was earned. Nonetheless, some eta^2 effect sizes for those differences were salient, ranging from .092 to a stronger .171, suggesting that for some items, where an ITA received his or her bachelor's degree made a meaningful difference to the responses.

For items pertaining to textual competence, participants differed in their responses according to country. Respondents from China (*M* = 4.21) and Korea (*M* = 4.05) approved somewhat less that teachers ought to write new terms on the board than ITAs from India (*M* = 4.67) and Sri Lanka (*M* = 4.67). But regional similarities ended there. Chinese respondents (*M* = 3.97) agreed less than Korean (*M* = 4.62) and Sri Lankan respondents (*M* = 4.50) that teachers ought to give definitions for concepts. Indian (*M* = 1.97), Sri Lankan (*M* = 1.92), and Turkish (*M* = 1.92) participants disapproved of teachers speaking quickly to cover content while Chinese (*M* = 2.66) and Korean (*M* = 3.14) participants were less certain. Finally, respondents earning their bachelor's degree in the U.S.A. (international students with a wide variety of L1s) strongly approved (*M* = 4.67) that teachers needed to communicate the course grading systems to undergraduates. Korean respondents were less certain (*M* = 3.81).

For items pertaining to non-verbal communication, Sri Lankan ITAs strongly approved (*M* = 4.75) that teachers ought to look at students during lectures while Chinese ITAs were less certain (*M* = 4.17)(the narrower *SD* for Sri Lankan ITAs suggested more agreement around the mean score). Chinese participants showed uncertainty (*M* = 3.47) that teachers should wear the same clothes as students while Korean participants disagreed more strongly (*M* = 2.62).

For some items pertaining to local educational culture, there was a general pattern of Chinese respondents seeming to show less certainty of teaching beliefs than other respondents. For instance, Indian (*M* =4.72), Turkish (*M* = 4.80), and "U.S." respondents (*M* = 4.85) showed stronger agreement that teachers ought to demonstrate knowledge of the subject than Chinese respondents (*M* =4.27). And, Indian (*M* = 3.67) and Sri Lankan (*M* = 3.71) respondents cautiously approved that students ought to do their own work while Chinese respondents (*M* = 3.02) centered around "I don't know." Turkish (*M* = 1.87) and "U.S." respondents (*M* = 1.92) disapproved that students ought to memorize what the teacher said while Chinese (*M* = 2.98)

and Korean respondents (M = 3.48) were less certain. Finally, Sri Lankan participants (M = 4.04) showed approval of teachers telling students how they ranked in relation to other students while Chinese (M = 3.01), Korean (M = 2.95), and "U.S." participants (M = 2.75) were less certain.

In terms of the U.S. teaching experience variable, two items had significantly different responses. Thirty-eight (38) participants had U.S. teaching experience, and 162 did not. In terms of textual competence (*A good teacher communicates assignment expectations by writing them on a board or using a handout*), ITAs with U.S. teaching experience responded with greater approval at M = 4.46 and ITAs without U.S. teaching experience were less certain at M = 3.94, eta^2 = .21. In terms of local educational culture (*A good teacher demonstrates knowledge of the subject being taught*) participants with U.S. teaching experience again showed slightly higher approval with M = 4.75 than participants without U.S. teaching experience with M = 4.41, eta^2 = .13. For the two items, the eta^2 effect sizes were moderate, suggesting a meaningful difference between responses on the two items between those with U.S. teaching experience and those without.

In terms of the home country teaching experience variable, two items had significantly different responses. Eighty-eight (88) participants had home country teaching experience, and 112 did not. Both items pertained to non-verbal communication competence. For *A good teacher looks at students during lectures* ITAs with home country teaching experience responded with greater approval at M = 4.55 and ITAs without home country teaching experience responded with somewhat less approval at M = 4.25, eta^2 = .05. For *A good teacher wears jeans or shorts and t-shirts in class, the same as students* participants with home country teaching experience approved *less* with M = 2.85 than participants without home country teaching experience with M = 3.30, eta^2 = .05. Eta^2 effect sizes for these two items were small.

Finally, for differences of responses between ITAs with U.S. study experience (n = 59) and those without it (n = 129), see Table 2. Five of 44 items were significantly different at $p <$ .0023.

Table 2. Statistically significant group differences by U.S. study experience

Attitudes pertaining to textual competence

Item/Effect size	**U.S. study exp *M, SD***	**No U.S. study exp *M, SD***
A good teacher demonstrates knowledge of the subject being taught. eta^2 = .09	4.69 .464	4.33 .743
A good teacher gives definitions for the concepts being taught. eta^2 = .05	4.47 .700	4.09 .805
A good teacher communicates assignment expectations to	4.52	3.80

Item/Effect size	U.S. study exp *M, SD*	No U.S. study exp *M, SD*
students by writing them on the board or using a handout. $eta^2 = .18$	.569	.774
A good teacher gives students prepared note outlines for class. $eta^2 = .05$	4.32 .701	3.95 .794

Attitudes pertaining to local educational culture

Item/Effect size	U.S. study exp *M, SD*	No U.S. study exp *M, SD*
A good teacher awards points for all assignments. $eta^2 = .07$	4.24 .751	3.78 .790

For items pertaining to textual competence, participants with U.S. study experience, *apart from* participants getting their bachelor's degree in the U.S.A., differed significantly from participants who had no U.S. study experience. Generally, ITAs with U.S. study experience had more focused approval, while ITAs without U.S. study experience were less certain in their approval. For instance, while respondents without U.S. study experience approved that teachers ought to demonstrate knowledge of the subject ($M = 3.95$), respondents with U.S. study experience approved more strongly ($M = 4.32$). ITAs without U.S. study experience somewhat approved that teachers ought to communicate assignment expectations to students by writing them on the board ($M = 3.80$), while ITAs with U.S. study experience approved more strongly ($M = 4.52$). Only one item pertaining to local educational culture was significantly different. ITAs without U.S. study experience cautiously approved that teachers ought to award points for all assignments ($M = 3.78$), and ITAs with U.S. study experience approved more strongly ($M = 4.24$).

For RQ #2 results see Table 3.

Table 3. Observed and expected frequencies for country where bachelor's degree was earned, U.S. study experience, U.S and home country teaching experience

Country of degree	U.S. teach YES Observed (Expected)	U.S. teach NO Observed (Expected)
China	11 (17)	79 (73)
India	8 (7.4)	31 (31.6)
Korea	2 (3.8)	18 (16.2)
Sri Lanka	8 (4.5)	16 (19.5)
Turkey	1 (2.8)	14 (12.2)
USA	8 (2.5)	5 (10.5)

$\chi^2 = .000$*

Country of degree	Home country teach YES Observed (Expected)	Home country teach NO Observed (Expected)
China	22 (39.2)	68 (50.3)
India	19 (17)	20 (21.8)
Korea	13 (9.1)	7 (11.7)
Sri Lanka	22 (10.5)	2 (13.4)
Turkey	11 (6.5)	4 (8.4)
USA	1 (5.7)	12 (7.3)

$\chi^2 = .000$*

Country of degree	U.S. Study YES Observed (Expected)	U.S. Study NO Observed (Expected)
China	21 (28.6)	69 (61.4)
India	18 (12.4)	21 (26.6)
Korea	13 (6.7)	8 (14.3)
Sri Lanka	6 (7.6)	18 (16.4)
Turkey	2 (4.8)	13 (10.2)

$\chi^2 = .001$*

Note. *Statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Using frequency data as a way to describe variations in educational experiences of ITAs was revealing. Differences in educational cultures of China, India, and other countries were apparent when considering whether such respondents could be expected to have U.S. teaching experience ($\chi^2 = .000$). Chance alone predicted that more ITAs earning their bachelor's degrees in China or Turkey would have U.S. teaching experience (around 17 and 3, respectively) when in fact *fewer* ITAs from those undergraduate education systems had U.S. teaching experience (11 and 1, respectively). On the other hand, respondents from Sri Lanka and the U.S.A. (international students earning their bachelor's degree in the U.S.A.) were *more* likely to have U.S. teaching experience (8 and 8, respectively) than would be predicted by chance (5 and 3, respectively).

This pattern is more pronounced when considering home country teaching experience ($\chi^2 = .000$). Nearly 40 Chinese ITAs were predicted by chance alone to have home country teaching experience whereas only 22 actually did. For ITAs having undergraduate education experience in all other countries (other than the U.S.A.) the direction was reversed. More of them had teaching experience than what chance alone predicted. For instance, 13 Koreans had home country teaching experience, where only 9 were predicted. For Sri Lankans, 22 actually had home country teaching experience, whereas only 11 were predicted.

In terms of U.S. study experience, location of undergraduate education again seemed to matter. For those getting their bachelor's degree in India and Korea, more respondents actually had U.S. study experience (18 and 13 respectively) than would have been predicted

by chance (12 and 7 respectively). Those getting their bachelor's degrees in China, Sri Lanka, and Turkey were less likely to have U.S. study experience (21, 6, and 2 respectively) than was predicted by chance (29, 8, and 5 respectively).

Discussion

Importance of ITA education and a need for continual reappraisal of "culture." The continuing importance of ITA education is underscored by continued growth in ITA numbers, and by the slowness of second language learning (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 2010). ITAs' second language communication ability is critical for negotiating unfamiliar academic and professional cultures, which are themselves instantiated in language and verbal exchanges (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 2007). ITAs need second language communication ability to learn new communicative genres relevant to teaching in U.S. higher education, and expand and redefine the ones they already have (e.g., Gunthner, 2007).

As key players in the success of ITAs and their contributions to undergraduate teaching in the U.S.A., ITA educators and others involved in ITA development, such as departmental graduate advisors and lab supervisors, need to cultivate an ever more nuanced appreciation of what contributes to ITAs' assumptions about good teaching. Results from this study contribute to this in terms of asking and perhaps answering the question: What have ITAs experienced in educational cultures thus far (including *our* own local educational culture), both as learners and teachers? As the results show, ITAs are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with formal knowledge about how teachers in the U.S.A. are supposed to act and think. And, what we assume ITAs believe may not be the case. This understanding may more rightly focus our efforts on creating opportunities for ITAs to build upon existing procedural knowledge or begin developing procedural knowledge to manage a class, maintain relationships with students, and to communicate information.

The interaction of data resulting from teaching belief items and grouping variables. Because of the stringent $p < .0023$ value set for the comparisons for all 44 questionnaire items on teaching beliefs, only 19 statistically different responses were found according to country where the bachelor's degree was earned, home country teaching experience, etc. Nonetheless, what differences were found were suggestive of ITAs as complex young people at the outset of their professional careers, with varied experiences in educational cultures both at the national level, and beyond it. They have well-formed propositional knowledge (world knowledge) about what they have observed and experienced. Evidence from the teaching belief items on the questionnaire, grouped by country in which respondents earned their bachelor's degree, and U.S. and home country teaching experience, suggests that procedural knowledge (experience *doing* teaching) may contribute to stronger agreement or disagreement, or more focused positions, with the attitudes captured in the teaching belief items. A case in point is in Table 1, where Chinese students, who are the least likely to have teaching experience of any kind, respond to *A good teacher gives definitions for the concepts being taught* with a tepid (compared to other respondents) $M = 3.97$ and a wide SD of .867 suggesting less agreement around the mean.

If one were to take only evidence from teaching beliefs mediated by country, one might conclude that the differences between Sri Lanka, or Korea, or China, might be due to some feature of the cultures of those countries. Perhaps in China, it is not part of young people's educational experiences to have definitions given for concepts being taught, and for Korean and Sri Lankans it is. But when viewed with evidence from the teaching belief items grouped by other variables, such as U.S. or home country teaching experience, *and* the frequency data showing more clearly these variables as elements of the *contexts* (educational cultures), a stronger position for the role of procedural knowledge (*doing* teaching) as a mediator of teaching beliefs might be argued for. ITAs who earned their undergraduate degrees in India, Korea, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and the U.S.A. are more likely than those educated in China, to have *some* kind of teaching experience, and thus greater access to the development of procedural knowledge (Table 3). Respondents earning their bachelor's degrees in India, Korea, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and the U.S.A. tended to have more pronounced agreement or disagreement with the teaching belief statements used in this study (Table 1).

These results are by no means conclusive. Highlighting the role of procedural knowledge in mediating teaching beliefs was not the object of this study. Rather, the object was to highlight the individual ITA as he or she moved through educational cultures that might constrain what experiences were possible to have. But it cannot hurt to consider procedural knowledge as significant. Those involved in ITA development may wish to appeal to ITAs' experiences as teachers (and as learners) in a variety of educational settings and use them as bases for discussion, open exchanges of beliefs and sharing personal evidence for them, and the cultivation of procedural knowledge through extended, guided teaching practica. Certainly, the eight years of handling this data have transformed the author, resulting in her belief that language instruction divorced from teaching opportunities will have limited effectiveness in preparing ITAs. An unfortunate irony is that there are few opportunities for low language ability ITAs to do team teaching, or other means of developing their procedural knowledge along with their communication ability. Institutional rules may forbid it, and/or academic departments and faculty supervisors are not willing to deal with it (see, however, Tapper & Kidder, 2006).

What then of U.S. educational culture? The data revealed some indications of U.S. higher educational culture as being distinctive in the sense that respondents who had earned undergraduate degrees in the U.S.A., or had U.S. teaching experience, felt that it was important to communicate assignment expectations and grading systems to undergraduates. But other responses suggested other educational systems had their "peaks," such as Sri Lankan respondents insisting on the importance of teacher eye contact. U.S. educational culture, to the extent the responses on the questionnaire revealed it, had more in common with other educational cultures, such as that of India and Turkey. Respondents with experience in these contexts suggested they valued the ideas of giving assignments that lead students to use concepts they are learning, and teachers demonstrating knowledge of the subject (Table 1). Negotiating U.S. educational culture is of course important to ITAs. Yet U.S. educational culture is not unique, and any newcomer to any new teaching setting will need to do their own negotiating and learning the language needed to function in it in ways that bring about teacher and student learning (e.g., Crabtree & Sapp, 2004).

Limitations. There are likely multiple differences in teaching beliefs according other life circumstances not accounted for in this study. Further, there is little explanation on why, for example, so few Sri Lankans and Turkish ITAs were able to study in the U.S.A. during their undergraduate career, and why more Indian and Korean ITAs were able to. Thus only the bare bone facts expressed by frequencies (Table 3) are known about these educational cultures as contexts, which is surely incomplete. Finally, some readers may not find the framework used to generate teaching belief items compelling, or they may doubt whether participants' responses predict what participants would actually do as teachers. However, their responses indicate predisposition, which given the right circumstances, will result in actions congruent to beliefs (Ajzen, 1988).

Conclusion

In this return to ITAs, their teaching beliefs, and U.S. educational culture, insights were gained on the patterns of how different educational cultures in these countries offered, or did not offer, undergraduate teaching opportunities, or study in the U.S.A., for students who later became ITAs in the U.S.A. These, and other life circumstances expressed as experiences in undergraduate education, seemed to mediate a number of ITAs' responses on teaching belief statements. This research supports a nuanced view of what ITAs bring, and do not bring, to the table in terms of their assumptions about teaching, and proposes a central role for development of language and procedural knowledge for ITA cultural adaptation to their professional roles in U.S. higher education.

About the Author

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Appendix

All Likert scale items on questions and whole group descriptive statistics on participants' teaching beliefs (*N* = 202)

Attitudes pertaining to sociolinguistic competence

Item	*M*	*SD*	Mode
3. A good teacher has students stand up before answering a question in class.	2.46	1.034	2
4. A good teacher has late students ask permission to enter the classroom.	3.00	1.027	None
5. A good teacher has a higher position and students should respect them.	3.30	1.047	4
6. A good teacher uses clear verbal warnings if students need to change their behavior.	3.62	.921	4
13. A good teacher tries to find out something about students, such as their names.	4.20	.716	4
16. A good teacher shows enthusiasm for the subject being taught.	4.72	.491	5
23. A good teacher has friend-to-friend relationships with students.	4.19	.833	5
25. A good teacher uses examples that students can relate to.	4.67	.539	5

Attitudes pertaining to textual competence

Item	*M*	*SD*	Mode
7. A good teacher summarizes during lectures.	4.38	.698	5

Item	*M*	*SD*	Mode
9. A good teacher allows students to answer other students' questions on course content during class.	4.01	.878	3
10. A good teacher writes newly introduced technical terms on the board.	4.37	.725	5
11. A good teacher has students learn by using students' points of view to generate discussion.	4.22	.651	4
14. A good teacher welcomes student questions and comments.	4.77	.446	5
17. A good teacher gives students prepared note outlines for class.	4.04	.806	4
18. A good teacher gives definitions for the concepts being taught.	4.23	.784	5
20. A good teacher speaks quickly to cover content during lectures.	2.40	1.001	2
21. A good teacher lectures without following an outline.	2.25	.966	2
24. A good teacher verbally explains graphs, diagrams, or photographs used in class.	4.14	.933	4
27. A good teacher discusses possible errors in test score calculation with a student.	4.05	.711	4
28. A good teacher	4.04	.779	4

Item	*M*	*SD*	Mode
communicates assignment expectations to students by writing them on the board or using a handout.			
31. A good teacher will discuss a change for the due date of an assignment if the student is having a family emergency.	4.17	.706	4
38. A good teacher communicates to students the course grading system.	4.15	.823	4

Attitudes pertaining to non-verbal communication

Item	*M*	*SD*	Mode
19. A good teacher looks at students during lectures.	4.38	.690	5
35. A good teacher watches students' faces during lectures to see if they understand.	4.38	.722	5
36. A good teacher wears jeans or shorts and t-shirts in class, the same as students.	3.11	.994	3

Attitudes pertaining to local educational culture

Item	*M*	*SD*	Mode
1. A good teacher lectures and has students take notes most of the time.	2.95	1.128	2
2. A good teacher has students sit quietly in class, and listen carefully.	2.83	1.285	2
8. A good teacher demonstrates	4.47	.679	5

Item	*M*	*SD*	Mode
knowledge of the subject being taught.			
12. A good teacher keeps the difficulty level of the teaching high to challenge students.	3.10	1.095	3
15. A good teacher communicates learning expectations to students.	4.50	.592	5
22. A good teacher uses graphs, diagrams, or photographs to help explain concepts.	4.51	.633	5
26. A good teacher chooses technical articles from the field of study for students to read.	4.04	.694	4
29. A good teacher gives assignments which show student mastery of content.	3.89	.754	4
30. A good teacher knows that American students have similar social backgrounds and educational levels.	3.23	.939	3
32. A good teacher gives assignments which lead students to use concepts taught in class.	4.25	.687	4
33. A good teacher gives a few big tests, instead of many quizzes.	3.01	.982	3
34. A good teacher keeps students' grades confidential.	4.00	.977	4
37. A good teacher treats all students the	4.44	.915	5

Item	*M*	*SD*	Mode
same.			
39. A good teacher tells a student how he or she ranked in a test compared to the other students.	3.23	1.155	3
40. A good teacher has students learn by having them memorize what the teacher says.	2.80	1.186	2
41. A good teacher tests students only on the concepts taught in class.	2.83	1.026	3
42. A good teacher expects students to do their own major assignments without help from other students.	3.28	1.009	4
43. A good teacher gives students a document with information on assignment and test dates, late assignment policies, and teacher contact information.	4.26	.750	4
44. A good teacher awards points for all assignments.	3.92	.841	4