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Linguistic diversity and the politics of international inclusion in higher education: A critical sociolinguistic study international teaching assistants

Nicholas Subtirelu

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LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND THE POLITICS OF INTERNATIONAL INCLUSION IN

HIGHER EDUCATION: A CRITICAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

by

NICHOLAS CLOSE SUBTIRELU

Under the Direction of Stephanie Lindemann, PhD

ABSTRACT

Institutions of higher education (HEIs) in the United States recruit numerous international graduate students, many of whom serve as teaching assistants. HEIs' motivations for employing international teaching assistants (ITAs) include not only economic incentives but also humanistic aims of internationalization, for example, increasing cross-cultural cooperation. However, integrating ITAs into the institution, making them welcomed and respected members of the community, has proven difficult. In particular, problems in ITA-student communication have been reported for decades.

I argue that the crux of these integration difficulties lies in how linguistic diversity is approached. Policymakers and researchers usually treat ITAs' Englishes as the cause of communication difficulties, with the implication that ITAs should more closely conform to

norms of 'native' English. I propose instead that the primary problem is not linguistic diversity itself but ideological perceptions of other Englishes and unproductive responses to the difficulties that arise in trying to communicate across linguistic difference.

This study examined policies and perceptions related to ITA-student communication at one internationalizing university through document collection, interviews, and classroom observation. I found that, despite its strategic plan calling for preparing students to enter a globalizing world, the institution's response to ITA-student communication difficulties targets only ITAs' competencies, mainly by assessing and remediating their language proficiency. Discussions with students and observations of classroom interaction revealed that many students appeared to orient to communication with ITAs in ways that did not help promote successful communication or prepare them to communicate across linguistic difference in a globalizing world. I also found that available ideological stances and strategies for addressing linguistic difference made it difficult for ITAs to be simultaneously liked and respected as instructors.

This study has implications for HEIs seeking to create internationally inclusive communities and prepare their students and other stakeholders for communication across linguistic difference. First, ITA preparation should be reframed so as not to stigmatize ITAs' Englishes. It should also prepare ITAs to become active agents in socializing students into productive and respectful orientations to linguistic difference. Second, HEIs must more comprehensively seek to confront students' deficit language ideologies and unproductive responses to communication difficulties.

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NICHOLAS CLOSE SUBTIRELU

Committee Chair: Stephanie Lindemann

Committee: Diane Belcher

Eric Friginal

YouJin Kim

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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Coleman, Diedra Crockett, Wanda Page, and Satuday Sam. I'm grateful for the patience they and others showed me and the hours they spent helping to make sure that all of the accounts were in order.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

1   INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is about challenges faced by institutions of higher education (HEIs) as they attempt to navigate the various incentives for internationalization, including both the potential economic benefits and humanistic aims, as well as broader ideological forces at play in the societies they are part of. I focus in particular on the challenges that HEIs face with respect to the integration of a particular group, international teaching assistants (ITAs). HEIs have found it difficult to create the conditions under which ITAs can perform their duties as instructors and be valued for the skills and perspectives that they bring. The devaluing of ITAs' language, knowledge, and pedagogical labor represents a serious undermining of HEIs' own missions of creating communities of learning where people from different backgrounds come together, cooperate, and together achieve more than they might have otherwise been able to.

These challenges, I believe, can be illustrated with a brief look at two excerpts from two different documents, one authored by and one written about the same HEI. I have withheld the institution's name to avoid drawing undue attention to it, especially because I believe there are many institutions where this same and similar problems are prevalent. The first text I present comes from a 2007 report written by a committee that was assigned to explore this institution's internationalization and make recommendations about where it can improve and become more competitive as part of the institution's development of a strategic plan. The report makes it clear that there are areas where the institution can and should improve, especially in creating a more substantial international experiences for students, promoting and celebrating internationally focused research among the faculty, and making institutional efforts to incentivize international programs on campus and globally-oriented perspectives and competencies among all stakeholders. The document, however, begins with a celebration of the institution's aspirational

vision for itself as an internationally inclusive community in a globalizing world that could have

been written by just about any HEI in the United States or, indeed, in the world (see Jenkins'

2014 analysis of similar materials created by universities all over the world).

> In today's global economy, and in a world of increasingly complex networks of human
> mobility, it is imperative for an institution of higher education to train students for the
> challenges and promises of the global community. It is also important for the institution
> to recognize and celebrate ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences in its educational
> and scholarly mission. It is only through an educated global citizenship that we may
> reach a kind of international conscience that promotes justice, peace, and humanity while
> protecting culture and the environment in the academic pursuit of creativity and
> innovation: artistic, scientific, and technological.

The second text is from a newspaper article, which was published nearly two years after

the report (in 2009) and which describes events that appear to have taken place merely a year

after the report's publication. I have altered some of the details in the excerpt, again to avoid

drawing undue attention to any of the parties, but also because I have read similar reports from

students across the United States printed in many different newspapers (King, 1998 points to

many newspaper articles publishing similar complaints from students) and made available on

websites like RateMyProfessors.com (Subtirelu, 2015). Although many of the details are specific

to this incident, narratives with very similar structure are repeatedly passed around dinner tables,

dorm rooms, and social media.

> Andrew Smith was eager to study math when he enrolled at [the university from above].
> But he says he encountered an unexpected obstacle that had nothing to do with complex
> formulas. [Smith, originally from a town in New York,] could not figure out what his

math instructor was saying -- because of the teacher's heavy foreign accent. "I couldn't understand the teacher, so I dropped the course before the first exam so I wouldn't be penalized," Smith said. "It was very upsetting." A year later, the 19-year-old, who aspires to become an accountant, says he is taking the same calculus and statistics course and getting high marks. "I have a teacher with a New York City accent, and I have an 'A' so far," Smith said. "Don't tell me there aren't teachers out there who can't speak English."

There is a profound disconnect here between the institution's discourse calling for the recognition and celebration of "ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences" and the student's reported experience in cross-cultural contact in the classroom, ending with his dropping a course taught by an instructor from outside the United States, a nonnative[1] speaker of English. Indeed, linguistic difference is hardly being celebrated here. International instructors' Englishes are not even framed as different from but rather as complete deficits, as an indication that the instructors "can't speak English". The presence of an international instructor has not helped the student to learn to cope with the "challenges" inherent in participation in "the global community", one of which is most certainly the need to communicate across linguistic difference, since he has instead decided to avoid this challenge altogether and run back into the comfortable familiarity of an instructor with a more similar cultural and linguistic background to his own.

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[1] The terms "nonnative" and "native" and the distinction they imply have, over the past few decades, been the subject of criticism in applied linguistics (e.g., Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001; A. Davies, 1991). Davies argues that the distinction is predicated on a myth, and Brutt-Griffler and Samimy argue that the terms are only superficially connected to linguistic competence and are better described as "non-elected socially constructed identities" (p. 99). While these criticisms surely pose a challenge to essentialist understandings of the terms as concrete linguistic categories, they are fully compatible with my use of them here. I use the terms "nonnative" and "native" throughout this manuscript to refer to an ideological system of categorization, not unlike race or gender. The system is relevant not for its scientific merits (of which there are few) but rather for the way individuals and society orient to it. Thus, I believe that, in this work, which describes how stakeholders at a university orient to the language of a group of nonnative speakers, it is useful to use the terms to refer to these "non-elected socially constructed identities", because of the contextual relevance and the material consequences they have.

Of course, the authors of the report I quoted above noted that there were areas where the institution needed to improve with respect to its internationalization, but notably there is no direct mention of students' perceptions of linguistic difference, their willingness to engage in communication with international students or instructors, or any other indication that classroom interaction might be a site where there are past failures in internationalization as well as substantial opportunities for meaningful benefits in its report. Indeed, based on her own study of Anglophone universities, Dippold (2015) argues that the interaction that goes on in classrooms is systematically ignored as a priority in HEI internationalization. This appears to be true of the institution that is the subject of the excerpts above as well. The committee's suggestions for internationalization include proposed increases in study abroad opportunities, ambitious goals for second language learning, plans to create and strengthen partnerships with universities outside the United States, and commitments to infusing course content with more international materials and perspectives. While any of these things might be expected to have some benefit on students' attitudes toward linguistic difference and their willingness to engage in interaction with their international instructors, none of them necessarily targets this directly or comprehensively.

In the report as well as in other documents concerning the institution's ongoing internationalization that I examined, there are few mentions of actual contact or communication between native English-speaking students from the United States, who are supposed to benefit from the university's international community, and members of that community whose backgrounds differ from their own in particular in that they are nonnative speakers of English. Such contact appears to be mostly assumed to take place and to be more or less successful.

Clearly, however, these assumptions are unwarranted. For decades, there have been indications of the pressing challenges related to the integration of international students and

faculty at US HEIs. In this study, I discuss one particular group, international teaching assistants and the challenges they face with respect to integration at one internationalizing US university, which I call Shrinking World University (SWU, pseudonym).

In the next chapter, Chapter 2, I more thoroughly discuss the internationalization of US HEIs and the influences on this process including both economic and pedagogic ends, attempting to situate international teaching assistants within this internationalization. I also present an overview of past applied linguistics literature on ITAs arguing that, although it often acknowledges the complexities in ITA-student communication including how students can affect such communication, it is characterized by an implicit politics that stresses the need for ITAs to conform to US norms of interaction rather than advocating for a politics that would stress the need for, for example, an institutional recognition and celebration of "ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences". Finally, I present my own approach to research on this topic, which I characterize as a critical sociolinguistic perspective, and which proceeds from a very different political position, one that stresses the need for all parties to be ready and willing to communicate across linguistic difference so that ITAs and other nonnative English speakers at the institution can be integrated.

In Chapter 3, I introduce the case study that I use to explore these issues at one internationalizing HEI, Shrinking World University. The chapter provides an overview of the data collection and analysis procedures that were used for my critical sociolinguistic case study.

In Chapter 4, I present an analysis of the policy situation at SWU. I first show that SWU, like many universities including the one I discussed above, has expressed institutional commitments to international cooperation and fostering "global competency" among its stakeholders. Despite this, policy-making related to ITAs and other international instructors

targets the nonnative speaking instructor, not other stakeholders. In light of this, I discuss how ITAs at SWU are selected and prepared to serve in their institutional roles, highlighting a number of places where ITAs might receive better preparation as well as ways in which the institution might approach such preparation in a way that does not stigmatize ITAs' Englishes.

In Chapter 5, I begin discussing an oft-neglected aspect of what is sometimes called 'the ITA problem': how students, many of whom are native English speakers, orient to communication with their nonnative English-speaking instructors. Based on focus groups with students and interviews with ITAs, I describe students' orientations toward communication across linguistic difference and show that the SWU student population is not homogeneous in the way it approaches such communication and how it responds to the difficulties that arise during it. I focus on how some students demonstrate a preference for Avoidance, consistently choosing not to interact or have contact with ITAs and other international instructors, and their justifications for this orientation. I also show that the opposite orientation, Collaboration, is not without its challenges, since it involves the need for both ITAs and students to attend to possible face threats.

In Chapter 6, I look specifically at how students and ITAs attempt to deal with the difficulties they encounter when communicating across linguistic difference as well as the perceptions they have of the process and each other. I show that the difficulties in the ITA-student interaction that I observed are not, as is commonly assumed, a function merely of alleged linguistic 'deficiencies' on the part of the ITA. Rather, linguistic difference may trigger difficulties, but students' choices, in particular the choice not to engage in conversational repair, often ensure that difficulty is never resolved. I also discuss how the need to negotiate difficulties that are encountered in the classroom puts ITAs in an awkward position of having to balance

their need to be seen as an authority in the classroom and the need to have students perceive them as caring, likeable instructors.

In Chapter 7, I conclude this study with an overview of my findings as well as recommendations for future research and ways forward for institutional policy, ITA preparation, and programs to begin to offer preparation for students to engage in communication across linguistic difference with their ITAs and others.

2   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, I attempt to provide an overview of the context in which my study is situated. I first discuss internationalization as a process of strategic institutional response to forces of globalization, highlighting specifically how international teaching assistants (ITAs) are a part of this larger process and the possible motivations and incentives that drive their recruitment or the possible value they might add to the institution and its educational mission. I then move on to discussing research on ITAs that has come mostly out of applied linguistics. I do not intend to comprehensively review this literature but rather to examine the body of work more holistically, discussing the implicit politics driving much of the field's work with ITAs. Next, I discuss what a critical sociolinguistic perspective might look like, what it might add to our understanding of ITA-student communication, and what it might offer institutions of higher education struggling with the integration of ITAs and other international faculty. Finally, I discuss briefly the scope of my own research on this topic, specifically introducing my research questions.

2.1 The ITA, the internationalizing US university, and the globalizing world

The different regions of the world we inhabit have become demonstrably more connected over time. More recently, these connections have been aided by technologies like air travel, which permits the transportation of people and goods, and computer networks, which permit the flow of information and ideas. They have also been aided by the more deliberate efforts of political and economic actors, such as universities, trying to access specific markets previously outside of their purview. These efforts can be described as internationalization. HEIs in the United States (and elsewhere) have been engaged in internationalization for decades. Perhaps most saliently, their internationalization has brought about the presence of many "international"—originating outside of the US—faculty (Kim, Twombly, & Wolf-Wendel, 2012) and students (Institute of International Education, 2015).

The prevalence of international teaching assistants is suggested by the demographics of doctoral recipients from US HEIs, as shown in the National Science Foundation's (2014) *Survey of Earned Doctorates*. According to the NSF's data, temporary visa holders accounted for approximately 31.8% of all awarded doctorates in 2014, the most recent year for which data is available. This percentage varied greatly by field. It was quite a bit higher within most of the STEM fields. For example, in Engineering, temporary visa holders accounted for about 51.6% of all doctoral recipients. In other fields, it was substantially lower; for example, in Education, only about 10% of all doctoral recipients were temporary visa holders. To my knowledge, no data is available on precisely how many of these doctoral recipients served as teaching assistants nor how many of them would be regarded as nonnative speakers of English (or speakers of stigmatized Englishes). However, given the prevalence of teaching assistantships as a form of support for graduate studies as well as graduate programs' desire to give their graduates

experience in the classroom, it is likely that many of these doctoral recipients did serve as teaching assistants at some point during their graduate education. Furthermore, the top four national origins (China, India, South Korea, and Taiwan; Canada was fifth) accounted for about 58.8% of temporary visa holders who earned doctorates at US HEIs in 2014, which suggests that the majority of these temporary visa holders are nonnative English speakers or speakers of Englishes that are stigmatized in the United States (e.g., Indian English).

US HEIs' recruitment of international faculty and students (ITAs are arguably both) has numerous possible motivations, which I divide into two categories. The first are factors related to potential (short term) economic gain or advantage. Although HEIs often seek to recruit international students as a way of generating revenue, since ITAs' assistantships usually cover their tuition costs, this may not be the most relevant incentive for understanding the economic incentives that drive HEIs' recruitment of ITAs. However, considering the use of assistantships as a recruitment tool helps to explain why US HEIs may employ large numbers of ITAs.

Teaching (and other) assistantships serve a number of functions for HEIs. Graduate assistants provide labor in the form of teaching classes, grading papers, leading recitation or lab sections, and other duties. HEIs also use these assistantships to their advantage in the competition to attract and recruit new graduate students. As Stephan, Scellato, and Franzoni (2015) note, US HEIs' ability to provide the tuition waivers and stipends that come along with assistantships is an important influence on where prospective international graduate students choose to earn their degrees. As they point out, such incentives are likely more powerful for attracting international students (from certain, usually less wealthy, backgrounds) than US students into graduate programs, since the typical stipends associated with assistantships are substantially lower than average starting salaries in the US for individuals with Bachelor's

degrees. This appears to be one of the driving forces behind the large numbers of international graduate students enrolled in US graduate programs in fields related to the natural sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics (Ginther, 2003; King, 1998). The wages offered to teaching assistants then prove to be a fairly inadequate way of attracting US students into the candidate pool, but they do serve as an incentive for students from other countries to apply to programs in the US, suggesting that HEIs and ITAs have the potential for mutual economic benefit from the arrangement.

However, there are other possible motivations behind US HEIs' recruitment of international faculty and students, and more specifically ITAs. Among these are factors related to the internationalization of the curriculum or, as Leask (2009, p. 209) describes it "the incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning process", and institutions routinely position themselves as engaged in the internationalization of their curriculum (Dippold, 2015). However, Dippold argues that most of the focus in internationalization of the curriculum has been on the inclusion of materials and content from other national contexts into existing programs. She points out that there are potentially important, but as of yet unrealized, benefits of educational initiatives that attempt to engage students in meaningful interaction with others who have backgrounds different from their own. Viewed in this manner, international students and faculty, of which ITAs are a part, become an important asset in creating opportunities for students, especially those students who have not had much exposure to people from different backgrounds, to develop competence in interacting with and understanding others. Indeed, HEIs around the world, including in the US, now routinely express commitments to developing students' competences related to working

with others in a globalizing world (Dippold, 2015; Jenkins, 2014), and the ITA-taught classroom is potentially an arena where such competencies could be developed and practiced.

It is within this context of globalization and HEIs' attempts to respond to it that 'the ITA problem' has arisen as an issue that policymakers, researchers, and educators have grappled with. Confronted with instructors whose cultural and linguistic backgrounds differ from their own, US students have complained that, among other things, they have difficulties understanding their ITAs and other international instructors (Alberts, Hazen, & Theobald, 2013; Bailey, 1984a; Berdie, Anderson, Wenberg, & Price, 1976; Damron, 2003; Fitch & Morgan, 2003; Fox & Gay, 1994; Halleck & Moder, 1995; Plakans, 1997; Subtirelu, 2015; Villarreal, 2013).

Students' complaints have not fallen on deaf ears. In the 1980s and 1990s, they were heard by state legislators and other policy makers, who took it upon themselves to address the problem through state-level policy creation in twenty states (C. F. Thomas & Monoson, 1993). Other states contemplated similar state policies, and other university systems took the initiative to address the complaints of their own accord (King, 1998). King points to student and parent complaints about ITAs' language and their dissemination in public media as the impetus for these policy efforts, and Ginther (2003) suggests that administrators have been further motivated by the desire to avoid litigation arising from students' complaints. Bailey (1984a) notes that, since universities orient to students as consumers, students have a powerful voice in institutional decision-making with respect to 'the ITA problem'. The resulting policies usually mandated that HEIs assess the English proficiency of prospective ITAs (and in some cases, other international instructors) and remediate those whose language is found lacking. HEIs' and state governments' policy responses then suggest a clear tendency toward privileging the perspectives of students who issued complaints (Ginther, 2003), allowing the need to quell their dissatisfaction to prevail

over other possible motivations for internationalization, like the fostering of skills for communicating across linguistic difference among all parties.

2.2 A review of past research on ITA-student communication

2.2.1 Acknowledging nonlinguistic factors in ITA-student communication

While most state legislators and university administrators appeared to focus on the ITA's language as the source of communication problems, researchers and educators (particularly those working directly with ITAs) have long acknowledged that there are many other factors involved in ITA-student communication difficulties. For example, ITAs' lack of teaching experience and their lack of familiarity with US cultural norms have both been widely discussed in the literature as aspects of the situation that are perhaps more relevant to addressing the situation than focusing on the ITAs' language (e.g., Hoekje & Williams, 1992).

In addition, researchers have also long acknowledged that students play a role in the difficulties that they complain of (e.g., Kaplan, 1989) and have suggested that any attempt to address these issues should also address students' contributions (Bailey, 1983; Tyler & Davies, 1990). The best known and most compelling demonstration of the role students play in communication with their international instructors can be found in the work of Rubin and Kang (Kang & Rubin, 2009; Rubin, 1992), which suggests that undergraduate students' perceptions of ITAs' race can affect their comprehension of ITAs' speech. In their experiments, Rubin and Kang have used recordings of a White speaker born in the United States. Two groups of undergraduate students are asked to listen to the lecture and take a comprehension test as well as answer questions about their perceptions of the speaker. One group is shown a picture of a White person whom they are led to believe is the speaker. The second group is shown a picture of an Asian person. Students who were led to believe that they were listening to an Asian speaker

performed worse than the other group on a comprehension test and also reported that the speaker spoke with more of a 'foreign' accent. Rubin and Kang's work, which demonstrates how listeners' perceptions of a speakers' race affects how they hear their speech, offers a compelling illustration of why attempts to address ITA-student communication difficulties through exclusive focus on ITAs is an approach that is doomed to fail.

Despite these important acknowledgments, I argue that, up until very recently, researchers examining ITA-student communication have rarely thoroughly examined or attempted to address the role of students' perceptions or contributions to instructional communication. Instead, the methodological choices and theoretical orientations of past research suggests an implicit politics that views 'the ITA problem' as chiefly an issue of ITAs' non-conformity to the communicative norms of US higher education. Such research also implicitly or explicitly suggests ITAs' adoption of these norms as its solution to this problem.

2.2.2 *Experimental research*

Although communication between ITAs and students is ostensibly at the center of 'the ITA problem', researchers have often chosen not to study interaction between students and ITAs in instructional settings with several notable exceptions (e.g., Axelson & Madden, 1994; Bailey, 1984b; Chiang, 2009a; C. E. Davies & Tyler, 2005; C. L. Myers, 1994; Rounds, 1987; Tyler, 1995). Many researchers, particularly those working on topics related to pronunciation or discourse structure, have relied on experimental techniques, in which they present a recorded excerpt of an ITA (or prospective ITA) delivering a monologue. In these experiments, participants are asked to respond to the recordings in constrained ways, for example, pointing to areas they find difficult to understand (Gallego, 1990), providing perceptual ratings of speech qualities including intelligibility or comprehensibility (Hsu, 2011; Isaacs, 2008; Kang, 2010; J.

Williams, 1992), answering comprehension questions (Hahn, 2004), or commenting on their experiences while listening (Tyler, 1992).

Importantly, such studies prioritize the level of experimental control they are able to achieve through the use of recordings, allowing them to present the same speech event to multiple participants. However, these experimental procedures do not allow researchers to explore how student listeners might respond when they encounter communication difficulty, rendering communication in their studies unidirectional and placing the onus for ensuring success in communication on the speaker (Rajadurai, 2007; Rajagopalan, 2010).

Furthermore, the listening experiences of the native listener and the listener-internal factors that might affect such experiences are not examined in detail in most of these studies (Lindemann & Subtirelu, 2013), although some more recent research suggests that this is a possible avenue for inquiry in these studies. Zielinski (2008), for example, played recordings of nonnative speakers to native listeners but focused on the listening strategies that the listeners employed, arguing that what they chose to attend to in the speech stream contributed to the communication difficulties they experienced. In addition, Kang (2012) played recordings of ITAs to student listeners and considered both features of the ITAs' speech as well as characteristics of the listeners (e.g., their experience interacting with nonnative speakers) in trying to explain their rating behavior. She found a combination of these factors could be used to explain the variance in students' ratings of the ITAs' oral proficiency and instructional competence.

As a result, because of their methodological designs and the theoretical orientations through which they approach their data, most experimental studies on ITAs begin their inquiry from the presupposition that the ITA's language is the primary or most relevant source of

difficulties in ITA-student communication. There is ample reason to suggest, however, that students are not merely neutral or objective recipients of their ITAs' speech (see Lindemann & Subtirelu, 2013 for a review). Furthermore, as I will discuss in more detail below, there is reason to suggest that students' responses to the communication difficulty that they encounter is a crucial determinant of whether ITA-student communication is successful.

2.2.3   *Comparing ITAs to their native English-speaking counterparts*

As another way of attempting to improve ITA-student communication or ITA preparation, researchers have sometimes analyzed the instructional discourse of US-born native English-speaking instructors. In some cases, the discursive work that these instructors do is merely presented as a model that ITAs can work toward emulating during ITA preparation courses (e.g., Byrd & Constantinides, 1992; McChesney, 1994). In other cases, comparisons are drawn between ITAs' language use and that of the native English-speaking instructors, usually with the implication that the native speakers' discourse represents a standard against which the ITAs' performance should be evaluated (e.g., Pickering, 2001; Pickering, 2004; Rounds, 1987).

There are two limitations of these studies' theoretical assumptions, which are reflected in their methodological choices, that I believe are important. First, although the researchers would likely not suggest that absolute conformity to native norms is required for functional comprehensibility, their use of native norms as their baseline excludes any examination of how ITAs are able to be successful communicators even when they deviate from such norms, or when they rely on other norms. Perhaps success as an ITA is in part predicated on the ability to draw on different, ITA-specific strategies.

Second, the use of native English speakers as a baseline implies that ITAs can unproblematically adopt such norms and, therefore, should do just that. With respect to features

of pronunciation, this may prove arduous, if not outright impossible, as well as unnecessary, since deviation from native norms in no way necessitates that communication will be unsuccessful. With respect to features like discourse strategies (e.g., how to show politeness), the differences in the social positionalities of ITAs and native English-speaking instructors raise the possibility that students' reception of particular strategies when used by an ITA will be different than when used by a native TA (Yates, 2005), such as more informal or colloquial means by which US-born TAs might build rapport or couch directives. Furthermore, ITAs' intersectional identities may raise unique challenges for them in trying to construct an identity as caring, competent, and authoritative instructors in light of widespread ideologies about their languages and identities. I return to these issues in more detail below.

2.2.4 Interethnic/cross-cultural interactional sociolinguistics

As I mentioned above, there has been some research that attempts to explore difficulties in ITA-student communication by directly observing and analyzing interaction between ITAs (or prospective ITAs) and students in instructional settings. Much of this work has relied on two very different and influential approaches to the study of human interaction: interethnic or cross-cultural interactional sociolinguistics and conversation analysis. Both of these approaches share an admirable commitment to closely examining communication that takes place within the types of settings and under the types of conditions that the researchers hope to generalize to. However, as with any research approach, their methodological prescriptions and theoretical assumptions render them unprepared to fully explore or consider all of the possible aspects of the situation and context that might be germane to the larger issue. I argue that the aspects of ITA-student communication that are not considered in these studies impacts how that communication is presented and ultimately what types of policy recommendations are derived from this research.

The work of Tyler and Davies has fruitfully employed interactional sociolinguistics to understand how communication difficulties between ITAs and students arise, and they identify speakers' socialization into different linguistic communities that favor different uses and interpretations of discourse strategies as a major factor in these difficulties (C. E. Davies & Tyler, 2005; Tyler, 1995; Tyler & Davies, 1990). Their work provides rich, triangulated description of moments in ITA-student interaction that were problematic from multiple perspectives: the analysts', the (prospective) ITAs', and the students'.

It is worth considering one of these studies in greater detail. Tyler (1995) provides a detailed analysis of how a prospective computer science TA from South Korea and a US university student who has come to seek tutoring from him end up miscommunicating to the point that they both complain about each other's non-cooperation to the tutor's supervisor. The student has come seeking help on a project, in which she is asked to create a computer program that can take a list of numbers and produce a bowling score from them. Apart from the technical knowledge necessary, the task also requires knowledge of the rules of bowling, and this is the central point of communication difficulty according to Tyler.

Early in the conversation, the student acknowledges her own lack of familiarity with bowling, having only bowled a few times, and attempts to assess the tutor's knowledge of bowling, asking whether he knows how to keep score in bowling, to which he responds "yeah approximately" (p. 136). Tyler points out that the tutor's mitigation (i.e., *approximately*) is probably unexpected for a US university student, who would probably expect an instructor or tutor who is truly knowledgeable about the topic to simply claim expertise. When Tyler consulted the Korean tutor about the interaction, he reported that he was in fact quite knowledgeable about the game of bowling, but, as a cultural outsider, he was uncomfortable

making a bald claim to authority since he felt the topic fell within the purview of US cultural knowledge.

Tyler points out that the interlocutors appear to operate from different interpretations of who has been established as the authority on the rules of bowling in their conversation. The student believes that they have reached the implicit agreement that she is the authority, whereas the tutor believes he has been recognized as the one with the greater knowledge. The two later disagree about how play proceeds in bowling when a strike is bowled with the tutor correctly claiming that the frame is over (the player does not get a second ball) and the student erroneously insisting that the pins are reset and the bowler gets to bowl again. Tyler points out that the student challenges the tutor's attempted explanations of how the scoring works eight times, apparently based on her understanding that she has the superior knowledge of bowling and her belief that he is incorrect about how it works.

Tyler's analysis is insightful for many reasons including its identification of the initial point of difficulty, the differing interpretations of which interlocutor has the greater authority on matters of bowling. It is also commendable for its inclusion of multiple perspectives, including the international tutor's which is often neglected in research on ITAs. Nonetheless, an important criticism of interethnic interactional sociolinguistics is that it fails to consider the degree to which communication difficulty is not necessarily the result merely of culturally specific differences in discourse strategies but rather in how more generally shared principles of cooperation in communication are routinely eschewed in these contexts (Lippi-Green, 2012; Singh, Lele, & Martohardjono, 1988).

Considering the question of the degree to which the interlocutors are cooperating in communication raises numerous questions about Tyler's analysis. For example, when she

receives the response of "yeah approximately" from the tutor about his knowledge of bowling rules, why does the student assume that this means she is more knowledgeable? Tyler offers the explanation that a US-born tutor would have probably been more assertive about his/her knowledge and implies that the student naturally interprets a lack of assertiveness as a lack of knowledge. However, the tutor's response strikes me as more ambiguous than would warrant a clear interpretation, and it is unclear to me why the student was confident in assuming that the tutor was not knowledgeable about the rules after receiving such an apparently ambiguous response, so confident in fact that she challenges his explanations numerous times. Furthermore, there are numerous moments in the interaction when the student should be aware of an apparent mismatch between her understanding of the tutor as not knowledgeable about the game and features of his discourse, like his disagreement with her about the rules or his seemingly effortless use of specialized bowling terminology. Despite being presented with substantial evidence that there is a mismatch between her belief that the tutor is not knowledgeable about bowling and the way he is talking, the student never attempts to directly address the mismatch in interaction. Instead, she attributes these contradictions to devious intentions on the part of the tutor, telling Tyler that "the guy was playing with my head" (p. 139) and repeatedly challenges his attempts at explaining the rules to her.

As I will argue more thoroughly in the next section and in Chapter 5, how students and ITAs respond to apparent communication difficulty is a crucial determinant of whether it is elevated to the point of being 'problematic' or whether it is merely repaired as part of the routine procedures of the negotiation of meaning. This crucial feature, however, is not considered in studies from interactional sociolinguistics that start from the assumption that all interlocutors are making their best efforts to communicate.

2.2.5   Conversation analysis

Another approach to analyzing ITA-student interaction has been conversation analysis,

exemplified by Chiang's research, which shows how US university students and ITAs

successfully communicate, despite momentary difficulties, during office hours (Chiang, 2009a,

2009b, 2011; Chiang & Mi, 2008). Where interethnic interactional sociolinguistics sees

communication between those from different cultures as a site where miscommunication is

constantly reproduced by the gaps in understanding between usually well-meaning people that

stem from their different past socializations, conversation analysis is thoroughly skeptical of any

attempt to explain conversational data through the lens of larger social structures that cannot be

demonstrated as immediately relevant to the data through appeal to conversational-internal

evidence (e.g., Schegloff, 1997). Conversation analysis then concerns itself with the procedural

accomplishment of mutual understanding in situ and explores this process through focus on

conversational data, often with the deliberate exclusion of other forms of data (e.g., playback

sessions where informants explain their thinking during the conversation). By exploring his data

through the lens of conversation analysis, Chiang is able to present ITA-student communication

in a fairly optimistic light. Specifically, he shows how despite occasional, momentary

difficulties, students and ITAs use a variety of interactive strategies (e.g., asking for repetition of

a specific part of an utterance) to collectively ensure that mutual understanding is reached.

However, conversation analysis has commonly been criticized for imposing dispositions

of cooperative participation on its discourse data and the interlocutors (e.g., by Billig, 1999).

Indeed, while Chiang's work demonstrates convincingly the potential for students and ITAs to

achieve mutual understanding, conceived of narrowly as merely a matter of transmitting

information, it does not take into account other aspects of ITA-student communication such as

how the participants understand and evaluate each other. This is particularly important, since as I will discuss below, the apparent success of communication, understood merely on a referential level or as the completion of some communicative task, is only one aspect of the problems that affect ITA-student communication.

More recently, Chiang (2016) has explored other aspects of communication beyond informational exchange. In this recent study, Chiang examines interview data from students which show that what may appear to be cooperative moves on the part of students (e.g., attempts by students to complete ITAs' utterances when the ITA pauses, apparently because of difficulties in lexical recall) may be motivated not by mere cooperation but by negative assumptions about the competence of their instructors. Chiang argues that such interactional moves and the assumptions that motivate them have the potential to negatively impact ITAs, through, for example, influencing how students evaluate their instructors or helping to continually reproduce the discourse of 'the ITA problem'.

2.2.6   The implicit politics of ITA research

In summary, I believe that the types of research on ITAs that I reviewed in this section have often provided rigorous analyses of ITAs' language and fruitful suggestions for how ITAs might be better prepared to communicate with their US students. However, despite acknowledgments that students play a role in ITA-student communication, research on ITAs has engaged very little with the question of students' contributions to difficulties ITAs and students face in communication (with some exceptions, mostly very recent, mentioned in this section and in the next).

I believe that much of this has to do with the implicit politics behind the research approaches that have been employed. In particular, much of this research appears to take a

pragmatic stance which views ITAs' conformity to US norms of communication as the only truly viable strategy for empowering ITAs, exemplified by a footnote in Kaplan (1989), in which he acknowledges the role students' prejudices may play in ITA-student communication but goes on to dismiss the practicality of researcher and educator concern for this aspect, stating that such prejudices represent "a massive problem, ultimately requiring the re-education of the total population to greater acceptance of foreign accent" (p. 123).

Notably, this pragmatism contradicts the goals of internationalization of the curriculum that, as I discussed in the previous section, universities often purport to be committed to. I believe then that any attempt to fully contend with the roles that both ITAs and students play in communication must take an approach that breaks from the implicit politics of past research on ITAs. This work is already underway, and in the next section I outline my own approach to this topic that serves as the basis for my contribution to this ongoing project of re-thinking ITA-student communication difficulties.

2.3 A critical sociolinguistic approach to ITA-student communication

I consider my research to be informed by a "critical sociolinguistic" approach. Although "critical sociolinguistics" has been discussed in past work by appeal to this phrase (e.g., by Singh, 1996), I do not wish to imply that my work conforms to some clearly delineated strand of research known by this label. Rather, I use this phrase because my work borrows heavily from two main spheres of influence: sociolinguistics and critical forms of scholarship on language and education. From sociolinguistics and related disciplines (e.g., discourse analysis, linguistic anthropology, and language policy), I take a commitment to studying language in use, concepts like language ideology, and an understanding of language as intimately tied to other aspects of social life (e.g., identity).

The "critical" part of my approach is the more controversial and the more difficult to describe. Pennycook (2001) provides an excellent overview of what he views as critical applied linguistics, a term that I believe would be appropriate for my work as well, given that I am attempting to engage critically with a topic that is widely seen as the purview of applied linguistics. One of the defining characteristics of the critical approach to applied linguistics that Pennycook offers is a commitment to confront questions of politics. The view of "politics" that Pennycook echoes and that I use here refers not only to things like campaigns, elections, laws, and governments but to a much broader idea of how power operates anywhere and always. Placing questions of power at the center of inquiry involves a substantial shift from what might be described as a more 'traditional' form of applied linguistics that adopts a "stance that tends to deny its own politics" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 29), arguing instead for an imagined neutrality or objectivity that would render an exploration of power in research irrelevant.

By claiming that I am adopting a "critical" approach, I am implicitly claiming that other work, particularly on the topic of ITA-student communication, does not reflect an engagement with its own politics[2]. I have already discussed my view that past ITA research reflects an *implicit* politics, a phrase I used to denote the idea that such research is informed by assumptions about political questions (e.g., that ITA-student communication should be improved through

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[2] I suspect that many researchers who have examined ITA-student communication would probably not dispute my assertion that the label "critical" does not apply to their work, although I also would expect that they likely hold a very different (negative) view of what the label means (e.g., 'unobjective' research). However, Tyler and Davies (1990) position their work as being influenced by critical sociolinguistics. They quote Ellis and Roberts (1987, p. 20) who describe critical sociolinguistics as an approach "in which language is seen not only as reflecting social structures but also as helping to actively create them… to hold together, control, manipulate and maintain social systems and institutions" (quoted on p. 386 in Tyler and Davies, 1990). This is an important acknowledgment often credited to critiques of sociolinguistics which pointed out that the variationist sociolinguistics of the time lacked any focus on how language and discourse could be used for power rather than merely act as a reflection of power. However, while I acknowledge the importance of this critique, I do not believe it fully encapsulates what I mean by "critical sociolinguistics". In particular, I think it fails to consider how the researcher and the research are implicated in political struggle. As a result, despite the overlap in the terms that we have chosen and our agreement on many relevant issues, I do not see my approach and that of Tyler and Davies as the same (see my discussion of their work above).

focus on ITAs' Englishes) and engages in its own form of advocacy for particular political positions (e.g., that ITAs' language should be remediated in particular ways) even though it tends not to openly discuss these positions or alternatives to them. I believe that the research literature on ITA-student communication has not thoroughly engaged with questions like "is it fair or ethical to expect ITAs to conform to US norms of communication, and to what extent?", even though surely different answers to this question (or similar questions) would profoundly affect what we choose to research and how we undertake that research. Because of the tendency not to engage with these questions, such approaches too readily slip into pragmatic stances which usually end up tacitly accepting the status quo. It is my intent by adopting a critical approach to ITA-student communication to engage with other possible ways of improving ITA-student communication, especially those that are not simply practical but also ethical. What I argue for is an alternative for improving communication across linguistic difference in higher education, one that I believe is preferable not only because of my view of the ethics of the situation but also because it more closely conforms with the stated priorities of other stakeholders. I discuss this alternative in the next section.

2.3.1   ITA research, linguistic diversity, and the politics of inclusion

I take ITA-student communication to be a specific type of communication across linguistic difference, and I use this phrase, "communication across linguistic difference", to highlight two theoretical and political positions I bring to my work on 'the ITA problem'. The first is that I take the Englishes used by ITAs to reflect linguistic difference, not deficit, in line with many calls to reconsider long-standing ways of conceptualizing the nature of (second) language learning and use (e.g., Canagarajah, 2007; Cook, 1999; Douglas Fir Group, 2016; May, 2011). This position represents a strong break from the way researchers have often approached

ITAs' language in the past. Indeed, ITA research has been criticized for promoting deficit views of ITAs' Englishes (Dippold, 2015; Jenkins, 2014; Pae, 2001; Zhou, 2009).

Unlike many in second language acquisition and other research areas, I do not consider the question of communicative or linguistic competence to be first and foremost an empirical matter. Rather, I take the position that who will be deemed a legitimate speaker, and given all the rights of speakerhood that this entails, is primarily a question of ideology, a question of whose communicative skills and linguistic resources will be treated as valuable and whose discourse will be taken as worthy of the resources necessary to understand it (Park & Wee, 2012). As a result, I think it appropriate to begin any consideration of how to orient to people's linguistic resources by explicating political priorities.

Importantly, I reject the idea that other researchers who forego discussion of such priorities are somehow apolitical or 'objective'. Rather, I maintain that they are merely taking up a position of tacit acceptance of the status quo, which in the case of ITAs would involve acceptance of the positioning of privileged varieties of US English as the accepted norm of instructional language and ITAs' language as in need of 'correcting'. Such a position I believe is represented in the implicit politics of a great deal of past ITA research which I reviewed above.

My own position then is that if HEIs wish to be internationally inclusive and foster global competence among their stakeholders, then it is surely politically incommensurable to begin from the standpoint that national norms or 'standards' of language use and communication should prevail and be privileged, and that those who fail or choose not to conform should be excluded, ignored, or somehow punished or disadvantaged (Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Sterzuk, 2015). Thus, I take ITAs' Englishes as merely one possible element of the linguistic diversity that characterizes any HEI. As such, I consider ITAs legitimate speakers of English (broadly and

inclusively defined) within the context of the HEI, deserving of all the same rights, responsibilities, and privileges that speakers of more privileged Englishes enjoy at HEIs.

My position may appear to rest precariously on a slippery slope, to be unendingly willing to call anything legitimate language or legitimate English, and thus to be totally impractical since it would surely be untenable to expect someone who has no ability to use any form of English to instruct mononlingual English-speaking students, particularly to teach them abstract and technical concepts like those that are frequently covered in the courses ITAs are assigned to. However, I think it is important to note that I take these positions within a particular institutional context. As I mentioned above and will discuss with regards to one university context in Chapter 4, there are usually already policies in place that limit access to HEIs to those students (including graduate students) whose Englishes are deemed generally acceptable. Furthermore, many HEIs employ assessments to determine whether international graduate students have the capacity to use English effectively in instructional settings (Ginther, 2003; Xi, 2007), although the continued attempts to perfect such tests over the years provide some demonstration of how such practices and policies are not without their problems (e.g., S. L. Briggs, 1994; Farnsworth, 2013; Halleck & Moder, 1995; Hoekje & Linnell, 1994; Isaacs, 2008; Papajohn, 1999; Saif, 2002, 2006).

As a practical matter, HEIs cannot possibly hope to be fully neutral with respect to language (Wee, 2011). It is important then that they verify, in a maximally valid, consistent, transparent, and fair manner, that their students and instructors have some linguistic commonality on which to build effective communication in the classroom and other instructional settings. However, I also argue that, in order to permit and respect difference of other kinds (race/ethnicity, national origin, etc.), HEIs must seek to be optimally inclusive when it comes to linguistic diversity.

Inclusiveness, however, will require HEIs to recognize, accept, and cope with the fact that linguistic diversity introduces a need for its stakeholders to communicate across linguistic difference, which may prove challenging and require competencies, dispositions, and strategies that not all stakeholders have fully developed. HEIs must be prepared to promote a way of orienting to communication between those with different backgrounds that does not insist that either interlocutor conforms to the other's norms but instead that they jointly engage in cooperative processes of open communication to achieve mutual understanding. This is the essence of many recent perspectives on language and communication, for example, those discussing performative competence (Canagarajah, 2013), Negotiation (Zhu Hua, 2015), and the accommodative practices (Park & Wee, 2011) described by English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) researchers (e.g., Björkman, 2013; Firth, 2009; Kaur, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Mauranen, 2006).

Of particular note, Canagarajah provides an extensive and thorough treatment of performative competence. He summarizes the components of such competence using the following imperatives: "start from your positionality", "negotiate on equal terms", "focus on practices, not form", "co-construct the rules and terms of engagement", "be responsive to joint accomplishment of goals", and "reconfigure your norms and expand your repertoire" (p. 175). Importantly, Canagarajah's model does not stress conformity to static norms as the basis for communication, although it does not deny that such norms develop within communities, over time becoming the basis for more efficient communication. Canagarajah stresses more universal dispositions, competencies, and strategies that allow people to communicate across the gaps in their respective positionalities.

The adoption of similar orientations to communication across linguistic difference is a major determinant of the success that ELF users are able to achieve in higher education settings

in spite of momentary communication difficulty (e.g., Björkman, 2013; Kaur, 2010; Mauranen, 2006). These same orientations are also a major component in ensuring the success of the ITA-student office hour interactions that Chiang describes (e.g., Chiang, 2009b). I believe that such competencies or orientations are an essential aspect of concepts like world citizenship, global competence, and internationalization of the curriculum that many universities appeal to. Thus, attempts to cultivate such orientations and competencies in all stakeholders, including both ITAs and students, should be at the heart of HEIs' internationalization efforts (Dippold, 2015).

2.3.2   *Priorities for critical sociolinguistic research on ITAs*

Promoting a version of the internationalizing HEI that is maximally inclusive of linguistic diversity will require re-examining 'the ITA problem' as it has been commonly explored and understood. It requires expanding the range of issues that researchers attend to. In particular, I highlight the need for more research, particularly using critical sociolinguistic lenses, into two areas: (1) institutional policy and practice related to internationalization and to ITAs and (2) stakeholders' orientations to communication across linguistic difference.

2.3.2.1   *The institutional policy context and communication across linguistic difference*

The first area is institutional policy. As I have already argued, 'the ITA problem' is an inherently political problem and any attempts to improve the situation must be cognizant both of the normative position-taking of the institution as well as the de facto realities of the institutional context, because these contribute strongly to creating the conditions under which ITAs and students interact. Furthermore, an understanding of the current policy situation is crucial for providing targeted, relevant suggestions for changes to institutional policy and practice.

It has been widely reported that there is a gap between HEIs' stated goals with respect to internationalization and the integration of international students and faculty, which according to

researchers largely has to do with HEIs' failure to contend with linguistic diversity (e.g., Dippold, 2015; Jenkins, 2011, 2014; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Sterzuk, 2015). Nonetheless, Fairclough (2010) argues that an effective strategy for critical scholarship to pursue is examining institutions' practices and evaluating them according to the values they espouse in public discourse. As such, a critical sociolinguistic approach to ITA-student communication would examine both institutional discourse (e.g., marketing materials) and policy processes that either help to foster the type of international cooperation and global community that HEIs purport to be driven toward or not.

Examining policy processes, however, requires a broader orientation to policy than simply considering explicit, official policy-making, since even when such policies exist (and they very often do not with respect to issues most relevant to ITA-student communication), the act of implementing policy is enacted by actors at a local level. A full understanding of the policy situation then requires consideration of these local actors' intentions and actions (e.g., Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Johnson, 2013; Tollefson, 2013).

Indeed, a thorough consideration of local action appears crucial to understanding and improving communication in linguistic contact zones like the ITA-taught classroom. More explicit, official policies would likely require a strategically essentialist representation of language(s) or language varieties as bounded objects so that they can become the object of policy protections (Petrovic, 2015). Protecting particular types of language from discrimination or imbuing particular language varieties with some form of rights requires a clear delineation of what these varieties are or what counts as an instantiation of the particular language variety that is to be protected. Probably the most readily identifiable label that might be fitted to categorize ITAs' Englishes would be ELF, but critics are quite skeptical of ELF's ontological claim to the

status of language variety, in part because the linguistic phenomena it purports to explain under the umbrella term are far too heterogeneous (e.g., O'Regan, 2014; Park & Wee, 2011).

However, a competing conception of what makes ELF communication possible, namely a set of communicative practices or cooperative dispositions, is often asserted by ELF researchers (e.g., Baker, Jenkins, & Baird, 2015; Firth, 2009) and critics (Park & Wee, 2011) alike. It is unlikely that such practices or dispositions could be regulated in official terms at the level of the institution much less the polity. It would be nearly impossible to encode them into law to make them objects of regulation, and any enforcement of such regulation would doubtlessly run into other challenges, such as freedom of speech violations.

Nonetheless, local communities or sites of communicative practice, like academic departments or single classrooms, can more effectively structure communicative settings and negotiate how participants orient to communication across linguistic difference. They are also probably better suited to ensure that stakeholders are able to access opportunities for socialization into the forms and settings where this communication will take place. Understanding the institutional policy context (including policy processes at the level of local action) then is part of a larger process of understanding how ITAs and students interact, how they are prepared to do so, and how policy and practice can be shaped to ensure that communication and preparation are more satisfactory to all involved.

2.3.2.2   *Orientations to communication across linguistic difference*

As I discussed in the previous section, a great deal of research on ITA-student communication has tended to begin its inquiry from the recognition of students' perceptions of problems in ITAs' language. It has then attempted to find ways to reduce negative perceptions and improve communication by modifying the language of the ITA.

The critical sociolinguistic approach that I describe and advocate here proceeds very differently. Acknowledging that greater linguistic diversity means greater potential for difficulty in communication (though not, as is sometimes assumed, a total communicative impasse), I believe it is important to ask how participants, students or ITAs, respond to communication difficulty when it inevitably arises and whether their responses aim for and contribute to productive and respectful negotiation of meaning. To illustrate this importance, I present two scenarios that have been reported in ITA research with contrasting outcomes in terms of whether the participants, particularly the students, were satisfied with the interaction.

In the first, from Hoekje and Williams (1992, pp. 251-252), an ITA explains something to a student, who responds, after a pause, using "words of comprehension". The ITA treats the communication as successful. The student later reports to the researchers that she had not understood the explanation but preferred to leave and seek help from a classmate.

The second example comes from Chiang (2009a, p. 7), who provides transcriptions of office hour interactions illustrating how students and ITAs achieve mutual understanding in spite of momentary difficulties. In one example, an ITA's explanation includes the clause, "sometimes government quit this market", with "quit" pronounced in a manner the student apparently does not recognize (without a final [t]). The student interrupts to ask a repair question, "the government does what to the market?" The ITA reiterates and, when re-pronouncing the word "quit", includes a final [t]. Finally, the student demonstrates comprehension by restating the main point.

This pair of examples shows a contrasting set of outcomes. In the first, the student never successfully gets the information she seeks from the ITA. In the second (and in other examples from Chiang, 2009a), despite momentary difficulty, the interlocutors do achieve mutual

understanding; the student recognizes the word the ITA is pronouncing and thus appears to comprehend the larger utterance.

I present these examples, because I believe they illustrate an important point about one of the often neglected mechanisms at play in ITA-student communication: namely whether and how students, as listeners, attempt repair when they encounter difficulty understanding their ITAs. Had the student in the first example chosen to attempt to repair her nonunderstanding, she may have left having understood the ITA's explanation. Had the student in the second example not sought repair, communication may not have succeeded.

Addressing the role that students' and ITAs' willingness to engage in cooperative negotiation of meaning requires understanding what drives decisions of whether to engage, how much effort to put in, what strategies to take, or when to disengage. Such questions may be partially related to language directly (i.e., to language proficiency), but addressing them also requires a thorough consideration of nonlinguistic factors (or at least factors not related specifically to language proficiency or communicative competence) that impact interlocutors' willingness to engage with each other (Lindemann, 2002; Lippi-Green, 2012; Singh et al., 1988).

Lindemann (2002) provides an excellent illustration of how nonlinguistic factors, specifically negative attitudes toward a nonnative accent, result in what Lippi-Green (2012) refers to as the native English speaker's rejection of their share of the communicative burden (i.e., the communicative work that has to be done in order for interlocutors to reach mutual understanding). In Lindemann's study, US English speakers were paired with Korean English speakers to complete a communicative task. Lindemann observed that some US participants who had been previously observed to have negative attitudes toward Korean English (using a verbal guise task) used avoidance strategies such as not communicating their nonunderstanding (i.e.,

they failed to speak up when they did not understand the Korean partner) or even providing false confirmation of understanding to their Korean partners, even though the same participants took a more active role in dealing with communication difficulties when paired with another US English speaker. Furthermore, when paired with US participants who had more positive attitudes toward Korean English, the very same Korean English speakers and their partners successfully completed the task. Lindemann concluded that the US partners' refusal to share responsibility for ensuring successful communication with the Korean English speakers caused the pairs' failure to complete the task. The study's results highlight how what are often taken as issues merely of intelligibility or nonunderstanding may be more about how willingness to engage in cooperative negotiation of meaning can be "applied or suspended according to the nonlinguistic parameters of power, hegemony, and domination" (Singh et al., 1988, p. 47).

2.3.2.3   *Power, ideology, and identity in communicating across linguistic difference*

Hence, critical sociolinguistic exploration of ITA-student communication must attend to the reproduction and contestation of power, ideology, and identity. I consider two structural dimensions of social differentiation and their intersections with other social structures to be of particular relevance to ITA-student communication.

The first is the linguistic hierarchy perpetuated by dominant language ideologies. Perhaps most relevant to the context of ITA-student communication is Shuck's (2006) description of what she calls the ideology of nativeness derived from her study of US university students' representations of nonnative speakers on their campus and elsewhere. The ideology Shuck identifies relies on a binary distinction between native and nonnative speakers, categories that come to stand for more than merely language proficiency within the discourse of Shuck's participants. These categories also become iconically linked to race and nationality such that

language, race, or nationality can be substituted as metonymic references to the other two features (e.g., nationality can be used to imply linguistic 'nonnativeness' and racial Otherness).

Importantly, the categories are also used to imply particular rights and responsibilities for their members. In particular, within the logic of the ideology, nonnative speakers are assigned "full responsibility for communicating effectively with native speakers", whereas native speakers bear no such responsibility (p. 262). The ideology also implies a greater claim to the resources of the institution such that any efforts to be inclusive of nonnative speakers are seen as a threat to the institutional resources that native speakers represent as naturally theirs by virtue of their unmarked 'nativeness'. For example, Shuck writes "if students marked by language background are in a class with 'regular' students, the former are described as having special interests that will impinge on the rights of the otherwise invisible majority" (p. 270). Shuck's work makes it clear that the hierarchy implicit in the ideology of nativeness is not just about language per se but is also about implicit claims to institutional resources.

ITAs, in using their nonnative Englishes to fulfill institutional roles, contend with an ideology that positions them as illegitimate within the HEI space and particularly within the role of instructor. As I have previously observed (Subtirelu, 2015), this ideology can be observed in how student users of RateMyProfessors.com evaluate their international instructors (in this case, those with last names common to China and South Korea). As I argued in that work, students' discourse occasionally baldly draws on this dominant ideology, for example, when they advocate that students not bother attending classes because of the language of a particular instructor. More commonly, however, I observed that participants appeared to resist this ideology with statements like "she does have an accent, but…" followed by some refutation of the problematic nature of accent, for example, an assertion that the instructor is intelligible.

Rather than demonstrating the impending death of the linguistic hierarchy, however, I argue that these findings demonstrate that student users of RateMyProfessors.com are cognizant of the dominant ideology and that their discourse attempts to excuse their instructors while leaving the hierarchy implicit in the ideology of nativeness intact. In a follow-up study, a colleague and I showed how these apparently neutral or positive comments about international instructors' language do not fully mitigate students' tendencies to avoid international instructors, a potential consequence of the ideology of nativeness, since even when presented with such positive or neutral statements, participants in our study reported less willingness to register for a course with the instructor than when we removed the mention of language (Subtirelu & Gopavaram, 2016).

My previous work then suggests that students do not simply mindlessly echo the prefabricated ideas of the ideology of nativeness, but even as many attempt to contend with or counter it, its assumptions and effects are nonetheless reproduced in their discourse despite their apparently good intentions. ITAs in contemporary HEIs then appear to face a situation where their students are potentially sympathetic to their situations, but it is not clear that this necessarily mitigates the power of the linguistic hierarchy. Further complicating this matter is the way that ITAs may themselves internalize the ideology of nativeness.

In previous work (Subtirelu, 2014), I described the way that international students studying in an intensive English program at a US university talked about communication difficulties that they encountered as they used English on and off campus. I found that some of these 'non-native' speakers reproduced a deficit ideology about their own Englishes (very similar to the ideology of nativeness as described by Shuck, 2006), which included a consistent tendency to attribute communication difficulty to their own 'deficient' Englishes and to see native

speakers' accommodative practices as further evidence of their own failure to conform to the 'normal' linguistic and cultural practices of the dominant group. I believe that this ideology is common among international students, including ITAs, at US universities, and, as I argued previously, I believe that it also has the potential to impact whether and how they choose to engage in communication with other people at the HEI.

Thus, research into ITA-student interaction needs to consider how all participants including ITAs and their native- or nonnative-speaking students contend with the hierarchical positioning of their Englishes and how this positioning affects what responsibilities and rights they imagine themselves and their interlocutors to have in interaction. Furthermore, such hierarchical positioning intersects with other dimensions of social differentiation like race and gender that clearly play an important role in understanding how interlocutors choose to interact with each other (I have discussed some of these intersections throughout the previous few paragraphs).

The other dimension of social differentiation especially relevant to ITA-student interaction is the institutional hierarchy that assigns the ITA to a position of relative authority vis-à-vis their students. Buzzelli and Johnston (2001) discuss two forms of an instructor's authority: being *in* authority and being *an* authority, and both are relevant to understanding the dynamics of ITA-student interaction. The first refers to the instructor's power to make decisions that impact the course of learning and teaching as well as decisions that impact individual students, such as grading. The second refers to the instructor's positioning as knowledgeable with respect to the content area.

There are a couple of ways in which ITAs' positioning in the institutional hierarchy is relevant to an exploration of ITA-student communication. The first has to do with the necessity

of some degree of authority for instructors in the classroom. In order to be effective, they must be seen by their students (and perhaps others) as having legitimate knowledge about the subject matter of the class and also the right as well as the judgment necessary to make determinations about a number of pedagogical issues such as how the class will proceed or how students' learning will be assessed. Research over the past few decades on nonnative English speakers teaching language has suggested that their status as nonnative speakers may pose a barrier to students accepting them as authorities in the classroom (Amin, 1997, 2001; Braine, 1999; J. Thomas, 1999) and that some report making deliberate efforts to establish their credibility and ward off challenges to their authority that might occur due to their nonnativeness (Liu, 2005; Reis, 2011; Subtirelu, 2011).

The situation for instructors teaching a language they do not have a native claim to may be particularly fraught with challenges of establishing authority since the ideology of nativeness undermines their claims to be knowledgeable of or skilled in the language. However, research on how nonnative speakers' discourse is perceived suggests that, due to perceptions of their Englishes (related to the ideology of nativeness I described in the previous section), ITAs and other international instructors whose subject matter is not English may also be perceived as less credible as subject matter authorities (e.g., Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010) or just generally lower in a number of status-related traits like educational attainment or intelligence (see Lindemann, Litzenberg, & Subtirelu, 2014 for a review). Indeed, ITAs teaching subjects other than English have reported feeling that it is difficult for them to establish credibility as instructors (Ates & Eslami, 2012; Gomez, Khurshid, Freitag, & Lachuk, 2011; LoCastro & Tapper, 2006). Here too, of course, it is important to keep in mind how the intersections of race, gender, and other positionalities impact the perception of ITAs' credibility and authority.

Another way that ITAs' institutional positioning may affect communication with their students has to do with how students' relatively lower positioning in the institutional hierarchy may compel them to accept passive or subordinated participation roles in the classroom and other instructional settings, regardless of the linguistic background of the instructor. Shaw (1994) provides an analysis of native English speaking instructors' use of the phrase "any questions?" which is used to wrap up a particular topic and invite questions before moving on. Shaw points out that, although instructors report valuing and encouraging questions, their placement of invitations to ask questions may make any attempted question take on an evaluative force. Indeed, Shaw glosses the student's alternative response, to remain silent, as communicating to the instructor "your solution is perfectly clear" (p. 47), suggesting that the opposite, to ask a question, is an implicit criticism of the foregoing instruction. Students' contributions to instructional communication then are usually affected by the desire not to threaten the face of the instructor, who exercises some degree of power over the student. Thus, students' willingness to engage in cooperative dialogue with their ITAs (e.g., to ask questions) is likely affected by their beliefs about how communicative acts like question asking may threaten the ITA's face.

2.4 The present study

The work I report on in this document is an attempt to apply a critical sociolinguistic lens to ITA-student communication in order to expand the range of theoretical approaches that have been taken to this topic up until now. In particular, as I have discussed in the previous section, I am particularly interested in what the role of institutional policy, perceptions and ideologies of language, and communicative strategies may be on whether ITA-student communication is successful. Furthermore, I am interested in identifying avenues for change that might help to

address any unproductive, unfair, or problematic aspects of the situation through improved ITA preparation, interventions with students, or HEI policy-making.

My research, which I report on in the next four chapters, consisted of a case study of a single US university, which I call Shrinking World University (SWU). I attempted to explore the issues I have discussed in this chapter at SWU, focusing on the following research questions:

1. What policies related to ITAs, their Englishes, or their socialization into their roles as instructors exist at SWU?

2. How do SWU students and ITAs orient to communication across linguistic difference in instructional settings?

3. How do SWU students and ITAs respond to and perceive communication difficulty when it occurs in the classroom?

The remainder of this document is an attempt to provide partial, tentative answers to these questions. In the next chapter, I describe the methods I used to gather and analyze relevant data. In Chapter 4, I take up the first research question and attempt to describe the institutional policy context at SWU. In Chapter 5, I describe SWU students' and ITAs' orientations to communication across linguistic difference as an important but under-researched determinant of whether ITA-student communication is successful. In Chapter 6, I look at how (and whether) SWU students and ITAs negotiate meaning in the classroom when difficulties in communication inevitably arise and how this process of attempting (or not attempting) to communicate across linguistic difference shapes their perceptions of each other.

3   METHODS

Data collection for this project took place in two phases. The first phase consisted of a survey of perspectives from various stakeholders, supplemented by the gathering of documents

stipulating policies related to international teaching assistants at Shrinking World University and outlining the university's priorities with respect to internationalization. Relying on the contacts I made during the first phase, the second phase consisted of an in-depth study of one Biology teaching lab and, more specifically, two of the ITAs that teach in it. In this chapter, I present more specific details about and provide justification for the methodological choices I made throughout the collection and analysis of the data. Although I attempt to give a suitable overview here, I do provide some more indication of methodological choices as they arise in the next three chapters, which report on the results of this work. Before I discuss the specifics of how data was collected and analyzed, I begin by describing my own positionality in this work.

3.1 Researcher identity

Like any researcher, I by necessity influence the research that I carry out and report on. I chose the questions. I selected the methods. I interacted with the participants. I interpreted what their words mean. I decided what is meaningful and important. I framed the results. All of these should be rather mundane observations, but there are powerful epistemologies and ideologies of science and research that compel us not to acknowledge these things, and so much of this frequently goes unsaid or is erased from discussions of research. However, I think it useful to provide some indication of who I am, as the researcher in this project, so that my work can be read through the lens of who produced it. In doing so, I do not wish to imply that my work, which is qualitative and critical, is somehow more susceptible to the forces of subjectivity than other forms of research (especially positivist approaches that insist on their own objectivity and neutrality). I discuss my own positionality merely as a way of making myself and my work more accountable, to show some of the ways that who I am, what I think, and what I have experienced affects what I write here. I also hope that my role in this work is made apparent throughout this

document as well, often in subtle ways such as my insistence on presenting long excerpts of interviews that usually contain my contributions to recorded conversations.

I am a US-born White male native speaker of English. Each of these aspects of my identity places me in a position of privilege within the social hierarchies that are most relevant to my work. While I think it is important to be skeptical about deterministic views of how constructs like race or gender structure micro-level relations, I think it is clear that these aspects of my identity permeate my experience of the world and others' experiences of me in ways deeply relevant to this work. Nonetheless, I view these aspects of my identity as a starting point from which I have to negotiate, and this is how I approached them in this study.

For example, the racial and gender identities that I perform and which are ascribed to me do not necessarily invite those who are raced and gendered in marginalized ways to reveal their marginalization to me (Chadderton, 2012). A number of reasons may prevent them from doing so including the very reasonable assumption that I will not have the experience necessary to understand what they have experienced, a position that assumes their experiences of marginalization may fall on ears that are not only unable to comprehend but potentially even hostile to the naming of domination or marginalization, since I am, after all, part of the group doing the dominating and marginalizing.

I believe that this tendency can be observed in the way many of the ITAs I interviewed appeared to strategically avoid the suggestion that they had been victims of racism or sexism. Even though I sought to create space for interviewees to raise these possibilities (e.g., asking questions about how ITAs were viewed or treated by their students), they seemed to strategically avoid appealing to racism or sexism to explain their experiences. Rather, some ITAs chose instead to appeal to an aspect of identity that they apparently felt I was more ready to

comprehend: age. Such an assumption would not be wrong. At the time of the interviews, I was a twenty-something graduate student, and I can certainly draw on experiences in which my lower institutional status or my age have been used to undermine me. However, this tendency suggests to me that my identity affects the degree to which ITAs or other participants in my study are willing to explicitly name sexism or racism in our discussions and ultimately the degree to which I am able to present race and gender as relevant to this work.

Perhaps because I used the category of 'international teaching assistant' to recruit participants (not just ITAs themselves but others with some relation to them), which carries with it connotations of nation and language, these topics were more readily and openly discussed by my participants. I am a natural-born citizen of the United States. I have lived within its borders for the vast majority of my life, and I am a native speaker of US English. When these facts about myself were recognized[3] and oriented to by the participants, I was interactionally placed into a position of linguistic privilege, for example, deemed able to judge the adequacy of ITAs' language. Perhaps nervous about why a native English-speaking linguist would be studying them, many of my ITA participants looked to me for confirmation that their Englishes were acceptable. Such requests provide some indication of how this aspect of my identity affected the conversations I had with ITAs. I was frequently positioned as expert on English by virtue of my

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[3] I am not always sure how interlocutors who are unfamiliar with me understand my ethnicity or nationality. In particular, my last name, Subtirelu, and its Romanian origins often index foreign-ness to people in the United States, in part because Romanians did not participate in early waves of European immigration to the US. Some evidence of this tendency can be seen in an *Inside Higher Ed* article about my research (Jaschik, 2015, March 2). After interviewing me over the phone, apparently cued by my name and research interests, the author asked me about my own origins and my accent. He included a statement at the end of his article stating that I "grew up in Ohio" and have "no discernible accent", information that I doubt would have appeared in an article about the research of Dr. Jones or Dr. Smith. I had similar experiences while conducting interviews for this work as participants often uneasily asked about my origins. Although such questions can be uncomfortable, I welcomed these occurrences especially in interviews with ITAs, since they allowed me to connect my father's family's immigration and experiences in the US as one source of my interest in nonnative English speakers and their experiences.

nativeness and, to a lesser extent, my training as linguist and ESL instructor. I attempted to

navigate this positioning as ethically as I knew how, using my privilege to assure ITAs of their

obvious communicative competence while also trying to undermine the assumption that this

nativeness made me uniquely qualified to evaluate their language. I also tried to make it clear

that I believed the problems experienced in ITA-student communication could not be accounted

for simply by alleged deficits in their Englishes and that I was particularly interested in

developing this point in my research. Importantly, however, the tendency to look to me as a

native English-speaking authority on language, communication, and even at times teaching, who

was potentially out to catalog my participants' flaws, surely impacts what was said between

myself and the ITAs and others who participated in my research.

Like any individual, I am not merely a reflection of the identities and ideologies that are

ascribed and transmitted to me. While I am undeniably positioned in privileged positions on

hierarchies of race, gender, language, and nationality, I am deeply skeptical of and trenchantly

opposed to these hierarchies and the ideologies that support them. Much of my skepticism and

opposition is grounded in the education I have received and the reading that I have done

connected to my development as a critical scholar of language and education. I discussed my

opposition and some of the intellectual influences on it in Chapter 2. In this chapter, I want to

emphasize that I approached this project as an act of resistance, resistance against ideologies that

privilege me but which I oppose on the grounds that they are unjust. Of course, resisting

privilege while being privileged is complicated to say the least, and so I do not mean to imply

that this resistance was perfectly executed or necessarily effective. Rather, my point is that this

resistance influenced the choices I made in this study, the things I considered important, and the

ways I interpreted what I observed, just as the politics that underlie any research project (whether

they are made explicit or not) influence the interpretations and choices that are made within the scope of research.

3.2 Phase 1: Stakeholder views and policy description

The first phase of research was intended to address the first two research questions of this study (discussed at the end of Chapter 2). Specifically, I aimed to understand the policy context at SWU as it pertained to ITAs. This included examining SWU's stated priorities with respect to internationalization of the curriculum, as well as exploring policies related directly to ITAs that might provide them with support developing instructional repertoires or which might seek to assess their language to determine whether they are prepared to take on the role of teaching assistant. I also aimed to explore stakeholders' views of ITA-student communication at SWU as a way of understanding whether the university's diverse goals (e.g., provide quality instruction and create a cooperative international atmosphere) were apparently being achieved. In the following sections, I discuss the recruitment that I undertook for the stakeholder survey and the procedures I used to interview different stakeholders.

3.2.1   Recruitment of participants

In order to recruit participants for my survey, I engaged in a form of snowball sampling (Buchstaller & Kattab, 2014), in which I sought out additional participants by asking those who have already participated to name potentially relevant participants. To this end, I began by interviewing individuals with relevant administrative tasks that served (prospective) ITAs across the entire university, including those who administer the Institutional Language Proficiency Test (ILPT) and those involved in the ESL program, which offers a course for international teaching assistants. Talking with these individuals allowed me to identify SWU departments where ITAs were commonly employed.

Specifically, I chose Biology, Computer Science, English, Mathematics, and Physics. Each of these departments employs enough ITAs to allow me to meet my goals for survey recruitment; I aimed specifically to interview six ITAs in each. They also all come from one college, the College of Arts and Sciences, meaning that they are more or less governed by the same minimum standards for graduate admissions and other policies pertinent to ITAs (more on this in Chapter 4). Finally, the types of instruction common in these areas allows me to explore a range of different scenarios in which ITAs teach. Different instructional types like large lectures, smaller seminars, and laboratory instruction are represented as well as less commonly known instructional styles like the emporium model in Mathematics and the studio lab in Physics (both of which are discussed in detail in Chapter 4).

After identifying the departments I planned to survey, I used university directories to identify the department chairs, directors of graduate studies, and other relevant administrators within each of these departments. I sent emails to them, requesting an interview or allowing them to fill out an online survey (none chose to fill out the online survey, so I do not discuss it further). I received only a small number of positive responses and in some cases I was directed to other individuals. For example, an administrator in Biology directed me to the academic professionals who oversee laboratory instruction in Biology since these people had the most direct contact with ITAs.

During my interviews with administrators, other individuals with pertinent roles commonly came up, and I contacted some of those people for interviews. For example, when I learned that the Mathematics and Computer Science departments require pedagogy courses, I requested an interview with the instructors of these courses (only the Mathematics faculty

member responded). At the end of their interviews, I also requested that administrators provide me the names of any people who I should interview including ITAs working in their department.

I thus began recruiting ITAs by asking administrators and by relying on my acquaintances at SWU. For example, I had worked with an ITA in the Computer Science department and requested an interview with him. For the first few ITAs that I interviewed, I also asked them to name peers who I could interview, and I did this until I had scheduled six interviews from the department. I offered a $30 Amazon.com gift card as an incentive to participate for all ITAs.

In addition, I also asked my ITA informants to distribute a flyer to their students inviting them to participate in student focus groups and offering a $30 Amazon.com gift card as an incentive. At least ten of the ITAs agreed to do so, and students taking classes within each of the five departments participated in the focus groups.

3.2.2 *A social practice approach to interviewing*

Before I proceed to describe the interviews in detail, I should briefly elaborate on my approach to interviews and focus groups, since these constitute the primary data sources for my proposed survey. Interviews and focus groups have been identified as useful tools for studying both language ideology (Laihonen, 2008) and language policy (Johnson, 2013, pp. 239-242), both of which are of central concern in addressing my first two research questions. However, as many scholars have pointed out (e.g., C. L. Briggs, 2007), social scientists have frequently under-theorized interviews viewing them as direct windows into the minds of their participants.

More recently, researchers have pointed out that interviews are ultimately social events constrained both by the ways in which participants choose to orient to each other's' identities (Talmy, 2011) as well as the linguistic repertoires of the participants, which is particularly

relevant considering that I interviewed some participants (especially ITAs) in their second language, English (Miller, 2011). The fact that focus groups involve multiple interviewees potentially interacting with each other complicates this social event even further (G. Myers, 1998). As such, the collection of interview and focus group data requires a skilled interviewer, and its interpretation requires a reflexive analyst.

Often, having skill in interviewing is thought of as having the ability to mask the subjectivity of the researcher or the interviewer so as not to unduly influence the participants, for example, by suggesting the types of stances the interviewer might want to hear, akin to concerns of social desirability in questionnaire studies (e.g., Holtgraves, 2004). The more recent scholarly work on interviewing within applied linguistics that I have alluded to complicates this goal by pointing out that it is essentially impossible to avoid interviewers influencing the interviewees since even the types of behaviors that might be prescribed (e.g., do not provide feedback on participants' opinions) can be read within the interaction as communicating something about the interviewer's stance toward the participant's utterances. For example, not providing feedback on a participant's opinion may signal disinterest or disagreement with what the participant has said. There is little hope of erasing the interviewer's influence then, and I did not attempt to eliminate my influence entirely while interviewing my participants.

Nonetheless, it was my goal to give participants the space to express ideas and opinions about the topics that were not only contrary to my own but, more importantly (since they routinely expressed positions I disagreed with quite strongly), were outside of my own experience or my own thinking about the topic. To this end, what I was after was what Holliday (2010), in the context of talking about qualitative data analysis, describes as "submission", a

willingness on the part of the researcher to let the research and the data "take on a life of its own" (p. 101) or take the researcher in directions that s/he had not previously considered.

My goal then was not necessarily to be 'objective' but rather unobtrusive. Surely, I had tentative research questions, topics I was interested in, and a list of questions that I wanted to ask, but I wanted those questions to be as broad as possible to allow any of my informants to lead me in directions that I had not thought of. I have presented my interview protocols in Appendices A (for administrators), B (for ITAs), and C (for groups of students). The main questions I have relied on are often ostensibly 'closed-ended' questions (i.e. yes/no in grammatical form), but my informants rarely responded to these questions with a simple "yes" or "no". In fact, they often did not provide such simplistic answers, providing much more complex attitudes toward the topics that I raised and justifying this attitudes using narratives and other pieces of evidence that provided rich and often unexpected insights into the issue. My questions served merely to raise a topic or issue that my participants could discuss by drawing on whatever they felt was relevant to the issue, and I asked different follow-up questions, some of which are included in the appendices. Hence, these interview protocols should not be viewed as strict scripts (and indeed I often modified or ignored questions when I felt the situation warranted it) but rather as a suggestion of the types of topics that were raised in the course of our interviews. In the following section I discuss the choices I made in designing these protocols and the influences on these choices.

My approach to interviewing also has a notable influence on my preferred means of presenting data. Since I argue that what the participants say is best interpreted within the context it was produced, with an understanding of both the social and interactional contexts, I provide a number of longer transcriptions of interview data (often page length or more), which include

aspects other than simply the lexical choices that the speakers make, including elements like partial representations of intonation, overlap, and contrastive stress. Transcription conventions are included in Appendix D. This detailed transcription is particularly revealing when considering participants' attitudinal stances, for example ITAs' views of departmental policies or students' perceptions of their instructors' Englishes, and most of my transcriptions are provided for the purpose of illustrating stances like these.

3.2.3   *Procedures and protocols for interviews and focus groups*

Past studies of administrators' role in ITA success and screening as well as the policy processes at US universities are quite limited. I consulted two prior dissertation studies (Ernst, 2008; Toler, 1998), which interviewed administrators about ITAs. In my protocol for administrators (see Appendix A), I incorporated modified versions of a few of the questions in Ernst's and Toler's studies. The scarcity of research, however, means that the protocol I developed is essentially unique to this study. I began by asking administrators to explain the department's rationale for hiring ITAs (question 1). I then sought to find out about the policies related to ITAs in the department and how the interviewee is actively involved in these (questions 2-5) without necessarily raising the issue of language specifically, although the questions elicited some discussion of ITAs' language by virtue of referencing international teaching assistants specifically. In the last part of the interview (questions 6-7), I raised issues of language and undergraduates' responses to ITAs more directly. Ultimately, since the protocol was intended for different audiences I often modified the question list, for example, omitting some questions for informants whose work with ITAs did not allow them to respond directly from their experiences. During the course of these interviews, administrators often referenced policies, procedures, or other textual materials, which I sought a copy of from the interviewee or

on the internet or in university archives. I audio-recorded these interviews, and they were transcribed by myself or a research assistant.

The perspective of ITAs has been under-represented in research and policy efforts related to problems that centrally concern them. However, a number of recent studies have sought the perspective of ITAs (Ates & Eslami, 2012; LoCastro & Tapper, 2006; G. Williams, 2007) or international instructors more generally (Alberts et al., 2013; Theobald, 2013). In addition, Toler (1998) provides a sample interview protocol used with ITAs in her study. Intending to gather information about ITAs' perspectives, I have drawn on this research in developing an interview protocol (see Appendix B) for them. I began by asking the ITA to provide a narrative about coming to Shrinking World University (question 1), which allowed the participants to talk about a rather safe topic to begin with. I then asked the participants to tell me about what it was like for them learning English (question 2), allowing me to glean a few key pieces of information such as how long the participants had been studying English and how much experience they had using it. Next, the protocol moved on to attempting to examine the ITAs' perspectives about the requirements for becoming a TA and the support they receive as TAs (questions 3-4). My next few questions attempted to ascertain the ITAs' experiences and perceptions of being in an instructional position at SWU (questions 5-7). Finally, my last few questions dealt more directly with issues of language and communication difficulties (questions 8-10). I audio-recorded these interviews, and they were transcribed by myself or a research assistant.

Undergraduates' views and perceptions have been studied in a number of published studies which employed focus groups in order to study their opinions about ITAs (Damron, 2003; Fitch & Morgan, 2003; Plakans, 1997), international instructors (Villarreal, 2013), and nonnative English speakers more generally (Shuck, 2004). Although I used individual interviews

with ITAs and administrators, following previous research, I believe that focus groups are more appropriate for undergraduate students. Undergraduate students' potential perception of me, as a PhD student, might be as an authority figure or as someone aligned with their teaching assistants as my peers. Either of these impressions could represent a threat to my goal of not preventing students from expressing whatever ideas they might have about the topic. Granting them strength in numbers then I believe allowed the student participants to feel more comfortable expressing their thoughts openly. While, as I have mentioned, the possible influence of participants in a focus group on each other raises a potential threat to their ability to present the ideas and opinions that they might wish, I found that the ability of one participant to confront the views of another was often a productive aspect of this research tool, since it sometimes allowed me to more directly compare participants' views, for example, on the communicative competence of a particular ITA (as can be seen from some of the Excerpts in Chapters 5 and 6).

In creating my protocol for student focus groups (see Appendix C), I benefited from past focus group questions developed by Shuck (2001) and Villarreal (2013) as well as the questionnaire issued to undergraduate students by Alberts et al. (2013). My first question (after introductions) asked each participant to describe the classes they have taken with L2 English-speaking instructors. This gave each participant the opportunity to speak at the beginning and to answer a question that was informational in nature as opposed to one that required sharing personal opinions. My other questions (2-4) asked the participants to evaluate the experience of having nonnative English-speaking instructors. Throughout the discussions with the students, I often asked them to discuss the particular ITA who had given them the flyer for this study as a way of allowing me to triangulate the participants' views with those of the ITAs. Such questions also allowed me to ensure that at least some of our discussions pertained directly to ITAs and not

to other international instructors, since I found that students were often unaware of who was a TA and who was not. I audio and video recorded these focus groups with the assistance of a research assistant, who also transcribed the focus groups.

In order to gather more demographic data on students, I used a biodata questionnaire, which the students filled out before we began the focus group discussion. This questionnaire included information about demographic variables of potential interest including class standing, gender, race/ethnicity, and language background. It can be found in Appendix E.

3.2.4 Incidental document gathering

Before, during, and after I undertook interviews with stakeholders, I also gathered documents relevant to a description of the ITA policy situation at SWU. I began my research by looking in a number of places where policies pertaining to ITAs could be expected to be found, especially handbooks for graduate programs and course catalogs (including both current online versions and past versions often available only in print). I also examined accreditation guidelines that stipulate credentials and regulations for instructors. Finally, I examined online documents that outline SWU's priorities particularly with respect to internationalization. Most notably, this included the university's strategic plan.

I also gathered additional documents by asking for copies from my informants as they came up in the course of our interviews. This included mostly documents produced or used specifically by these individuals including copies of syllabi for courses, emails, assessment rubrics, and other things. In addition, my interviews with administrators, ITAs, and students sometimes included mention or allusion to other documents, and I sought these out after the interview either by finding them online or by contacting the participant. The document collection occurred throughout my analysis of the interview and focus group data, and as I will discuss in

the next section, the documents were helpful in confirming (or not) statements that the

participants made during our conversations.

3.2.5   *Analysis*

In the following two chapters (Chapters 4 and 5), I present two separate analyses based

on the data I collected. The types of analytic procedures varied by the nature of the question that

I was attempting to answer. In chapter 4, I present an overview of the policies at SWU

concerning ITAs, in particular in five academic departments: Biology, Computer Science,

English, Mathematics, and Physics. For this analysis, I read and reread transcriptions of all of the

administrators and all of the ITAs from each department and coded them according to emerging

aspects of their collective understanding of the situation, usually policies and procedures that

they reported were relevant to the selection, preparation, and support of ITAs in the department. I

compared different stakeholders' accounts of these policies to each other and to written

documentation (when available), trying to determine whether the accounts corroborated each

other, or, in instances where they appeared not to, I considered what might account for the

differing accounts. For example, occasionally, an administrator would report procedures that the

department intended to implement. However, when I spoke with ITAs, I found that, in actuality,

the department had not consistently carried out the policy as intended.

In chapter 5, I present an analysis of ITAs' and students' representations of classroom

communication and the difficulties they experience during such communication. This analysis is

intended to address my second research question about how ITAs and students at SWU view

their classroom communication. For this analysis, I read and re-read transcriptions of our

conversations, marking up the documents with thematic codes. Eventually, I created profiles of

individual participants to try to summarize their positions on particular issues and compare them to those of other participants.

In my presentation of this work in chapter 5, I provide extensive transcriptions of the conversations between me and the participants in order to show how these participants took stances related to communication and constructed identities and roles for themselves and others in conversation. Some of the analytic process that influenced my thoughts on this topic is covered in greater detail in that chapter.

Before I move on to describing the next phase of collection, it is important to emphasize the "I" in the above statements describing my analytic process and to unpack the implications of my interpretive approach to qualitative data analysis. My analysis is certainly data-driven in that it is informed by a set of observations that were systematically observed and documented as described above. However, the process of qualitative data analysis is "inductive and iterative" (Lichtman, 2012, p. 244), meaning that qualitative analysis is not undertaken with pre-set procedures for analysis that can be followed regardless of who actually carries out the analysis and which are set forth prior to the collection of data and carried out only after all data is collected (i.e., it does not conform to idealized forms of inquiry often thought to guide experimental or quasi-experimental work employing statistical analysis). This is not some flaw of qualitative research; rather it is one of the most important goals of such research to engage in inquiry in a manner that allows ideas to emerge during the process of data analysis and collection rather than assuming that the researcher has identified the important elements of the situation a priori (Holliday, 2010).

Nonetheless, the harnessing of the researcher's interpretations within this approach is both a strength and limitation. In her description of her positionality within her ethnographic

study, Harklau (2000) writes "like any researcher, I am a positioned subject who is 'prepared to know certain things and not others' (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 8), and I am inexorably subject to the very social and institutional forces that I interpret here" (p. 45). I consider Rosaldo's statement as quoted by Harklau here to be particularly important. As a researcher who interprets the words of my participants and decides what meanings are important, I am both ready and not ready to understand some things. On the one hand, I take this to be a strength in that my engagement with others' ideas, my life experiences, and my academic socialization have prepared me to learn from and understand ideological processes unfolding in interviews, focus groups, and classroom interviews in ways that others may not have previously considered. On the other hand, it is also clear that I am not as prepared to learn certain things as others might be. For example, in Section 3.1 above, I discussed how my male-ness or Whiteness can act as an obstacle to a full exploration of participants' perceptions of racism and sexism. I hope that the analyses I have provided in this document prove insightful and that my omissions continue to be explored and debated.

3.3 Phase 2: Micro-ethnography of classroom interaction

As I alluded to in the previous chapter, work on ITA-student communication contains surprisingly few studies that involve observation and careful analysis of classroom communication. Furthermore, to my knowledge, no study has considered this issue from a critical sociolinguistic perspective, which places issues like language ideology and how participants collaborate or not across linguistic difference at the center of the analysis. Past research has not attended to the participants' apparent willingness to communicate across linguistic difference and the strategies they use to enable communication of this type. For example, research has not thoroughly considered how undergraduate students do or do not carry

their share of the communicative burden and how this impacts their eventual understanding of course content.

3.3.1 Recruitment

After interviewing administrators and ITAs across campus, I focused my attention on a group of ITAs who were all teaching in a very similar situation, teaching Biology 201 or 202, introductory lab classes for Biology majors. This restriction allowed me to study in detail the nature of the courses that the ITAs were teaching and to observe the community of TAs and supervisors who were involved in providing instruction in these labs. This helped me as I observed and analyzed the classroom discourse to understand the types of instructional choices that ITAs were making.

Since I was working in one particular lab, I first gained the permission of the lab supervisors to attend lab meetings and ITAs' classes and to record the interaction going on there. Getting this permission required that I undertake laboratory safety training, which I completed prior to beginning my data collection.

I then contacted ITAs who were teaching these labs and had also participated in an interview with me previously. Four ITAs were initially willing to participate, but due to scheduling conflicts and difficulties gaining consent from students, only two (and their students) ended up participating. Both of these participating ITAs taught Biology 201.

After the ITA teaching the lab provided their consent to my research procedures, I sought the consent of the students. I explained the procedures to students in four classes, and, in two classes (both taught by the same ITA), one or two students were uncomfortable with recording and declined consent. However, in two others, all of the students attending the class provided their consent.

Midway through the semester, I collected demographic data from the students and also asked them to provide an email address if they might be interested in participating in focus groups later in the semester. I used the email addresses I gathered to recruit participants for the focus groups. At the end of the semester, I sent out an email to the students who had provided email addresses giving a few times for students to choose from and offering a $30 gift card as reward for participation. Interested students responded to my email and set up a time to participate. For each of the classes that I observed, I was able to recruit four participants (eight total) to serve as student informants and provide insight about how students responded to the ITAs and their instruction.

3.3.2   *Participant observation and classroom recording*

Over the course of two semesters, I attended several lab meetings for the Biology 201 and 202 group that, as I will discuss in chapter 4, was supervised by an academic professional, AH (administrators and ITAs have been assigned two letter identifications throughout this document; these are not the person's real initials), and a lab coordinator, AD. I chose to attend meetings at the beginning of the semester, when AH and AD provided an orientation to the lab for new TAs. This allowed me to observe the issues that the supervisors felt were the highest priority for the new and continuing TAs. I also attended lab meetings the week before I would be observing an ITA teaching. This allowed me to see what the group had to say specifically about the lesson that the ITA would be delivering. It also allowed me to familiarize myself with the material prior to observing the ITA teaching it in the classroom. This made my observations more efficient as I was prepared to understand what the ITA had to say and was not simply struggling to understand the scientific concepts and procedures that they were discussing with the students.

I attended ITAs' lab courses at four points in the semester. During my observations, I sat in the back of the room (not at a lab bench) and took field notes. I remained in this position throughout the course to ensure that I was not interfering with the lab. My field notes consisted of a running record of events in the lab, especially those things that I expected the recording might not capture. I also recorded my own perceptions of communication, especially when I thought I was observing difficulty. My position in the lab was best situated to observe one particular lab bench positioned directly in front of me, and so many of my observations focused on the groups of students who were seated at this lab bench. I also had very little interaction with the students, other than a little bit of small talk before and after the class with those who were nearest to me. During the lab, I only infrequently spoke with the ITAs; our interactions during class usually pertained to the recording equipment. After and before the classes, I usually spoke with the ITAs about how they felt the course was going, and I occasionally included their comments in my field notes.

I video recorded the classrooms using a Canon Vixia HF R52 camcorder and a Canon WM-V1 wireless microphone that the ITAs attached to their lab coats. The microphone picked up the ITAs' speech as well as the speech of any other person who spoke with the ITA. The camcorder was set up on a tripod at the back of the room next to me. While observing and taking notes, I also operated the camcorder by panning back and forth to keep the ITA in the frame as she moved about the room.

For all of the ITAs that agreed to participate, I attended part of the first course of the semester. At this time, I simply took field notes to get a sense of how the ITA had introduced themselves to the class and what kind of tone they were establishing in the classroom. I also introduced myself to the class, usually during the time when ITAs asked students to introduce

themselves, alerting the students to the fact that I was a researcher studying ITA-student communication and would return later in the semester to tell them more about my project and hopefully collect data in their classroom.

I then attended another course early in the semester, usually the third one. At this time, I sought students' consent. I arrived in the classroom with my recording equipment, and set it up but did not turn it on immediately. I had arranged with the ITA beforehand to have a brief discussion with the students about the research. The ITA left the room, and I discussed what I would be doing with the students, including that I would be video recording the classroom. I then allowed students to fill out a consent form in which they could mark "yes" or "no" to provide or not provide their consent. Because of the nature of my data collection, if any of the students declined to provide their consent, I was unable to record in that classroom. In two classes, I was able to collect consent from the whole class (in the others, one or two students were uncomfortable with video recording). In those classes, I began recording immediately after getting consent and recorded the rest of that class and took field notes.

I returned to each class a few more times. During the class that students took their midterm, I distributed a demographic questionnaire (nearly identical to the one in Appendix E with a line added for students willing to participate in a focus group to provide their email addresses) for them to complete after they finished their midterms. Two other times during the semester, I observed and recorded the class, once toward the middle of the semester and once at the end. For two of the three recordings, I recorded the ITAs teaching the same lab sessions. For the second ITA (PS), I was unable to record her delivering the same lesson that I had recorded the first (MZ) delivering, because the lesson was instead taught by an apprentice who was training in the lab (more information is provided on apprentices in Chapter 4). I recorded both

ITAs delivering a lesson on the use of the microscope and plant cell structure toward the beginning of the semester. Toward the middle of the semester I recorded MZ teaching a lesson on blood typing; I observed PS teaching the next lesson in the sequence which was about DNA and the use of electrophoresis (a technique used to separate DNA strands based on their size). Toward the end of the semester, I observed both ITAs teaching the same lesson on microbiology, bacteria, and gram-staining.

In addition to observing and recording classroom interaction, I was able to speak extensively with one of the ITAs, MZ, about her thoughts about the class. We met informally to discuss the class and also to talk about a conference presentation she was planning to deliver about being an ITA. We also met to talk about her teaching evaluations after the class ended. During these times, at her request, I offered MZ whatever feedback I could about her teaching as a way of trying to develop a more reciprocal relationship between her and myself as researcher. I also provided her references and feedback on her abstract and presentation in preparation for her conference. These informal processes also provided me with insights into MZ's struggles as ITA, and I often took field notes during our conversations to inform my later analysis. MZ often looked to me as an authority particularly on matters of language and teaching (in the US), and my opinions seemed to influence her understanding of her teaching situation in some ways. For example, after I pointed her to research by Rubin (1992), she seemed to find validation of perceptions she had seemed unwilling at first to vocalize, in particular that her students arrived in the classroom with expectations about what she would be like based on her race and accent.

Throughout the process, I collected a variety of materials from the instructional setting. These included a copy of the lab manual that students and ITA used, PowerPoints that MZ used to deliver her instruction, and copies of both ITAs' student evaluations. I also conducted a wrap-

up interview with the lab coordinator, AD, to obtain an administrator's perspective on some of the issues I had noticed in the classroom.

3.3.3   Participant playback sessions

Much of what happens in instances of miscommunication or communication difficulty is not directly observable in the moment. For example, a participant might behave as if they have understood their interlocutor but in fact be unsure of what was actually said. Furthermore, other aspects of the situation are routinely omitted from interaction. For example, why participants choose a particular strategy in communication or how they perceive their interlocutor is not directly observable from the interaction itself, but these issues are important to understanding how we might go about addressing systemic issues in communication. As a result, I conducted playback sessions with participants to get a sense of whether they felt communication was successful, why they chose certain strategies in communication, and what their perceptions of each other were. The technique has a long history of use in interactional sociolinguistics (e.g., Tannen, 1981) and has also been used to study ITA-student communication (e.g., Chiang, 2016; Tyler, 1995).

After I made the third recording of each class, I viewed the recordings and read through my field notes from each class session with the goal of identifying key moments in classroom communication to ask the participants about. I looked in particular for instances where there was apparent communication difficulty. After reviewing recordings and my own reflections on ongoing interaction, I chose two to three excerpts from each class session to eventually show to students and the ITA during playback sessions. Most of these segments were about one to three minutes long. In preparation, I reviewed these segments and transcribed them. I also gathered visual materials that were necessary to each of the sessions so that I could show them during the

sessions. Finally, I wrote short contextualizing statements to read before playing each of the segments in order to give the participants some sense of how the segment fit into the larger class.

About a week or two after the final recording, I met with students and ITAs to discuss the class and view the segments that I had prepared. Appendix F and Appendix G provide a basic outline of questions that I used during the playback sessions. The sessions began with me asking participants about their perceptions of the class and communication in general. After discussing general perceptions of the class, I introduced the video segments and alerted the participants that I would be asking them to comment on them. I then played each video segment on my laptop and asked participants to comment on them when they finished. Although I offered to pause the clips in the middle, none of the participants ever requested this. However, I purposefully paused some of the longer segments (these were around four to five minutes) in the middle to elicit comments about the beginning of these longer segments that might have been forgotten otherwise. Immediately after viewing the segment, I allowed the participants to make whatever comments they might want to about it. I then asked more probing questions, sometimes asking participants about specific aspects of the interaction, especially those pertaining to the communication difficulties that I had identified. For the ITAs in particular, this aspect was rather uncomfortable, and I consistently tried to reassure them that my goal was not to highlight flaws in their instruction but rather to explore apparent communication difficulties from the perspective of all of the participants. Both ITAs asked me my own perception of the communication in their classrooms or of particular situations. Although I insisted that the ITAs try to voice their opinions first, I did share my own still-developing opinions and perceptions of the events, which, as can be seen by my final analysis in Chapter 6, were not particularly negative toward the ITAs' language or teaching. I also allowed them to see what I wrote about them in Chapter 6 as a way

of providing them reassurance as well as the feedback that they sought in these playback sessions.

In total, I conducted six playback sessions. I interviewed both ITAs individually and audio recorded our conversations. I conducted two more individual interviews with one student from each of the two classes and audio-recorded these interviews. I had not planned for these to be individual interviews, but I was only able to recruit one student to each of these time slots. Finally, I conducted a focus group with a group of three students from each of the ITA's classes, and, with the help of a research assistant, I audio and video recorded these two sessions. Each of the sessions was transcribed by myself or a research assistant. Most of the sessions lasted about one hour with the individual student interviews being somewhat shorter.

3.3.4 Analysis

In Chapter 6, I provide an overview of communication difficulty that occurred in the classrooms I observed and how participants understood it. In order to produce this analysis, I analyzed the data I collected from these sessions by comparing participants' accounts of what was happening in the videos. I found that my playback sessions had elicited rich commentary from multiple perspectives on four segments from each of the two ITAs' classes (eight in total) involving communication. For each, I examined how the communication difficulty occurred, trying to pinpoint the contributing factors that led to it as well as how participants responded to it through the participants' accounts as well as by reviewing the recordings and other relevant materials (e.g., the lab manual) myself. I also examined how the participants understood the situation, how they felt about their own and others' contributions, and why they reported acting as they did. Of course, as I have already discussed above, qualitative analysis is an act of systematic interpretation that is both enhanced and limited by the analyst's (my) subjectivity.

4   POLICIES AND PROCEDURES RELATED TO INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS AT SWU

In this chapter, I present an overview of the policies at Shrinking World University that are related directly to international teaching assistants (ITAs), especially those that affect (1) who will be allowed to serve as a teaching assistant, (2) what preparation they will be required to undertake before teaching, and (3) what opportunities they will have to develop as instructors. I also consider how the university presents its internationalization efforts.

Such work requires a broad approach to the concept of policy. My definition includes what is often thought of as policy, the written down and widely disseminated statements of institutional and political authorities. It also includes other things especially the informal routines and practices of people at lower positions in institutional hierarchies that ultimately constitute de facto policies. In particular, I am interested in how such policies affect ITAs and ITA-student communication and how they might be changed to promote productive and respectful communication across linguistic difference and ITAs' and students' socialization into the practices, competencies, and orientations that such communication requires.

As will become apparent below, the vast majority of the relevant policy work at SWU is targeted not at students but at ITAs. As I discussed in Chapter 2, this is typical of the way 'the ITA problem' has been addressed at US HEIs. In some cases, relevant policies uniformly affect all instructors or all teaching assistants. In other cases, particularly with respect to the assessment and remediation of language proficiency, ITAs are subject to additional requirements or have additional forms of support available to them. These policies can be created or implemented at various levels in the university, or, in some cases, they may even originate at a level above the university, yet much of the policy work that takes place at SWU with respect to ITAs is

undertaken at the departmental level. As a result, this chapter features five sections detailing the policies and procedures of five academic departments, within one college (the College of Arts and Sciences), at SWU. However, before I begin describing the departmental processes, there are some university- or college-wide policies that are relevant to understanding both the university's orientation to internationalization as well as policies that affect all ITAs regardless of their department affiliation.

Unlike other universities that have had their ITA policies described in the literature (e.g., the University of Southern California, as described in Kaplan, 1989), at the time of my data collection, SWU lacked a centralized office for creating and enforcing policies for all ITAs across the entire university. (One of my informants speculated that a new university administrative unit, which was created just prior to my data collection, might change this.) As such, many of the requirements that might be handed down to ITAs at other universities by graduate schools are either absent or handled by individual departments at SWU. Nonetheless, there are relevant university-wide requirements and resources for teaching assistants, including some directed specifically at international teaching assistants or international graduate students. I will review these polices before discussing each of the five departments.

The analysis I present here is based primarily on interviews with eighteen SWU administrators from the five academic departments and other relevant units on campus, interviews with twenty-nine ITAs from these departments, and policy documents that I collected through recommendations from my interviewees, online searches, and archival research. More information on methodology was presented in Chapter 3. Table 4.1 presents demographic information about the administrators whom I interviewed. Table 4.2 presents demographic

information about the ITAs I interviewed. Not all of their interviews are directly quoted in this
chapter, but they nonetheless influenced my analysis.

Table 4.1. Demographic information for administrators who were interviewed.

	affiliation	position
AD	Dept. of Biology	Lab coordinator
AH	Dept. of Biology	Academic professional
JG	Dept. of Biology	Academic professional
AC	Dept. of Computer Science	Department chair
DA	Dept. of English	Faculty
HB	Dept. of English	ESL director
HM	Dept. of English	IEP director
JS	Dept. of English	Department chair
RJ	Dept. of English	Faculty
DB	Dept. of English / TESS	Faculty / Associate Director
AJ	Dept. of English / ILPT	Faculty / Testing director
RW	ILPT	Testing coordinator
OP	Dept. of Mathematics	Associate chair
JJ	Dept. of Mathematics	Faculty
AT	Dept. of Physics	Graduate director, Astronomy
GH	Dept. of Physics	Associate chair
JF	College of Arts & Sciences	Associate Dean
MA	CA&S / Dept. of English	International programs coordinator / Faculty

Table 4.2. Demographic information for ITAs who were interviewed.

	department	gender	origin
DC	Biology	female	Middle East
FR	Biology	female	Americas
HS	Biology	male	East Asia
MZ	Biology	female	East Asia
PS	Biology	female	South Asia
UB	Biology	female	South Asia
LX	Computer Science	female	East Asia
NR	Computer Science	male	South Asia
NT	Computer Science	male	South Asia
SK	Computer Science	male	South Asia
WM	Computer Science	male	East Asia
YV	Computer Science	female	Eastern Europe
EF	English	male	Americas
HC	English	female	East Asia
ND	English	female	Eastern Europe
RK	English	male	Middle East
SW	English	male	East Asia
GC	Mathematics	male	Americas
JH	Mathematics	female	East Asia
LH	Mathematics	female	East Asia
OK	Mathematics	female	Africa
SG	Mathematics	female	East Asia
TL	Mathematics	male	East Asia
AE	Physics	male	Middle East
BG	Physics	male	South Asia
CL	Physics	male	East Asia
KY	Physics	male	South Asia
RT	Physics	male	South Asia
VD	Physics	male	South Asia

4.1   The college and university policy context

4.1.1   SWU's internationalization and ITAs

Before I discuss policies that affect international teaching assistants more specifically, I consider briefly how SWU represents itself as an internationalizing university in order to consider how the institution and its actors report envisioning their community and the place of international students and faculty within it.

Like many universities, SWU has developed and released a strategic plan that is intended to identify the universities' priorities and serve as one way of constructing its brand as a globally competitive research university. Gaffikin and Perry (2009) argue that such strategic plans are important to consider not because the discourse that they include will necessarily dictate procedure but because they represent explicit position-taking on a number of issues including notably orientations to globalization.

SWU's strategic plan consists of five goals, all of them ambitious, seeking to position SWU as a national and global leader among research universities, especially within various niche arenas that the university is well-positioned to compete in. One of the five goals SWU sets itself in the plan is to gain recognition for "globalizing" itself. The goal specifically references both attracting scholars who are "worldwide" academics and policy leaders as well as creating opportunities for students to prepare to enter a world characterized by globalization. Furthermore, under this goal, the strategic plan also identifies the development of "global competency" among SWU stakeholders, which includes both multilingualism and "cultural competencies".

I also spoke with administrators about motivations for recruiting or employing ITAs. Most did not see the internationalization of the curriculum as the main motivation for having

ITAs in their departments. Rather, reasons like the proportionally high number of international applicants to their graduate programs or an attempt to attract high quality students from other countries were much more common and were presented to me as the primary motivation for such decisions. Nonetheless, several administrators spoke about the potential value of having ITAs as a way of exposing students to people with different backgrounds than their own.

It appears then that SWU has a stated commitment to the internationalization of the curriculum within its strategic plan, including a commitment to developing "global competency" among its stakeholders, including faculty and students. ITAs and other international faculty might be reasonably thought of as valuable members of the university due to their ability to provide opportunities for exposure to people from outside many US students' past experiences, and indeed some administrators suggest that they view them in this manner. However, as of yet, such motivations do not appear to be the main force behind the recruitment of ITAs at SWU nor, to my knowledge, are there any explicit policies or practices that seek to address the development of "global competency" within the SWU classroom in a more guided fashion that moves beyond mere exposure. Rather, as I will show in the rest of this chapter, the bulk of policy making is directed at ensuring SWU ITAs are prepared to teach in a US context.

4.1.2   University accreditation

One important university-wide requirement for many TAs stems from SWU's accreditation through a regional organization, which requires accredited schools to demonstrate teaching credentials for all graduate teaching assistants. These requirements specify that graduate teaching assistants either have completed eighteen graduate credit hours or have a Master's degree in the discipline they are teaching in. Graduate teaching assistants must also be directly supervised by faculty, receive regular in-service training, and be routinely evaluated. It is

important to note, however, that, at SWU, these regulations are interpreted as pertaining specifically to graduate teaching assistants who serve as a course's instructor of record. As I will describe in more detail below, the types of teaching assignments that departments give to graduate students determine whether they are treated as being subject to these regulations. This is particularly relevant for disciplines making use of TAs as instructors of laboratory courses, where the TA is not considered to be the instructor of record and thus is treated as exempt from these requirements (e.g., Biology and Physics).

4.1.3 Language testing and ESL courses

Another set of university-wide procedures pertains to the language testing and potential remediation of ITA candidates. All international applicants to SWU graduate programs are required to achieve a minimum score on a standardized test of English language proficiency: TOEFL, IELTS, or a locally administered test, the Institutional Language Proficiency Test (ILPT, pseudonym). For example, the university requires a minimum score of 79 or 80 on the internet-based version of TOEFL for admission to a graduate program.

SWU also has implemented a policy of requiring all admitted, incoming international graduate students to take a version of the ILPT that includes an oral interview in addition to the test's usual writing, reading, and listening sections. However, my informants reported that exemptions are often provided to students upon request, usually from the director of graduate studies in the student's department. For example, SW, an ITA in the English department, reported that his department's graduate director requested an exemption from the ILPT on his behalf, and he was therefore not required to take the test.

ILPT scores are used to determine whether incoming international students should receive recommendations to take English as a second language (ESL) coursework: either a

Listening and Speaking course, a Writing course, or both. Those involved in the administration of ILPT were careful to note that its results involve only course recommendations rather than requirements that graduate students take ESL coursework. The score reports for the ILPT, for example, state that "Based on the results of the ILPT, students may be *recommended* for one or more ESL courses" (emphasis mine). The director of the ESL program, HB, described this process of recommendations in an interview with me stating that because there is "no centralized graduate studies office", there is no way to ensure that students will be required to take courses that they are recommended to take based on their ILPT results. Thus, each individual department exercises considerable autonomy in determining whether students will take courses, although as HB pointed out "many departments do follow our recommendations", but "some just don't".

Although some departments may choose to disregard ILPT recommendations, many of the ITAs that I interviewed reported being required to take a course from the ESL program based on their ILPT results. For example, HS reported that he was required by his department, Biology, to take the Listening and Speaking course after they received his ILPT results. In addition, during his interview, AC (Chair of the Computer Science department) reported that successful completion of any of the ESL coursework recommended by the ILPT was a prerequisite for international graduate students teaching courses in the Computer Science department.

However, the Computer Science department's procedures that AC described in his interview do not fully align with the intentions of those who administer the ILPT and oversee the ESL program. Whereas AC reported to me that any courses recommended by a Computer Science graduate student's ILPT results must be completed before they can assume responsibilities for a Computer Science course, the ILPT score reporting sheet distributed to international graduate students and their departments notes that "Assessment of a student's

readiness for a GTA position is not done through the ILPT". The ILPT does not make recommendations concerning one of the ESL program's courses, ENG 600, a course designed to prepare international graduate students to serve as teaching assistants.

In the past, a separate test was occasionally used across the university to determine ITA readiness for classroom instruction. Two faculty members in the English department, MQ and RJ, reported that they were involved in testing for ITAs during the 1990s, when a teaching simulation test was administered by the English department. RJ, who oversaw ITA testing starting in 1993, reported that this test was only ever administered to a small number of students, and only at departments' request. RJ's annual reports of her service to SWU reveal that she continued to administer the test until 2002, when she assessed eight TA candidates in the Spring and Summer; in the Fall of 2001 her report states that she assessed nine TA candidates. After 2002, there were no longer records of ITA testing, and it would appear that the test was discontinued at or around this time. Records suggest that it was only ever used to assess a small percentage of ITAs at SWU.

Later, as she reported in her interview, language testing in the English department was taken over by AJ. When accreditation requirements for the intensive English program (an accreditation separate from the university's) spurred attempts to document nonnative English speaking instructors' language proficiency, AJ reported that she developed a new test, the Classroom Oral Language Test (COLT), by adapting an existing test used at another university. This test, however, has (as of my data collection) only been administered to international graduate students in the English department. In her interview, AJ discussed the discontinuation of ITA testing for other departments outside of English. She expressed a desire to provide testing

for other departments but mentioned that the English department lacked the funding to compensate the raters who would need to be used to administer the COLT across all of SWU.

Departments other than the English department, therefore, no longer have real access to a test specifically designed to assess classroom language, although they apparently seldom made use of the previously existing test. There is some evidence then that some departments are using the results of ILPT (or another test such as TOEFL) as their main indication that international graduate students are prepared linguistically to serve as TAs.

During her interview, RW, ILPT Testing Coordinator, shared with me her view that this practice is an inappropriate use of the ILPT results. She argued that a test appropriate to determining ITAs' linguistic readiness would involve a simulated teaching demonstration rather than the simple interview used in the ILPT. Aware of the possibility that the ILPT is being used in this fashion, RW reported that test interviewers often inquire with interviewees about whether they will serve as TAs in their departments, and an additional note about the ESL program's ITA preparation course, ENG 600, is then sometimes added to the test-taker's ILPT score report.

4.1.4   ENG 600: A course in ITA preparation

Another aspect of the policies affecting SWU international students looking to serve as TAs is the availability of ENG 600, which is geared toward preparing ITAs for university teaching. The course was first listed in the 1988-1989 edition of SWU's graduate course catalog. The course, however, has gone through quite a bit of change and development over the years. DA, one of my English department informants, reported that it was redeveloped in the early 2000s and began to be offered around 2004 in its current form. Although international graduate students at SWU can enroll in ENG 600, there is no requirement at the college- or university-level that would compel any of them to do so.

Enrollment over the years in ENG 600 has been limited. Documents from the ESL program report that, from Spring 2000 until Fall 2014, only 186 students had registered for the course (in a total of twenty sections), which can only be a small fraction of the number of ITAs who have passed through SWU in that fourteen year span. Of the twenty-nine ITAs that I interviewed for this project, only four reported having taken ENG 600: AE (Physics), LH (Mathematics), SG (Mathematics), and YV (Computer Science). LH and SG reported that they were required by the Mathematics Department to take the course (more information on this requirement is presented below in my discussion of the department). AE and YV reported that they voluntarily enrolled.

Several factors may contribute to the low enrollment. First, prospective ITAs and their departments only receive recommendations for them to take two other English as a second language program courses. In the absence of a recommendation for ENG 600, few departments seem to require that their students take the course, even though they often do require that the international graduate students complete other recommended ESL coursework. In the absence of such a requirement, many ITAs are reluctant to take a course that adds to their already heavy burden of coursework, research, and teaching. For example, in his interview, WM, a TA in the Computer Science department, mentioned that despite having been encouraged to take ENG 600 by HB, who was the instructor of another ESL course WM took, he chose not to take the ITA course due, he reports, to his need to spend his time on research. SK, another ITA in the Computer Science department, offered a somewhat different explanation of not taking the course during his interview. He reported that he felt ENG 600 would be too similar in content to a course required as preparation for all Computer Science TAs (this course is discussed in greater detail below).

A second factor influencing the tendency of ITAs not to take ENG 600 is simply that not all ITAs are aware of the course's existence nor are all relevant administrators aware of it. Six of my twenty-nine ITA participants reported that they did not know about ENG 600 prior to our interview, and another three said they found out about the course when their lab supervisor, after having himself learned about the course through his interview with me, made an announcement about the course to the TAs who teach laboratory sections under his supervision.   This apparent lack of knowledge about ENG 600 exists among ITAs in some departments despite the ESL program's efforts to inform ITAs and administrators about the course. Instructors in other ESL courses encourage their students to take the ITA course, as I previously mentioned was the case for WM. Both HB and DA reported that they had regularly sent emails to department chairs and directors of graduate studies across the university suggesting that administrators encourage ITAs to take ENG 600. DA also reported that she had been regularly invited in the past to speak at meetings of department chairs, although the ESL program, she reported, had not been invited to do so in recent years. Finally, my informants reported that ILPT oral interviewers are asked to provide information to test-takers (i.e., international graduate students) about the course if they think it would be relevant to the test-takers.

Perhaps contributing to the apparent lack of awareness about and enrollment in ENG 600 is the fact that information about the course may not come at the most optimal time, since international graduate students are usually told about it as they enter their programs. At this time, many are not teaching or perhaps even thinking about teaching, since, in some departments (as I will discuss below), graduate students do not assume teaching responsibilities immediately. It may also be that this information is not always sent directly to the people who have direct contact with ITAs. For example, in the case of the Biology department, laboratory coordinators

and academic professionals who supervise laboratory instruction have the most direct contact with TAs. While the chair and director of graduate studies likely receive information about the course from the ESL program, this information may not be conveyed to those overseeing laboratory instruction on a regular basis. Neither of the two Biology academic professionals I interviewed, JG or AH, reported knowing about ENG 600. As mentioned above, after hearing about the course in our interview, AH later informed his TAs about it.

4.1.5   Teaching Excellence Support Services

The final university-level support available to ITAs comes from an SWU office, Teaching Excellence Support Services (TESS). TESS provides opportunities for all instructors at SWU to receive additional training in teaching, for example, through regular in-service discussions and trainings. TESS is also involved in putting on an annual pedagogy conference for TAs, and some of the TAs, especially those teaching in AH's Biology laboratory, reported that they had attended the conference. In addition, TESS hired DA and then DB (both from the English department) to provide support services especially targeted toward nonnative English speakers. TESS also recently underwent a search for a new director and specifically listed the following as one of the director's responsibilities: "playing a leadership role in the university in training graduate teaching assistants, including international graduate students". Thus, TESS continues to make efforts to include training sessions targeted at ITAs in its schedule of events. These services are available to ITAs if they are aware of them and choose to make use of them, although the voluntary nature of the services and events means that they are only occasionally utilized by relatively few ITAs.

As I mentioned previously, despite some university-level requirements and available forms of support, most of the policies and procedures governing whether international graduate

students may serve as TAs and how they will be prepared to do this stem from individual academic departments. In the next several sections I provide an overview of the way these decisions are handled and opportunities afforded across five departments in the College of Arts and Sciences at SWU: Computer Science, Mathematics, English, Biology, and Physics. The order of the departments, which are presented in the order listed above, is intended to present them according to defining features of their instructional contexts. In particular, Computer Science, Mathematics, and English all assign TAs to serve as the instructor of record for their courses. This affects both the policies that determine who is eligible to teach and when as well as the type of instruction that TAs engage in. In contrast, Biology and Physics both employ TAs as instructors of laboratory courses attached to other lecture courses. These TAs are not the instructors of record, and this has an effect on when they are deemed eligible to teach.

4.2 Department of Computer Science

The Computer Science department employs graduate students to teach some of its courses offered to undergraduate students, often large lecture courses with student enrollments around seventy students, although one of the six Computer Science ITAs that I interviewed, SK, reported that he was teaching a graduate-level Computer Science course. In most cases, those individuals who are assigned to be the instructor of record for these courses are PhD students, although AC, chair of the Computer Science department, reported in an interview that on occasion (he suggested once or twice a year) the department allows a Master's student to serve in this capacity.

Before they can be assigned to teach, they must meet several requirements: taking at least eighteen graduate credit hours (per accreditation requirements), taking a one credit hour seminar in pedagogy (CSCI 900), and, for ITAs, taking and passing any ESL coursework recommended

from their ILPT results. These requirements mean that most Computer Science graduate students are not appointed to be instructors of record in their first year, and none of the ITAs I interviewed reported that they had taught in the first year. In fact, WM, NT, and SK reported that they were first assigned to be the instructor of record for a course at the beginning of their third year in the program. During the time between admission and being eligible to serve as an instructor of record for a Computer Science course, Computer Science graduate students serve as instructional aides and lead recitation sections (they also serve in these capacities throughout their time in the program when they are not teaching). Once they have been assigned to teach, the department tracks their performance via annually-submitted portfolios that include, among other things, reports of their teaching. In the following sections, I elaborate on policies that affect ITAs in the Computer Science department, specifically admission into a Computer Science graduate program, the Computer Science pedagogy class (CSCI 900), requirements to take ESL classes, serving as instructional aides, leading recitation sections, matching graduate students to specific classes, and the yearly portfolio.

4.2.1 Program admission

As with any of the other departments, before someone can be considered as a candidate for a TA position, s/he must be admitted into one of the department's graduate programs, most likely the PhD program. Although the Computer Science PhD students constitute the department's primary candidate pool for serving as teaching assistants, and, according to AC, half of the students' responsibilities connected to their assistantships are teaching-related (the other half is research-related), the department does not place much (if any) emphasis on teaching experience or preparation during the admissions process. In his interview, AC reported that teaching experience, training, or abilities are not really considered in the process of admitting

PhD students into the Computer Science department. He said that the Computer Science department seeks out candidates who have backgrounds in research, especially those with "a good research fit" with one of the department's sub-groups in addition to other requirements like GRE scores and past GPA.

4.2.2 CSCI 900: A course in teaching computer science

Before being allowed to teach in the Computer Science department, graduate students must take CSCI 900, a one credit-hour course in teaching computer science (a requirement that may also be intended to fulfill accreditation guidelines, see my discussion of university accreditation above). The instructor of this course did not respond to my requests for an interview, but I obtained a syllabus for the course from his website and discussed the class in my interviews with AC and Computer Science ITAs. The course is structured around readings from two books (*The Joy of Teaching* and *McKeachie's Teaching Tips*), which the students present on and lead class discussions of. AC's evaluation of the course during his interview was quite positive, calling it "very rigorous and very fruitful". My research did not reveal that the course involves any practice teaching or observation of other instructors. This is not included in the syllabus, and none of my Computer Science informants reported it in their descriptions of the course.

When I discussed the course in interviews with ITAs, I heard mixed reviews. A few of the ITAs mentioned having gained some important information from the course. For example, WM mentioned that he had learned from the course that the US teaching context is marked by relatively more egalitarian relations between instructor and student than in his home country; he also reported receiving and following the advice of the instructor with respect to keeping records of his correspondence with students. SK mentioned that he had learned about laws governing

```
250   IR:  ((...)) have you gotten any training, (.) to be a
251        better teacher?
252   NR:  yeah.
253   IR:  or to be a good teacher?
254   NR:  yeah. [the]
255   IR:        [from] your department?
256   NR:  yeah. the there is a teaching pedagogy [class,]
257   IR:                                          [mhm.]
258   NR:  which all the graduate students are uh man- i mean
259        we have to attend it,
260   IR:  mhm.
261   NR:  no matter what. so, uh in my first semester, um i
262        had no choice. but i had to attend that. and it
263        was GREAT actually. got to learn a lot, (.) the
264        ethics behind teaching.
265   IR:  mhm.
266   NR:  it's not just how to teach, and other other stuff.
267        that's definitely uh it can be (.) uh (.)
268        somebody's perspective, like, my wh- one of the
269        (.) instructor of that teaching pedagogy class,
270        maybe he is given his ins- y'know perspective on
271        how to teach, but (.) the ethics is ethics. it's a
272        it's in the policy of (.) how to teach. So, (.)
273        the the things that i have learned over there is
274        kind of the rules, uh (.)
275   IR:  mhm.
276   NR:  what STUDENT (.) have. like kind of law, what
277        student can do, what law uh what what teachers, or
278        professors can do. as per se. like, for example,
279        (.) uh plagiarism. uh that's kind of rough in the
280        united states. and uh (.) you need to be very
281        careful about that. so how do you (.) y'know (.)
282        if you have a situation like that, wh- how do you
283        tackle that? how do you l- go forward? whom to
284        contact? all those things. and, kind of
285        maintaining the discipline among the students. you
286        you cannot babysit them. you cannot uh go them,
287        (.) and say something directly, because it it it's
288        against some policies. so how do you k- how can
289        how can you handle that? how can you (.) y'know,
290        implement that? all those kind of rules, and
291        y'know we had discussions in the class, and it wa-
292        it was great. it w- that that that class was
293        great.
```

Excerpt 4.1. NR discusses his experience taking CSCI 900, the Computer Science department's course intended to prepare its graduate students to teach.

```
320   IR: ((...)) i know you took (.) um the writing class,
321   YV: right.
322   IR: did you take any other [classes?]
323   YV:                         [um] yeah. actually,
324       (.) uh we I (.) take and i (.) it was purely MY
325       OWN (.)
326   IR: mhm.
327   YV: uh decision to take this um (.) pedagogy, like uh
328       for (.) for new mm (.) whatever doris was
329       teaching. how it's called,
330   IR: mhm.
331   YV: like, um (.) teaching for graduate assistants,
332       something like that, because we HAVE our OWN (.)
333       seminar,
334   IR: mhm.
335   YV: at computer science department,
336   IR: mhm.
337   YV: and i took it in fall, it wasn't very helpful,
338   IR: kay.
339   YV: i mean (.) we were talking about something which i
340       already knew,
341   IR: mhm.
342   YV: we (.) i i taught for a year, before, anyway,
343   IR: [mhm.]
344   YV: [in university,] (.) nothing specific about y'know
345       like AMERICAN classroom, (.) so it wasn't very
346       helpful. and i said, y'know what? maybe uh fr-
347       from just one of our profesors.
348   IR: mhm.
349   YV: so he's not big in to pedagogy. he would just
350       y'know, just (.) maybe for some people, it was
351       okay, just to make them feel comfortable,
352   IR: mhm.
353   YV: for me, it was honestly waste of time.
354   IR: okay.
355   YV: but with doris, i felt, (.) it was funny, and we
356       really made like presentations in front of the
357       class, and she video recorded us,
358   IR: mhm.
359   YV: so, it was good for me (.) kind of in terms of (.)
360       mostly in terms of pedagogical. not really in (.)
361       y'know in english.
362   IR: mhm.
```

Excerpt 4.2. YV discusses her experience taking both CSCI 900 and ENG 600.

students' privacy (e.g., FERPA). NT claimed that the course was generally helpful because even

though "you learned technical stuff, [that] doesn't mean you know how to deal with a class". The

most positive review came from NR, who hadn't yet been assigned to be an instructor of record in the SWU Computer Science department at the time of his interview but had taught as a Master's student at another university. In Excerpt 4.1, Ramesh describes his experience taking the course.

One Computer Science ITA, YV, expressed dissatisfaction with the course. In Excerpt 4.2, YV mentions that she elected to take ENG 600 (lines 324-331) and found the Computer Science department's course lacking in comparison.

4.2.3   Taking ESL courses

According to AC, the Computer Science department requires graduate students to complete any ESL coursework that they were officially recommended to take by the ILPT before they may be assigned to serve as the instructor of record for their own course. As a result, Computer Science international graduate students are required to complete the Writing and Listening/Speaking courses offered by the ESL program, if either has (or both have) been recommended per their ILPT results.

Because of the nature of ILPT recommendations, Computer Science graduate students are never required to take the ITA pedagogy course offered by the ESL program, ENG 600. However, during his interview, AC mentioned that he was aware of ENG 600 and said that it is a "fantastic" course. He also reported that he and his department recommend that ITAs take the course and that some Computer Science graduate students have taken ENG 600 in addition to the required Computer Science pedagogy course.

Of the six Computer Science ITAs I interviewed, only one, YV, reported taking both CSCI 900 and ENG 600 (see Excerpt 4.2 above), although she did not mention AC's or any other Computer Science department faculty member's recommendation as the impetus for this.

None of the other Computer Science ITAs I interviewed took ENG 600. They offered a range of reasons for not registering for it, some of which I mentioned above. Of particular importance were ITAs' concerns about not having enough time to take a non-required course while trying to manage all of their other responsibilities. I also previously mentioned that SK reported during his interview that he believed ENG 600 would be too similar in content to CSCI 900. The result seems to be that while AC, the chair of the Computer Science department, spoke quite positively about the ITA course, few Computer Science ITAs apparently take the course, even though ENG 600 may offer additional, useful preparation.

4.2.4   Serving as instructional aides

Computer Science graduate students do not typically serve as instructors of record immediately upon entering the department, in part because they must complete the requirements discussed in the previous sections in their first few semesters. Instead, newer graduate students are often assigned to serve as instructional aides, assisting another instructor (sometimes including fellow graduate students who are serving as the instructor of record for a class, more on this below), usually by holding office hours and grading assignments under the direction of the instructor. All six of the Computer Science ITAs that I interviewed reported that they had been instructional aides at least once, and most had served in this capacity numerous times. As shown in Excerpt 4.3, AC, the chair of the Computer Science department, suggested that these duties could serve as a form of preparation for TAs who eventually wish to be the instructor of record for the course they assist in.

```
385   AC: so there's a lot of work there. and of course,
386       this is uh something uh it's a good idea to DO
387       some GRADING, and get in on a class, before
388       teaching the same class. you see?
389   IR: mhm.
390   AC: so typically the p h d students will request,
391       hello, can i (.) grade for the c s two oh one?
392       because,
393   IR: mhm.
394   AC: next year i wanna teach it. you see?
395   IR: okay.
396   AC: so they get familiar with the class as well. [you
397       see?]
398   IR: [mhm.]
399   AC: uh what is involved, and and so on. you see?
400   IR: mhm. and when they GRADE for the class,
401   AC: yes. yes.
402   IR: are they also OBSERVING the class?
403   AC: umm uh very rarely, some professors require uh the
404       their (.) their t a's to come and attend the
405       class, as well. you see?
406   IR: mhm.
407   AC: uh but I would say that's exception. very,
408   IR: mhm.
409   AC: a few. mkay? but most (.) uh student (.) uh uh uh
410       graders will be (.) just holding office hours and
411       and (.) and grading the papers. mkay? mhm.
```

Excerpt 4.3. AC discusses Computer Science graduate students serving as instructional aides.

Of the six ITAs I interviewed, only one reported that she had attended the class sessions of one instructor that she assisted. During her interview, LX reported that she attended all of the class sessions of the discrete mathematics course taught by her Computer Science adviser during her first semester at Shrinking World University. Excerpt 4.4 and Excerpt 4.5 present part of LX's discussion of this experience during our interview.

LX's experience appears to be unusual in the Computer Science department, since the other ITAs I interviewed reported that they graded assignments without attending the class and also held office hours, which most claimed were rarely attended by students. This suggests that the degree to which assisting another instructor actually serves as preparation for TAs later

serving as the instructor of the same course varies substantially with most only becoming

familiar with potential assignments through this process.

```
342   IR: ((...)) did you have to observe the class, that
343       they were (.)
344   LX: uh
345   IR: taking?
346   LX: @uh it it depends. it's in in computer science
347       department, because y'know right now, (.) it seems
348       like computer science is a very (.) popular major.
349   IR: mhm.
350   LX: so we have (.) more, and more students,
351   IR: mhm.
352   LX: and, (.) that results in, we are lots of labor,
353       (.) so we get (.) as long as you want a job, you
354       can get a teaching @assistant.
355   IR: mhm.
356   LX: no matter you are familiar with that class a lot.
357   IR: mhm.
358   LX: uh (.) when i'm a teaching assistant, the first
359       time i'm i'm i'm be a teaching assistant, i'm
360       assisting my adviser.
361   IR: mhm.
362   LX: and she is the one that who REALLY take teaching
363       serious. he think that teaching is a very
364       important part in her career. even though she's
365       already got her (.) tenure. since.
366   IR: mhm.
367   LX: she's really kind of like care about (.) if the
368       students learn well from her class,
369   IR: mhm.
370   LX: so (.) at that at that that time, and she wants me
371       to (.) do the quiz question, exam- (.) ins- (.) uh
372       besides grading part, i need to prepare for
373       prepare the quiz question, the exam question, the
374       homework question,
375   IR: mhm.
376   LX: and i need to provide all those solutions.
377   IR: mhm.
```

Excerpt 4.4. LX describes her experience observing another instructor teaching a Computer Science course she would later herself teach (part 1).

```
378   LX: so i'm really kind of like (.) that's a first time
379       i'm teaching assistant. and, the discrete
380       mathematics (.)
381   IR: mhm.
382   LX: in (.) HERE (.) is very different from what i
383       learned in china.
384   IR: mhm.
385   LX: because that's the first semester i came here,
386       even though i learn english, but it's kind of like
387       VERY (.) GENERAL english, it's not like (.)
388       specific to computer science major.
389   IR: mhm.
390   LX: so even though there are some concepts, i don't
391       know how to say them in english. so it's really
392       hard to (.) for me to finish th- that task.
393   IR: mhm.
394   LX: so (.) i attend the class, the whole semester.
395   IR: mhm.
396   LX: i i'm full attendance.
397   IR: mhm.
398   LX: my attendance is even better than @most @of @the
399       @students @in [@that @class.]
400   IR:                [@@@] right.
401   LX: yeah. i attended the class, but, it it turns out,
402       (.) all that semester that i spent so much time on
403       that topic, so that it makes me, very familiar
404       with the content, so i'm very CONFIDENT when
405       students ask me for question, or, when i give the
406       question or solution since i'm really confident
407       about that. so that's why i get to teach that
408       class, twice.
409   IR: mhm.
410   LX: yeah.
```

Excerpt 4.5. LX describes her experience observing another instructor teaching a Computer Science course she would later herself teach (part 2).

4.2.5   Leading recitation sections

AC reported in his interview that the department had recently begun to offer a variation

of the instructional aide duties. In some cases, graduate students are now assigned to lead

recitation sections, in which a smaller number of students (AC reported the maximum number

was twenty five) receives more hands-on instruction such as carrying out a practical exercise

related to what has been introduced in the larger lecture course (similar in organization and

structure to the laboratory courses that TAs in Biology and Physics teach, as I discuss below).

During our interview, AC suggested that international students in particular benefited from or

felt more comfortable leading recitation sections, especially since the classes were smaller in size

and involved the instructor leading students through a pre-planned activity to demonstrate a

concept students had already become familiar with.

```
394   SK: ((...)) em it's a it's a one hour class.
395   IR: uh huh.
396   SK: it's basically, like i have to (.) uh IMPLEMENT
397       what uh instructor had my adviser is the
398       instructor for that class. so,
399   IR: mhm.
400   SK: what he had taught, so i have to implement, and
401       show the students, this is what they actually (.)
402   IR: mhm.
403   SK: MEAN. this is what it actually means.
404   IR: mhm.
405   SK: so, i just had to show it them, and make sure they
406       do the same.
407   IR: mhm.
408   SK: so, (.) and there is uh it's like a proper class.
409       y'know, it has an attendance, and participation
410       grade. So, (.)
411   IR: okay.
412   SK: it's a it's like a proper class i would say.
413   IR: so the students came (.)
414   SK: [yes.]
415   IR: [attended] class regularly?
416   SK: regularly. they HAD TO for to get grades.
417   IR: okay. (.) um and you said it was helpful, for you?
418   SK: yes, that was like my starting point, you can say.
419       so, as an instructor, so, (.) uh there will be
420       like twenty students, [there won't]
421   IR:                       [mhm.]
422   SK: there will be like twenty students, so (.) i (.)
423       teach the students like, this is what it is, and
424       then, i explain in detail, so, (.)
425   IR: mhm.
426   SK: i would say that's my starting point as
427       instructor. i'm not like a COMPLETE instructor, i
428       would say, it's like a (.) a a PART of
429       instructor's job.
430   IR: mhm. mhm.
```

Excerpt 4.6. SK describes his experience teaching a recitation section for a Computer Science course.

Perhaps due to the fact that, at the time of my data collection, recitation sections had only been recently implemented in the Computer Science department, only one of the ITAs I interviewed, SK, reported that he had led a recitation section. SK reported in his interview that leading the recitation section provided him with "a very good experience". In Excerpt 4.6, I present his discussion of his experience leading the recitation section for his adviser, who was the instructor of record for the course that the recitation section was part of.

Although none of the other ITAs reported leading recitation sections themselves, LX raised some potential concerns about the implementation of these recitations. In particular, graduate students serving as instructors in the Computer Science department are assigned instructional aides, who are also Computer Science graduate students, including instructional aides to lead recitation sections. In her interview, LX expressed dissatisfaction with one of the instructional aides who had been assigned to her and was supposed to lead a recitation section for her course. Specifically, she felt that her peer did not possess the appropriate level of knowledge about the subject matter such that when he was asked questions during recitation he was unable to respond to them. LX reported that she had received at least one complaint from her students about this recitation leader. Although she reported speaking with this instructional aide, she suggested that she did not have any recourse over him, since he is a fellow PhD student. She said "it's hard for me", because this person "is also a PhD student". She continued, "that's my peers; that's my colleague".

LX's situation then contrasts with SK's in that, whereas SK appeared to take his recitation duties seriously, perhaps because he was being supervised by his adviser, other graduate students may not be as committed to using their recitation leading as an opportunity to

prepare for their later teaching assignments. This suggests that the dilemmas of power created by having PhD students assigned their fellow PhD students as instructional aides may require more direct oversight or intentional policy making by the department to ensure that assistants are performing their duties adequately and benefiting from the experience in the intended manner. Furthermore, LX's fellow graduate student may lack the preparation or guidance necessary to perform his recitation duties adequately, suggesting that greater departmental efforts toward preparing graduate students for these responsibilities would be warranted so that the burden of dealing with student dissatisfaction does not fall to their fellow graduate students serving as the instructor of record.

4.2.6   Course assignment

Once they have met the requirements I have described above, Computer Science graduate students are eligible to be assigned to be the instructor of record for a course. They are usually assigned specific classes according to their research interests or expertise, although the department also has a number of introductory level courses for which any of the graduate students would have the necessary mastery of the material to be qualified to teach. For these assignments, AC reported that the department considers the TAs' preferences and abilities particularly with regards to whether they are well-suited to teaching introductory courses or more advanced ones (see Excerpt 4.7 below). AC also mentioned that graduate students would request to serve as instructional aides for particular classes with the goal of signaling their interest in teaching the course and strengthening any argument for allowing them to do so.

```
437   AC: so um uh and also, we we review their (.) uh each
438       of our p h d students is expected to submit a
439       teaching portfolio.
440   IR: okay.
441   AC: at the end of the year.
442   IR: okay.
443   AC: you see? if they've taught something, they have to
444       tell us,
445   IR: mhm.
446   AC: uh what they did. you see?
447   IR: okay.
448   AC: which includes the student evaluations, and so on.
449       mhm.
450   IR: okay.
451   AC: so we monitor THOSE, and uh we if there's some
452       trouble spots, we talk to the (.) yeah we we (.)
453       talk to the person involved. [mkay?]
454   IR:                                 [mhm.] mhm.
455   AC: if they haven't done a good job in the teaching,
456       and there were some complaints, or many
457       complaints,
458   IR: mhm.
459   AC: and (.) we make sure that, (.) they've understood,
460       (.) an- and that they can do better (.) job, the
461       next time, sometimes, it's uh (.) it's uh uh it's
462       it's a particular assignment.
463   IR: mhm.
464   AC: uh this particular class, they don't teach well,
465       but maybe some other class they would teach well.
466       [you see?]
467   IR:     [mhm.] mhm.
468   AC: so we make those adjustments as well.
469   IR: okay.
470   AC: some some uh p h d students are comfortable
471       teaching advanced topics.
472   IR: mhm.
473   AC: um to to students who've already gone through (.)
474       uh the uh maybe a couple of classes, and then
475       ((inaudible)).
476   IR: mhm.
477   AC: whereas other students are very good at uh other t
478       a's are good at teaching the the intro intro
479       classes. [okay?]
480   IR:              [mhm.]
```

Excerpt 4.7. AC describes the Computer Science department's requirements for TAs to submit portfolios and their use in assigning graduate students courses.

4.2.7   Yearly portfolios

The department employs a unique system for monitoring TAs' performance in the classroom, namely a yearly portfolio. In Excerpt 4.7, AC discusses how the Computer Science department requires an end-of-year portfolio from each PhD student, intended in part to allow the department to monitor TAs' teaching (lines 437-446). The report includes student evaluations (lines 448), allowing administrators to consider whether the TAs need to be mentored in their teaching or whether they may need to be assigned to a different course (lines 451-465).

Although the department looks over TAs' portfolios to get a sense of whether they are successful in the classroom, none of my informants reported a system for regularly observing the TAs' teaching and providing them with feedback on it.

4.2.8   Overall impressions

The Computer Science department appears to provide its TAs less preparation for teaching than the other departments I will discuss below. In particular, TAs are never required to observe the teaching of others in their department even though they are often assigned to assist instructors with teaching, most from the time they begin the program. However, they are not required and few seem to be genuinely encouraged to attend the class and observe the instructor they are assisting. Such a requirement (at least in their first year) might bestow some of the benefits that LX reports about observing her adviser while teaching (see Excerpt 4.4 and Excerpt 4.5).

The department's required pedagogy seminar, CSCI 900, although appreciated by most of the ITAs I interviewed (the primary exception being YV's criticisms, see Excerpt 4.2), is only one credit hour, meaning the Computer Science graduate students receive fewer instructional hours on effective teaching practice than graduate students in most of the other departments,

namely English, Mathematics, and Physics. The course also lacks some of the aspects that ITAs in these other departments reported were most helpful such as video-recorded practice teaching sessions and guided observation assignments (discussed in more detail below).

Assigning graduate students to lead recitation sections appears to hold some promise as a form of preparation for Computer Science TAs (and perhaps as AC suggested especially *international* teaching assistants). Because of the very recent implementation of this practice, my data is very limited with respect to stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of these recitation sections. However, one ITA suggested that not all graduate students assigned to lead them are adequately motivated or prepared to perform these duties. Greater guidance and oversight, perhaps in the form of an additional course (like those used in the Physics department, described below), may be necessary to help recitation section leaders be more successful in fulfilling their responsibilities.

4.3 Department of Mathematics

Like the Computer Science department, the department of Mathematics at SWU assigns its more experienced PhD students (and according to the associate chair of the department, OP, on some occasions an "exceptionally talented MA student") to be instructors of record for a number of undergraduate courses. There are a couple of different formats for these classes. There are more traditional lecture courses, where TAs take responsibility for a three credit hour course. There are also emporium model courses, where TAs instruct students for one hour per week, and the students are then required to spend three additional hours in the laboratory working on related assignments and learning to use mathematical software under the supervision of Mathematics graduate students serving as tutors.

In the following sections I review the policies that affect ITAs in the Mathematics department at SWU. Here, I provide a brief summary of these before expanding on them in more detail. Like all other programs, TAs in Mathematics must be admitted into a graduate program, usually the PhD program. When they first enter the program, they are generally assigned to serve as tutors. During their first year, TAs take a course in mathematics pedagogy, MATH 850. Some ITAs are also required by the department to take ENG 600 as well as any other ESL coursework recommended by the ILPT. Finally, once they have completed the requirements for being assigned a course of their own, they continue to receive support especially from the graduate teaching assistant (GTA) mentor through, for example, regular teaching observations.

4.3.1   *Program admission*

As with all of the other programs, being considered for a teaching assistantship in Mathematics requires first that the candidate be a graduate student in one of the department's graduate programs. However, as with the Computer Science department, the Mathematics department does not necessarily take teaching abilities or experience into consideration in their admissions. Rather, in an interview with me, OP, Associate Chair of the department, reported that the admissions process aims "to recruit the best students possible" and that, once graduate students are given an assistantship, the department trains them to undertake their instructional duties. Thus, Mathematics teaching assistantships do not appear to be assigned on the basis of teaching experience or abilities, but OP suggested that they were used as a recruitment tool that gives students that the department wishes to have in their programs an incentive to choose SWU and opportunities to receive training and experience in teaching.

4.3.2 Tutoring

Mathematics graduate students are not typically assigned to be the instructor of record for a course in their first semester or even their first year in the program. Rather, the department usually assigns them positions in its various tutoring services. Much of this tutoring is attached to emporium model courses. As students in emporium model courses are working on assignments and learning computer software, they can seek the assistance of tutors, who have assistantships from the Mathematics department. In her interview, OP suggested that this tutoring serves as a form of preparation for later teaching for graduate students by allowing the tutors to become familiar with the teaching model, the material, the software, and the emporium model teaching practices. After a period of time in which they serve as tutors, which OP reported depends in part on whether they earned a Master's degree from the SWU Mathematics department and were therefore already experienced tutors when they began their PhD program (and after completing other requirements that I discuss below), Mathematics PhD students are eligible to be teaching assistants, having full responsibility for their own sections of undergraduate Mathematics courses.

Some of the six Mathematics ITAs that I interviewed mentioned that they felt tutoring had been helpful for their later teaching. OK stated that "having to tutor students one on one really helped" her to understand how people learn. LH said that she felt prepared to teach at SWU in part because of her tutoring experience, which gave her many opportunities to speak with undergraduate students helping her to see which mathematical concepts were easy for them and which were difficult. LH also mentioned that tutoring specifically in the laboratory for an emporium course gave her a thorough knowledge of the material which she was able to draw on when she became an instructor for the same course.

```
252   TL: ((...)) i mean before i was (.) able to teach, i
253       have to (.) work in the lab,
254   IR: uh huh.
255   TL: and, working in the lab is basically tutoring,
256   IR: mhm.
257   TL: people,
258   IR: mhm.
259   TL: i guess that helped,
260   IR: yeah?
261   TL: because you have to talk to people, and stuff,

      ((8 turns omitted – discussing tutoring as
      undergraduate))

272   IR: okay. and in what ways, has that helped you, to
273       (.) be a teacher, now?
274   TL: it helps um (.) cuz you you encounter different
275       kind of students,
276   IR: mhm.
277   TL: and you teaching different kind of subjects,
278   IR: mhm.
279   TL: i guess it's not just just calculus, maybe (.)
280       some something else. like statistics, (.)
281   IR: mhm.
282   TL: college algebra, y'know. those bas- more basic
283       stuff, and the MORE BASIC it gets, the HARDER it
284       is to to explain sometimes.
285   IR: mhm.
286   TL: and you have to think of a lot of different ways
287       to explain stuff,
288   IR: mhm.
289   TL: which is good for teaching. because sometimes,
290       when you have to explain one thing, when you ask,
291       ANY QUESTION? Then, one student will ask you, but
292       but you you would think that you really explained
293       the BEST way, but (.) you have to think of ANOTHER
294       way to explain that thing.
295   IR: [mhm.]
296   TL: [that] that helps you prepare. and of course, the
297       english communication, need to (.)
298   IR: mhm.
299   TL: need to learn how to (.) talk @too (.)
300   IR: mhm.
301   TL: or explain, in english.
302   IR: okay.
303   TL: for for international students.
```

Excerpt 4.8. TL discusses his experience serving as a tutor in the Mathematics department.

In Excerpt 4.8, TL responds to a question that I had previously asked about what preparation he had received to help him teach, bringing up his tutoring experience (which, during turns omitted from the excerpt, he reported included tutoring while he was an undergraduate student) as something that may have helped him by allowing him to encounter different kinds of students, to have the opportunity to assist students with a range of different subjects, to challenge him to think of different ways to explain content, and to practice using English to communicate about mathematics.

While the Mathematics ITAs I interviewed were generally positive about the benefits of tutoring prior to beginning to teach, in her interview, JH pointed out that there were limitations to how much preparation for teaching could be gained from tutoring. In Excerpt 4.9, I ask JH about her experience teaching at another university before coming to SWU and how it benefited her current teaching (lines 495-497). JH responds by contrasting this experience with the preparation she received from tutoring, especially highlighting that there are differences in the communicative repertoires needed to tutor and to teach (lines 503-506).

It appears then that tutoring provides many benefits to Mathematics ITAs, especially giving them a sense of what kinds of material they are likely to be teaching, what kinds of questions students might ask, and how they might usefully explain content to students. However, there appear to be some limitations to how well tutoring prepares ITAs to lead an entire classroom full of students of varying abilities, using varied instructional approaches (including making space for students to work autonomously), for an extended period of time.

```
495   IR: okay. do you think that (.) teaching at (.) uh
496       ((university name omitted)) (.) helped you teach
497       here at shrinking world university?
498   JH: yes. definitely.
499   IR: what kinds of things?
500   JH: uh first thing is like, um (.) like, (.) i
501       practice a lot on my spoken english,
502   IR: [mhm.]
503   JH: [cuz] like it is very different, from like when
504       you TUTOR things, or, like, you have to control
505       the whole (.) like classes is one hour and fifteen
506       classes,
507   IR: mhm.
508   JH: so you talk ALL the time.
509   IR: mhm.
510   JH: and, the other thing is like, i (.) i kind of like
511       understand like um (.) what things are like (.)
512       maybe, maybe it's the first time teaching, you (.)
513       you think, maybe this question is very EASY for
514       you, but, actually, this is very HARD for the
515       students, [but,]
516   IR:          [mhm.]
517   JH: so these times, like, i IMPROVE it, like, (.) i
518       every classes, like um (.) i ga- (.) i give them,
519       like, um time,
520   IR: mhm.
521   JH: to practice by themselves.
522   IR: mhm.
523   JH: so, for every question, i WANT them to try that.
524   IR: mhm.
525   JH: because it's kind of like teaching experience.
526   IR: mhm. mhm.
527   JH: so, i really get a lot like from my previous one.
528   IR: okay. (.) cool.
```

Excerpt 4.9. JH discusses the experience she gained teaching at another university and compares it with tutoring.

4.3.3   MATH 850: A course in teaching mathematics

Tutoring is, however, not the only preparation Mathematics TAs receive before they

assume teaching responsibilities. All Mathematics TAs are required to take MATH 850, a three

credit hour course about teaching mathematics at the collegiate level, taught by a faculty member

in the department, JJ, whose specialization is collegiate mathematics education. During an

interview with me, JJ described the course and its purpose in detail. Since one of the primary purposes of the course is to prepare future TAs to teach in the SWU Mathematics department, JJ reported that the course covers department- and university-level policies related to teaching. JJ also stated that most of the students do not come to the course already having teaching experience, and so her main goal for the course is to "try to break that idea of you teach the way you were taught". To this end, she reported that the course is organized around readings about teaching at the undergraduate level including topics like comparative education and student diversity. She mentioned that the graduate students in the course receive some initial practice teaching by being assigned to be discussants for one of the papers, which JJ argued gave them an "easy introduction" to speaking in front of a class.

A second aspect of MATH 850 is the more extensive teaching practice that each of the graduate students in the course gets. During her interview, JJ reported that students in the course teach a lesson twice during the semester. The first is done in groups; the second, individually. JJ reported that she encourages the students to consider issues that they have been reading about in MATH 850 while preparing their lessons. After completing their teaching practice, the students receive feedback from JJ and their peers and are asked to reflect on this feedback. For their second individual lesson, JJ also gives them a video recording of their teaching on which to reflect.

A third aspect of MATH 850 is the inclusion of observations that students are required to carry out on other Mathematics department instructors. JJ reported in her interview that she required students in MATH 850 to observe the teaching of one TA and one faculty member. She stated that the class then discusses what they observed, paying particular attention to issues

germane to MATH 850, like the level of student engagement, the interaction between the students and instructor, and the use of technology in the classroom.

All of the Mathematics ITAs I interviewed reported having taken MATH 850, and I discussed it at length with most of them. They were mostly positive about the course. GC discussed the course in relation to his previous experience teaching at a community college prior to enrolling in his PhD program at Shrinking World University, stating that he felt he had not received any preparation there. MATH 850, however, gave him an opportunity to learn about "the science behind teaching" and helped him "to become a better communicator of knowledge". OK drew a contrast between knowing the content knowledge and knowing "how people learn" or what might be an effective way to teach them. She expressed the opinion that MATH 850 had given her "a lot of different tools to use while teaching".

During her interview, SG spoke at length about the benefits of getting to observe and reflect on the teaching of others. Prior to Excerpt 4.10, SG was describing MATH 850 in detail, and then began to discuss her observations. In Excerpt 4.10, she elaborates on how observing another instructor was helpful for her development as an instructor, especially helping her gain awareness of the need to balance chalk talk (teacher-fronted explanation of mathematical procedures, see lines 277-279) with more interactive forms of instruction (lines 272-284).

```
240   SG: yeah. and also, we will (.) need to observe a
241       class, uh (.) choose any teache- uh instructor's
242       class, and observe and (.) write down what you
243       feel, what he (.) can @improve,
244   IR: okay.
245   SG: yes. [like,]
246   IR:      [yeah?]
247   SG: mhm.
248   IR: um (.) did you find that helpful?
249   SG: yeah.
250   IR: how so?
251   SG: the n- (.) uh i observed two classes, and the fi-
252       (.) s- in some points, i would do the same thing
253       with him, but i couldn't find ((inaudible)) but i
254       when i observed then i see, maybe i can improve in
255       (.) in that part.
256   IR: mhm.
257   SG: yeah.
258   IR: like what part?
259   SG: like, what part, like, uh (.) uh (.) mm when the
260       teach like, write the (.) things,
261   IR: mhm.
262   SG: if he keep on writing, and student will be boring,
263   IR: [mhm.]
264   SG: [uh] yeah. probably we he can write something, and
265       then TALK to other to uh talk to students,
266   IR: mhm.
267   SG: what's happening, and then, (.)
268   IR: mhm.
269   SG: write.
270   IR: mhm. mhm.
271   SG: continue to write.
272   IR: so you felt that, he was writing on the board,
273   SG: [mhm.]
274   IR: [for] too long, without        [looking at]
275   SG:                          yeah, [for too]     mhm.
276   IR: looking at the students? [okay.]
277   SG:                          [yeah.] cuz that's
278       mathematics. we NEED to write a lot of (.)
279       equations on [board.]
280   IR:              [mhm.]
281   SG: and (.) if keep writing, ah (.) people will (.) uh
282       (.) be bo::ring. [and then,] (.)
283   IR:                  [mhm.]
284   IE: and (.) want (.) s- start to do other @things. @@
```

Excerpt 4.10. SG discusses observing other Mathematics instructors as part of her MATH 850 experience.

```
116   TL: ((...)) that class (.) um is (.) basically tea-
117       (.) teaching um what is it? pedagogy? pedagogy.
118   IR: mhm.
119   TL: um yeah tells you some of the (.) rules, or (.)
120       procedures in shrinking world university, and what
121       you should do, what you should not do,
122   IR: mhm.
123   TL: and, this (.) it was taught it's taught by uh (.)
124       education (.) it's a math major, but concentration
125       in education, the the professor is is the she
126       research in in in education.
127   IR: mhm.
128   TL: so she's the instructor.
129   IR: mhm.
130   TL: so we learn about (.) some history about
131       education. and (.)
132   IR: mhm.
133   TL: yeah. and we just discuss papers, in class.
134       [((inaudible))]
135   IR: [what did you think] about it?
136   TL: uh it was all right for me. i don't really like
137       reading english that much. [@@]
138   IR:                                    [oh yeah?]
139   TL: she made us read papers. [@@]
140   IR:                                [uh huh.]
141   TL: yeah.
142   IR: um did you think it was helpful for learning to
143       teach?
144   TL: uh (.) p- most part, not really.
145   IR: mhm.
146   TL: but (.) because most of time, we just read papers,
147   IR: mhm.
148   TL: but it's is not really (.)
149   IR: mhm.
150   TL: teaching you how to teach,
151   IR: [mhm.]
152   TL: [per se,] just DISCUSSING, how (.)
153   IR: mhm.
154   TL: how people do it. @@
155   IR: mhm.
156   TL: and, (.) but the but the important thing is (.)
157       she showed us like policy of school, those,
158   IR: [mhm.]
159   TL: [that i] didn't know before.
160   IR: [mhm.]
161   TL: [tha-] which was helpful.
```

Excerpt 4.11. TL discusses his experience taking MATH 850 (part 1).

```
162   IR: mhm.
163   TL: yeah.
164   IR: have you found that you can APPLY the things, that
165       people wrote about in the papers, to your teaching
166       now?
167   TL: mm not really.
168   IR: not really?
169   TL: not really. yeah.
170   IR: okay.
171   TL: for me, not really. @
172   IR: okay.
173   TL: i have my own (.) uh way of teaching.

      ((18 turns omitted - IR asks TL to describe his way of
      teaching, but TL is unable. They laugh about this.))

193   IR: um did you (.) uh did you practice teaching at all
194       in that class?
195   TL: pr- yes. yes. we have um (.) yeah. that was that
196       was helpful.
197   IR: [mhm.]
198   TL: [um] we have (.) presentations,
199   IR: mhm.
200   TL: so we pretend that the class is (.) is is in (.)
201       like calculus, or something.
202   IR: mhm.
203   TL: then then you prepare a certain section of a
204       lecture, and you (.) you do like, (.) ten fifteen
205       minutes of lectures.
206   IR: okay.
207   TL: and (.) then, the professor also video tape us, so
208       that we can look at ourself, and and see what we
209       can improve. yeah that was that was helpful.
210   IR: cool.
```

Excerpt 4.12. TL discusses his experience taking MATH 850 (part 2).

TL's assessment of MATH 850 was the most ambivalent. During his interview, we

discussed the course at length. In Excerpt 4.11 and Excerpt 4.12, TL discusses the course and his

evaluation of it. In general, he seems to have valued certain aspects of it (e.g., the practice

teaching and information about policies) more than others (e.g., reading articles about teaching).

TL appears to be drawing a distinction between learning about the theory behind teaching and

learning and perfecting the skills and practices that instructors use when teaching, showing a preference for the latter (lines 148-154).

Despite TL's criticisms of MATH 850, which echo long standing issues in teacher education concerning the divide between practice and theory, all of the Mathematics ITAs that discussed the course at length found something valuable in it, especially the opportunities to practice teaching and observe other instructors.

4.3.4 *Required ESL coursework for ITAs*

In addition to the previously discussed requirements, the Mathematics department requires prospective ITAs to complete coursework from the ESL program before they can begin teaching. Two of the Mathematics ITAs that I interviewed, SG and LH, reported that they had taken the ESL program's speaking and listening course due to the recommendation they received from their ILPT results. In addition, the Mathematics department requires that ITAs take ENG 600 (the ESL program's ITA preparation course), regardless of their ILPT results. OP discussed this requirement during her interview pointing out that ITAs need preparation in "the culture of a classroom" in the US and that ENG 600, rather than being exclusively focused on language, also covered this topic. For these reasons, OP reported that the Mathematics department felt it was important for ITAs to receive this additional preparation, and she claimed that MATH 850 and ENG 600 "complement one another" and that "they are both essential".

```
329   IR: and, what did you have to do, (.) uh so that you
330       would be ALLOWED to teach? (.) um (.) these
331       classes?
332   LH: uh (.) uh you have to take (.) @uh (.) course. (.)
333       english six @hundred.
334   IR: the e s l class?
335   LH: yeah. the [e s l class.]
336   IR:            [okay. tell me] about it.
337   LH: uh (.) i i remember there were (.) like (.) six
338       presentations.
339   IR: okay.
340   LH: yeah. so it's like everyone would do uh (.) five
341       minutes talk.
342   IR: mhm.
343   LH: like being a teacher, and then (.) uh (.) it's
344       like (.) a pre-trained thing. right?
345   IR: [okay.]
346   LH: [yes.] like (.) um (.) i think it's (.) that was
347       fun.
348   IR: mhm.
349   LH: especially, (.) the instructor will RECORD you.
350   IR: mhm.
351   LH: like, would (.) uh make a video. of you.
352   IR: mhm.
353   LH: and then after that, you just (.) look at @ that
354       video. and, (.) notice how stupid @you @are. @@
355   IR: @@@@[@]        [yeah?]
356   LH:     [@] @it's [@like] yeah.
357   IR: mhm.
358   LH: but yeah i learned a lot from that. so (.) it's
359       like um (.) they also taught you how to (.)
360       COMMUNICATE with your students,
361   IR: mhm. mhm.
362   LH: and uh (.) if you cannot understand them, because
363       we're international students,
364   IR: [mhm.]
365   LH: [right?] so we s- sometimes, they ask you
366       question, in a very CASUAL way,
367   IR: okay.
368   LH: so it's kind of (.) HARD to understand.
369   IR: mhm.
370   LH: and then i will ask them again, and uh (.) OR, ask
371       some other students to answer that. this is what
372       @i @learned from that class.
```

Excerpt 4.13. LH discusses the ESL program's ITA course, ENG 600.

Despite this requirement, only two of the Mathematics ITAs that I interviewed, SG and

LH reported taking ENG 600. The other four ITAs all reported that they had been exempted

from taking the course. Both OK and TL had completed an undergraduate degree at SWU, which they suggested led them to be exempted from ENG 600. GC was a naturalized US citizen and had completed a significant portion of his education in the United States, including most of high school, his undergraduate education, and a Master's degree. Indeed, due to his citizenship status, he would technically not be classified as an international student by SWU (although he and others appeared to orient to his identity as 'international' or, perhaps, transnational). Finally, JH had earned a Master's degree from and had experience teaching at another US university, which was apparently the reason for her exemption. Thus, despite the Mathematics department's commitment to have ITAs receive additional preparation from ENG 600, four of my six Mathematics interviewees reported that they were exempt from the requirement, reflecting a diversity of life situations that do not necessarily fit neatly within existing categories like "international student" or "international teaching assistant".

I spoke with both LH and SG about the experience of taking courses from the ESL program. SG spoke positively about the course. When I asked her if she thought ENG 600 had been helpful, SG said "definitely", because she believed she needed the specific type of practice, preparing a lesson and delivering it in front of a large group, which the class gave to her and which was not available to her elsewhere (with MATH 850 perhaps being an exception, although ENG 600 appears to provide more of this practice than MATH 850). SG also mentioned that there was some amount of similarity between MATH 850 and ENG 600. Excerpt 4.13 presents part of LH's discussion of her experiences in ENG 600, in which she describes practice teaching and strategies she learned for dealing with communication difficulties.

Overall, the two Mathematics students who were required to take ENG 600 reported positive experiences with the course and only one mentioned partial redundancy between that course and MATH 850, although she did not frame this as a problem.

4.3.5   Graduate teaching assistant mentor and teaching observations

Once Mathematics graduate students have fulfilled the requirements to become teaching assistants, they can be assigned to teach courses in the department. Once assigned, however, they continue to be supervised and given further feedback on their teaching by the Mathematics department. Of particular note is the department's practice of appointing one faculty member to serve as the graduate teaching assistant (GTA) mentor every semester. In her interview with me, OP described the duties of the GTA mentor as attending classes taught by Mathematics TAs, conducting midterm evaluations with their students, and meeting with the TAs to discuss and evaluate their teaching practices. OP also mentioned that the GTA mentor also submits a report to the chair and associate chair, which is reviewed before making TA assignments for the next semester. OP described the purpose of the report as helping "to identify individual strengths to come up with a better teaching assignment for this particular student" rather than being used to "punish" TAs.

In my interviews with Mathematics ITAs, I discussed the GTA mentor's observations with some of them: GC, SG, LH, and TL. JH reported that she was teaching for the first time at the time of our interview and had not yet been observed, and the topic was not addressed in my interview with OK. The interviewees described roughly similar experiences with observations. They reported that the GTA mentor came at some point during the middle of the semester but did not make them aware of her plans to observe the class ahead of time (all of them reported a female GTA mentor). All reported that she sat in the class and took notes. Most reported that she

met with them afterwards to discuss her observations. TL mentioned that he had not met with the GTA mentor; rather, she told him that he had done a "really good job" immediately after the end of class, but he reported that he never received or sought any further feedback. Some of them also mentioned receiving feedback from the midterm evaluations that the GTA mentor also conducted with their students.

There was some inconsistency with respect to how frequently TAs were or were supposed to be observed. LH and GC reported that they were observed every semester, but TL and SG reported that they were observed less frequently. SG claimed that she was observed only when teaching a course she had not previously taught. TL reported that he had not been observed one semester because he was ill on the day the GTA mentor came to observe him, and the observation was not rescheduled.

The ITAs mentioned getting feedback through this process both from the GTA mentor and their students who filled out the online midterm evaluation. The ITAs mostly reported receiving praise from the GTA mentor, but some mentioned some constructive feedback from her particularly concerning classroom management. For example, LH reported being told that she should prop the locked door to the classroom so that students who arrive late do not need to be let in, and that she should ask students who are leaving early to do so quickly and quietly so as not to disturb the other students.

In addition, some ITAs reported that students' mid-semester feedback was helpful but also difficult to deal with since the students lacked understanding of what was feasible for them to change. For example, LH mentioned that students in her emporium model course, which involves only fifty minutes of classroom instruction per week, felt that she was "rushing", but LH attributed to this to the time constraints of the course. She also mentioned though that some

of the students requested that more attention be paid to Microsoft Excel functions and the homework questions, and she reported that she began doing these things as a result of the suggestions. All in all, she reported that she thinks about the suggestions but considers some of them not to be possible or not within her control although she stated she implements changes where she is able.

4.3.6   Overall impressions

Overall, the Mathematics department seems to have the most robust system for preparing ITAs and helping them develop of any of the SWU departments I examined. It requires that all TAs gain practical experience tutoring, which, aside from apparently providing helpful experience in learning to work and communicate with students, often places them in direct contact with some of the course materials that they will eventually teach. In addition, the department requires its own three credit hour course, MATH 850, which includes both observations and in-class teaching practice. It also requires some ITAs to take ENG 600, giving them additional preparation (especially those ITAs with no or very limited experience with US higher education). Finally, it provides those TAs who are currently teaching with feedback in the form of observations and student midterm evaluations, while also offering a number of resources for TAs to turn to if they should need assistance: a GTA mentor, course coordinators, academic professionals who oversee emporium model courses, and a faculty member dedicated to collegiate mathematics education.

4.4 Department of English

SWU's English Department places its ITAs in a few different programs. The first program is the intensive English program (IEP), which offers courses in English for academic purposes to students who are not matriculated into a degree program at SWU. The second is the

ESL program which offers courses for degree-seeking bilingual students, including the ITA course previously discussed. A third is the undergraduate linguistics program.

In almost all cases, when they serve as TAs, the department's graduate students serve as the instructor of record for their courses, and as a result must meet accreditation standards. The department offers no teaching assistantships charged with ancillary teaching duties such as leading recitation sections or laboratory sections as is common in some other departments, although, occasionally, graduate students may be assigned to grade tests, quizzes, or assignments for a faculty member.

The department has a number of policies that affect ITAs, and I provide here an overview of these policies, followed by more elaboration on individual aspects in the sections that follow. The English department's policies include a tendency to consider teaching qualifications during the process of admitting students into the graduate program. It also includes a tendency not to assign some new international PhD students to teaching positions during their first semester in the program and offer them alternative assignments like tutoring. The department also has a number of additional language requirements that ITAs must fulfill in order to teach, which stipulate that some ITAs take a teaching simulation test (the COLT). One of the department's programs also requires the completion of a pedagogy course before TAs can be assigned to teach in it. TAs are also given some support to develop as instructors while they are teaching in the department through events organized by the GTA coordinator and regular teaching observations.

4.4.1   Program admission

Most of the department's teaching assistants are PhD students, although some M.A. students (particularly those who have completed a year of coursework including two required pedagogy-related courses) are permitted to teach in the IEP. HM, the director of the IEP,

reported that there were not any international M.A. students serving as TAs in the IEP at the time. As some of my informants (JS and AJ) pointed out, it is expected that all department-funded PhD students serve as teaching assistants at some point during their time in the program, usually in one of the programs mentioned above. In fact, because of this, when making decisions about admissions into the PhD program, the department considers candidates' teaching abilities and experiences closely to determine whether prospective PhD students have the skills and experience needed to allow them to begin serving in an instructional capacity either immediately or very soon after their first semester.

4.4.2   Teaching or other duties in the first semester

Since entry into the PhD program requires an earned Master's degree, new English PhD students have typically already satisfied the accreditation requirements for teaching assistants and may begin teaching immediately. Indeed, many new PhD students begin teaching in their first semester, especially in the IEP and the ESL program. However, in her interview, AJ, faculty member and former chair, mentioned that international graduate students are more likely than their domestic peers to receive assignments that do not include teaching during their first semester. Although the department assigns students different responsibilities, their assistantships are funded at the same rate.

```
117   IR: in your experience, does the department fund uh
118       domestic and international students, (.) uh in the
119       same ways? or are those (.) different boxes i
120       guess, um used differently?
121   JS: the MAIN difference i guess i see is, (.) um well,
122       th- one of the differences is with p h d students,
123       when they come in, if they're DOMESTIC students,
124       and they HAVE experience teaching already, they go
125       STRAIGHT into the classroom, but if they're
126       INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS we tend not to do that, if
127       they they've never taught in the u s, if they HAVE
128       TAUGHT in the u s, that's another story.
129   IR: mhm.
130   JS: so i think the MAIN interest (.) or the MAIN (.)
131       the main concern we have is, are you are you
132       acclimated, are you used to a- american academia,
133       and and what american students (.) or, students in
134       american classrooms can be like?
135   IR: mhm.
136   JS: so: with the p h d:, funded p h d students we tend
137       to for instance, have them do TUTORING their first
138       semester which is a good way to (.) just (.) it's
139       a kind of warm up, and get to know students, um
140       (.) um (.) and, since usually, the first teaching
141       assignments are in the i e p, then they're getting
142       to know i e p students. and, they're getting to
143       know the demands that are put on those students,
144       so, it's it seems like um a good transition for
145       them.
146   IR: mhm.
```

Excerpt 4.14. JS explains the department's tendency not to assign new international graduate assistants to teach in their first semester (part 1).

JS, department chair, explained this tendency to avoid placing first-semester international students in the classroom in her interview. In Excerpt 4.14, JS attributes the tendency to treat international and domestic PhD students differently with respect to teaching assignments to a question of familiarity with US higher education (lines 130-134). By not being assigned a class to teach and instead being given other responsibilities such as tutoring, JS suggests that new international PhD students are provided with a "good transition" into teaching at SWU (line 144). Later, she noted that these students accrue other benefits from the department's procedures.

In Excerpt 4.15, JS notes that being shielded from teaching responsibilities also protects them

from the additional workload that goes along with teaching (lines 151-173).

```
147   JS: so whether or not they question, y'know, not being
148       put immediately into the classroom, (.) i i don't
149       know, maybe they do.
150   IR: ((inaudible)) can ask them. @@@
151   JS: yeah, we could ask them, um (.) i i think in fact
152       we're probably @protecting @them @@
153   IR: mhm.
154   JS: from the demands, because the demands generally
155       are heavier, for people who are in the classroom,
156   IR: uh uh you mean like in terms of uh just, number of
157       hours worked, [or like?]
158   JS:                [yeah. yeah.] yeah. (.) yeah.
159   IR: mhm.
160   JS: um (.) the uh for the tutoring, you just have to
161       be available,
162   IR: mhm.
163   JS: in the tutoring space,
164   IR: mhm.
165   JS: for a certain number of hours,
166   IR: mhm.
167   JS: for i- if you're responsible for your own class,
168       you have those classroom contact hours, and then
169       a- you have all the prep, and then you have
170       grading.
171   IR: mhm.
172   JS: so it's it's it's i i think it's a heavier demand,
173       than the tutoring, so, the tutoring in a way gives
174       people a semester to (.) get used to shrinking
175       world university.
```

Excerpt 4.15. JS explains the department's tendency not to assign new international graduate assistants to teach in their first semester (part 2).

In Excerpt 4.15, JS raises the question of how ITAs in the department feel about the

being given different assignments than their domestic peers (lines 147-149). While ITAs

generally expressed appreciation of this practice, which often shielded them from heavier,

unfamiliar, or undesired workloads (as JS suggests), it also potentially carried a stigma for them.

```
61   SW: but, one thing i wanted to mention, the my first
62       semester, so i did my tutoring,
63   IR: uh huh.
64   SW: but, which (.) i didn't expect, (.) that i was (.)
65       i was supposed to do,
66   IR: okay.
67   SW: yeah. because uh (.) y'know, i applied here, and
68       then, in the application process, there were some
69       options. i think we had to (.) it was online, i
70       guess, so we had to apply for y'know g t a, g r a,
71       and then, (.) there was like a g l a, but that
72       that did that was a tutoring,
73   IR: uh huh.
74   SW: but i d- i think i applied to ALL THREE,
75   IR: mhm.
76   SW: but the (.) i thought (.) th- in my mind, i
77       thought y'know i'll get a CLASS in my first
78       semester,
79   IR: mhm.
80   SW: but the uh but i was ASSIGNED, was yeah one g
81       y'know g r a, and then, (.)
82   IR: [mhm.]
83   SW: [one] tutoring,
84   IR: mhm.
85   SW: so i was a bit, a bit surprised about that.
86   IR: okay. (.) and when you say SURPRISED,
87   SW: @
88   IR: you you weren't happy? is that what you're saying?
89   SW: mm. actually, at first, i didn't like i didn't
90       know why (.) y'know whether (.) it is a good
91       thing, or or not, because i didn't know what it
92       (.) what it MEANT, to be a tutor.
93   IR: mhm.
94   SW: rather than (.) y'know (.) a teacher.
95   IR: mhm.
96   SW: for a class. because i didn't (.) y'know i didn't
97       know the system. how things work here,
98   IR: uh huh.
99   SW: but th- but later after i got here, i found out
100      that the tutoring is for usually (.) like often
101      times first the the m a students, first semester.
102      that's what they are (.)
103  IR: uh huh.
104  SW: supposed to do, NOT supposed to do, they (.)
105      y'know a lot of them are like first semester
106      master's students, and after, (.)
```

Excerpt 4.16. SW discusses his perceptions of being assigned tutoring instead of teaching in his first semester in the PhD program (part 1).

```
107   IR:  uh huh.
108   SW:  they do that, y'know, they seem to apply for a
109        teaching position. (.) th-
110   IR:  uh huh.
111   SW:  the (.)
112   IR:  s-
113   SW:  that the program uh
114   IR:  so you were [surprised,] because, [um] (.)
115   SW:             [mm.]                 [mhm.]
116   IR:  because um (.)
117   SW:  mhm.
118   IR:  because that was something that (.) m a students
119        did, (.) and you felt you didn't need that?
120   SW:  MM. because i had a (.) a previous uh tutoring
121        experience,
122   IR:  mhm.
123   SW:  while i was doing (.) my m a.
124   IR:  mhm.
125   SW:  and then i didn't have an EXTENSIVE teaching
126        experience,
127   IR:  mhm.
128   SW:  in even in ((country of origin omitted)), either,
129   IR:  mhm.
130   SW:  so, sort of i kind of uh y'know (.) yeah. unde-
131        under- understand uh why i was assigned for (.)
132        TUTORING, (.) but uh at the same time, (.) because
133        i had y'know previous tutoring experience, and
134        also, i as a as a student, i i taught i-
135        immigrants at ((university name omitted; it is in
136        the United States)) (.)
137   IR:  mhm.
138   SW:  ((university name omitted))
139   IR:  mhm.
140   SW:  so, (.) i i i i felt like y'know i (.) it might be
141        more helpful for me to y'know start (.) teaching a
142        class here.
143   IR:  mhm.
144   SW:  and then, (.) so, yeah. that's that's what i felt
145        later. y'know after i got here. and then after i
146        started (.)
147   IR:  mhm.
148   SW:  y'know working as a tutor, and then, after knowing
149        that what's going on within the department. how
150        things work, y'know.
151   IR:  mhm.
```

Excerpt 4.17. SW discusses his perceptions of being assigned tutoring instead of teaching in his first semester in the PhD program (part 2).

Of the five English ITAs I interviewed, three were given non-teaching assignments in their first semester; the other two both taught courses during their first semester. For HC, delaying teaching for a few semesters and instead being assigned a research assistantship was her preference; she reported in her interview that she had not wanted to teach when she first entered the program. RK reported that he had expected to be assigned a course to teach in his first semester but was "happy" that he was instead assigned to be a tutor due to the fact that he was not confident that he was adequately prepared for the cultural dynamics of a US classroom. However, in his interview, the third ITA from this group, SW, expressed some ambivalence about being given a tutoring assignment rather than a teaching assignment in his first semester. In Excerpt 4.16 and Excerpt 4.17, SW describes the feeling of being a new PhD student and being assigned responsibilities that were also being assigned to people who were just beginning to work toward a degree he had already earned (a Master's degree) and who were just entering a profession he had already entered.

4.4.3   Tutoring

JS's comments about assigning ITAs to tutoring also suggested that tutoring might serve as "a kind of warm up" that would allow future ITAs to "get to know students", especially IEP students, and to get "to know the demands that are put on [IEP] students" (Excerpt 4.14, lines 138-143). RK and SW were the only two ITAs I interviewed who had been assigned to tutoring. Both were fairly positive about their experiences as tutors. RK described it as "a good experience", and SW called it "a great experience". However, I asked SW to comment on whether he had found tutoring during his first semester useful preparation for teaching, and his responses only partially support this view as shown in Excerpt 4.18.

```
1460   IR: um (.) i wanted to ask you then, uh (.) i think
1461       (.) a lot of the intention (.) with the tutoring
1462       with having students tutor before they teach is,
1463       the idea that, you get to KNOW (.) students, and
1464       what they're like, [and]
1465   SW:                     [mhm.] yeah.
1466   IR: was that (.) was that (.) do you feel that that
1467       was helpful? do you feel that that HAPPENED for
1468       you?
1469   SW: mm. (.) i guess it (.) uh YEAH, to some extent, it
1470       was helpful, to get to know the students. a little
1471       bit more.
1472   IR: mhm.
1473   SW: but (.) but (.) when you do tutoring, you (.) not
1474       only i e p students, but also the undergrad
1475       students,
1476   IR: mhm.
1477   SW: y'know bilingual, or multilingual,
1478   IR: [mhm.]
1479   SW: [y'know] writers. or speakers.
1480   IR: mhm.
1481   SW: and then, (.) i didn't know much about what's
1482       going on the the in the i e p program. [actually.]
1483   IR:                                         [mhm.]
1484   SW: yeah their curriculum,
1485   IR: mhm.
1486   SW: y'know, and then, the the syllabus,
1487   IR: mhm.
1488   SW: y'know what type of assignments they get.
1489   IR: mhm.
1490   SW: so, (.) it was in a way, it was more like random,
1491       for me. (.) [s-]
1492   IR:            [the] tutoring was?
1493   SW: yeah. so, (.) yeah to some extent, i got to KNOW,
1494       y'know what kind of assignments, they get. But,
1495       like i didn't have a whole picture,
1496   IR: mhm.
1497   SW: of the i e p program, or the e s l program,
1498   IR: mhm.
```

Excerpt 4.18. SW discusses his tutoring experience.

In Excerpt 4.18, SW reports that, as a tutor, he had not had a complete picture of either

the IEP or the ESL program (lines 1494-1497), which, later in the interview, he pointed out made

it difficult to be an effective tutor. He also suggested that tutors should attend IEP faculty

meetings and read the IEP handbook to gain a broader understanding of the program. SW's

suggestions and experiences indicate that it may be helpful for the department to engage in more intentional efforts to ensure that tutoring can serve as useful preparation for future ITAs.

4.4.4   Additional language proficiency requirements

In addition to sometimes not being assigned to teach in their first semester in the PhD program, prospective English department ITAs are subject to English language requirements that go beyond those necessary for admission to the program (which, according to my informants, are already higher than other departments at SWU). The requirements for demonstrating this proficiency are listed in the department's handbook for the MA program. They specify that the applicant for a TA position in any of the English department's programs should meet one of the following conditions:

- Be a native speaker of English "from a country where English is the primary language", (the requirement includes a list of example Inner Circle (Kachru, 1985) nations, e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada);

- Have received English medium schooling from elementary school through college;

- Have four semesters of experience as the instructor of record (e.g., being a TA with primary responsibilities over a section) at a US college or university; or

- Receive a score of 27 or higher on both the speaking and writing sections of the TOEFL (internet based test).

According to the policy, any TA that does not meet one of these four requirements is required either to take and pass the ITA preparation course, ENG 600, or to take and pass the Classroom Oral Language Test (COLT) in order to demonstrate their English language proficiency as it relates to classroom discourse or teaching contexts.

4.4.5   *Classroom Oral Language Test*

The SWU English department uses the Classroom Oral Language Test (COLT) to assess whether those prospective ITAs who have not already demonstrated sufficient English language proficiency in some other way have the language proficiency necessary to serve as instructors in any of its programs (i.e. IEP, ESL, or undergraduate linguistics). I spoke with two people involved, AJ and RW. During her interview RW pointed out that a test like the COLT attempts to assess language proficiency specific to the context of teaching but not to assess teaching ability itself. She acknowledged, however, that other constructs like teaching ability are "kind of inextricable" from this specific language proficiency.

The procedures for administering the COLT are outlined in the IEP's self-study submitted for accreditation (the IEP is accredited separately from the university). The document outlines who the panel of raters will consist of: one faculty member who teaches graduate courses in the English department and two members of the IEP faculty (including preferably the GTA coordinator, a position I discuss more below). Although not mentioned in the document, some informants reported that an undergraduate student is also typically invited to be a rater. The test involves two tasks: a short presentation (estimated to take about five minutes) and a longer prepared presentation (estimated to take about ten minutes). For the short presentation, the test-taker is given some typical classroom material (e.g., a syllabus) and asked to present the document to the raters as if they were students in the test-taker's class. For the prepared presentation, test-takers are asked to prepare to teach about a basic topic and deliver the lesson to the raters. Some informants reported in interviews that the raters also ask the test-taker questions to help assess how well s/he responds to student questions. According to the self-study document, there are three possible outcomes of the test: (1) the test-taker passes and is

immediately eligible to teach in the department, (2) the test-taker provisionally passes but must complete ENG 600 before being qualified to teach in the department (however, no further testing is necessary), and (3) the test-taker does not pass and must complete ENG 600 and also re-take the COLT before being eligible to teach in the department.

The director of the IEP program, HM, reported that additional language requirements for the department's ITAs, including the COLT, are relatively recent and came about in conjunction with the IEP's application for accreditation several years prior, although they apply to ITAs teaching in other English department programs as well. In particular, the accrediting agency lists as one of its standards that "Faculty who teach English demonstrate excellent proficiency in English", and, in its self-report for reaccreditation, the IEP outlines procedures for the COLT (including the exemptions listed above) as a way of demonstrating its satisfaction of this requirement. HM reported that, at the time the IEP was applying for accreditation, HM and AJ explored industry best practices, through, for example, listserv discussions with peers at other universities, in order to determine how best to fulfill CEA's requirements. The various language proficiency requirements for English department ITAs, including the COLT, were developed through this process.

During her interview, HM spoke positively of these new requirements stating that they "legitimize" the process of instructor selection to the accreditation agency and that they help ensure that students receive quality instruction. HM could not recall a time when an ITA had been assigned a class without adequate language proficiency, suggesting that these requirements are motivated by a desire to respond to the potential concerns of other stakeholders especially students or the accreditation agency.

It appears to be simply an oversight that the requirements discussed in the previous paragraphs do not also appear in the PhD program's handbook (as of the time of writing), because the department has required international PhD students to take the COLT including three whom I interviewed for this project: SW, RK, and HC, the three ITAs who were not assigned teaching responsibilities in their first semester (suggesting perhaps that the testing requirement is a further factor in the AL department's decision to shield some international PhD students from teaching initially). Indeed, an email message from the then department chair addressed to one ITA informed the ITA that s/he would be required to take the COLT before being allowed to teach and cited and provided a link to the MA handbook policy. All three of these ITAs reported passing the COLT on their first attempt and not being required to take (and thus not taking) ENG 600.

Those ITAs who were required to take the COLT reported not having known in advance of the requirement and, in one case, interpreted the requirement negatively. In her interview, HC said that she learned of the requirement only briefly after she requested to teach a course. In his interview, RK reported that he "was a bit shocked by" the short time period between when he was informed of the test and when he was scheduled to take it, which he reported was only five days. Likewise, as shown in Excerpt 4.19, SW expressed surprise at the requirement (lines 233-235). This surprise seems to stem in part from him not having been aware of the requirement, perhaps because it was not listed in the PhD handbook. SW went further than the other ITAs, apparently interpreting this requirement as a lack of confidence in his teaching or English speaking ability (lines 248-252), an issue he appears to consider serious because of the disciplinary context in which most graduate students are or have been practicing teachers, and

much of the research that is carried out in the field is directed toward educational matters (lines

236-246).

```
233   SW: and then that was ANOTHER surprising thing,
234       because uh (.) i NEVER expected (.) to y'know,
235       take a (.) @speaking @test here, to teach a class.
236   IR: mhm.
237   SW: because uh in terms of (.) our major,
238   IR: mhm.
239   SW: y'know, yeah probably not everyone's a teacher,
240       but the y'know (.) we have a i e p, and then,
241       y'know, e s l, (.)
242   IR: go ahead. sorry. checking ((inaudible))
243   SW: undergrad class. so, (.) if they y'know (.)
244       recruit p h d student- doctoral students,
245       probably, their expectations are (.) y'know, yeah.
246       we are supposed to teach a class.
247   IR: mhm. mhm.
248   SW: but (.) like the one i (.) y'know had to go
249       through, probably (.) they wasn't (.) that means
250       that they wasn't sure, about my teaching ability.
251   IR: mhm. mhm.
252   SW: maybe y'know, english speaking ability.
253   IR: [right.]
254   SW:     [so] that's why they (.) y'know (.) led me
255       through all these process i guess.
256   IR: mhm. [mhm.]
257   SW:        [so] i was uh i'm still wondering why they
258   IR: mhm.
259   SW: y'know, first of all, if (.) they were they
260       weren't that really CONFIDENT about me, y'know (.)
261       being a teacher,
262   IR: mhm.
263   SW: yeah th- they could have done something before
264       they accept me. accepted me here i guess.
265   IR: mhm. [mhm.]
266   SW:        [but] they didn't do that, they did that just
267       after the fa- fact.
268   IR: mhm.
269   SW: so if i y'know, failed the test, i don't know
270       what's gonna happen to me.
271   IR: mhm.
272   SW: what could have happened to me, y'know, here.
273   IR: right.
274   SW: and s- getting some assistantship.
275   IR: mhm. mhm.
276   SW: in the department.
```

Excerpt 4.19. SW describes his perceptions of being required to take the COLT.

4.4.6   ENG 900: A course in teaching linguistics

Beyond the language requirement discussed above, one of the department's programs, the undergraduate linguistics program, has one further requirement. Before teaching in the undergraduate program, all prospective TAs must satisfactorily complete a course designed to prepare them to teach in that program, ENG 900. The course involves observing a faculty member teaching an introductory linguistics course for a full semester. The faculty member and the students meet once a week to discuss issues related to teaching in the undergraduate program and reflect on the way the class is going. All of the PhD students are also required to complete a micro-teaching session in the linguistics class, and then their peers and the faculty member evaluate and give feedback on the micro-teaching. All PhD students who want to teach in the undergraduate linguistics program are required to take this course, and I found no evidence that the course paid any particular attention to the particular concerns of ITAs. During her interview, AJ, who had taught the course, reported that the course is "not specifically directed at ITAs". Later when I asked her if the course had specifically discussed issues of concern to ITAs, she could not recall any and said "I don't think we really focused on those issues".

4.4.7   Course assignment

Once graduate students meet the requirements for a teaching assignment, they are placed into positions during a meeting of members from each of the department's different programs. In her interview, JS, the department chair, described this process of distributing assistantships and teaching assignments as a collaborative process that takes place every semester in which different programs come together to negotiate the placement of the department's graduate students. JS also reported that, since it is funding its positions independently, the IEP has "a major voice" in negotiations about which TAs are assigned to them.

Thus, the needs of various programs as well as TAs' own preferences, which are reported to the department prior to the meeting, are factored into decisions of whether and which ITAs are assigned to teach in the department. For example, my informants discussed how the ESL program requires instructors with specific experience (e.g., knowledge of US higher education and first year writing programs) enabling them to be effective instructors in the university's first year composition program offered for international and resident bilingual students. My informants also pointed out that the IEP is set up to offer teaching positions to less experienced instructors thanks to the support system it has in place, including its graduate teaching assistant coordinator (GTA coordinator). Indeed, the department's Master's students often teach in the IEP toward the end of their time in the program once they have completed some required coursework.

4.4.8   *Graduate teaching assistant coordinator and teaching observations*

One of the primary ways in which the IEP supports inexperienced TAs is through their GTA coordinator. During her interview, HM described the GTA coordinator's responsibilities. She mentioned that the IEP provides training sessions that are required for all first-year GTAs to attend and optional for others. HM could not recall any sessions aimed at ITAs' specific needs as opposed to topics of general interest to all instructors, although she suggested that ITAs could benefit in particular ways from discussions of classroom management that are common to these sessions. In addition to developing these sessions, the GTA coordinator coordinates the observations that the department does of its TAs.

TAs assigned to teach anywhere (undergraduate linguistics, ESL, or IEP) in the department are required to be observed by faculty members in the department. When teaching a course for the first time, TAs are supposed to be observed at least twice in their first semester. If

TAs teach the same course during subsequent semesters, they must only be observed once. The department has implemented common frameworks for their observations.

When I interviewed, AJ, a faculty member involved in observing TAs, she reported that she meets with TAs before the observation to discuss the purpose of the observation, which she characterized as providing formative assessment, and to give the TA the opportunity to specify particular issues for her to pay attention to. During her observations, AJ reported that she observes and takes notes. AJ also reported that after each observation, the TA and the observer

```
819   EF: ((...)) um (.) i think that, (.) oh when i started
820       teaching, uh this was this is (.) this is related
821       to (.) cultural context, in ((name of country)), i
822       was very unhappy, well NOT VERY unhappy, but i was
823       (.) uh i felt uncomfortable having somebody
824       observe me.
825   IR: uh huh. uh huh.
826   EF: um (.) and  think i have changed in that respect,
827   IR: [mhm.]
828   EF: [now,] i am really @happy @when @there @is
829       @somebody @there. [@@@]
830   IR:                   [okay.] okay.
831   EF: um also, because i know that i can trust people
832       around me, [and th-] ((inaudible)) (.)
833   IR:            [okay.]
834   EF: and i am clear about their intent. too. to help,
835       and to (.) [to like (.)]
836   IR:            [so]
837   EF: hold up a mirror, and, hey, this is what i saw you
838       do, and that [sort of thing.]
839   IR:                  [uh huh.] and the observations that
840       you've had, they've been (.) helpful for you?
841   EF: they have.
842   IR: uh huh. can you tell me how so?
843   EF: um (.) well, for um the um (.) i think it's the
844       mirror thing. the the just the telling you (.) i
845       saw you do this.
846   IR: mhm.
847   EF: um (.) and (.)
848   IR: would you mind telling me what kinds of things
849       they said, they saw you do?
```

Excerpt 4.20. EF discusses being observed by members of the department (part 1).

```
850   EF:  um oh, i remember THIS one, with uh ((DB's name
851        omitted)). and and (.) and (.) she told me (.) or
852        somehow, i don't remember her exact words, but the
853        the outcome was, um (.) i tend to (.) um (.)
854        hesitate. a little.
855   IR:  mhm.
856   EF:  in in in in in the grammar class.
857   IR:  okay.
858   EF:  uh (.) um because i (.) i don't wanna say y'know,
859        that's not right, or no, that's not (.)
860   IR:  mhm.
861   EF:  um (.) so before i say anything like that, i (.) i
862        stop and think.
863   IR:  mhm.
864   EF:  okay. where is this person coming from? @@ why are
865        they saying are they seeing something i'm NOT
866        SEEING?
867   IR:  mhm.
868   EF:  that sort of thing. um (.) eh (.) and i KNEW that
869        i did that, but i didn't i i hadn't REALIZED, how
870        (.) mm (.) how that could be um (.) i don't wanna
871        say nerv- unnerving, but mm like (.) i now see th-
872        how a student could feel like, okay. so @@@ so
873        @what @is @right? @@
874   IR:  what is right?
875   EF:  what is RIGHT, or what is or or so s- (.) if you
876        give me THIS on a test, what what what am i gonna
877        do?
878   IR:  okay. @@
879   EF:  right? that sort of thing.
880   IR:  yeah.
881   EF:  yeah. um (.) and i've been i've been um (.) given
882        ah like practical tips in the class too. like for
883        example, i have been told, (.) um (.) not once,
884        but several times, about the pace of my classes.
885   IR:  mhm.
886   EF:  tends to be slo::w. it has improved, but not
887        ((inaudible)) (.) but those and and i i i've been
888        given t- i i KNOW i am AWARE of that. Sometimes.
889        but they have been giv- they have GIVEN me tips.
890   IR:  mhm.
891   EF:  about how to (.) uh (.) how to improve on that,
892        and other things, like (.) voice projection, and
893        um (.) um (.) not so much about the content
894        though.
```

Excerpt 4.21. EF discusses being observed by members of the department (part 2).

are supposed to fill out forms describing how the class went, and that the two are then supposed to meet to discuss how the lesson went. AJ states that she has used this time to discuss things she noticed in the TA's teaching including both positive moments and areas for improvement.

The ITAs I interviewed tended to view the departments' observation procedures positively. During his interview, EF praised the program's use of observations due to the fact that they are "structured" and provide a way of getting useful feedback about teaching as shown in Excerpt 4.20 and Excerpt 4.21.

Both HC and SW were also positive about their observation experiences. SW characterized the feedback that he received from his observers as "positive" but also "constructive". As shown in Excerpt 4.22, HC mentioned the observations as an example of the strong relationship that she had forged with the faculty member who was the course coordinator of the class she was teaching (SF), a relationship she suggests was fruitful in that it was not as focused on the authority of a supervisor but rather a type of mentoring in which a more experienced teacher provides guidance to a less experienced one.

Although the English department ITAs spoke mostly positively about the observation procedures, RK pointed out some potential shortcomings. During his interview, he mentioned that he'd been observed by three people during his first semester of teaching, which was the same semester that I interviewed him. RK reported that one of his observers felt his class was "overly teacher centered" and he described a transitional process in which he tried to adapt to a style of teaching that he claimed he was "not very much used to and familiar with" and which he felt he was "pushed into". In Excerpt 4.23, RK describes the transitioning of his teaching style that was set in motion after his observation as well as his ambivalent feelings toward this new teaching style.

```
426   IR:  uh have you gotten any OTHER (.) help, or support
427        or anything, from the department?
428   HC:  um so, for intro to linguistics, (.) ((SF's name
429        omitted)) is is the course coordinator.
430   IR:  mkay.
431   HC:  so, whenever i had issues, or concerns regarding
432        the course, like (.) general issues, teaching
433        issues, or, (.) like, how to deal with disruptive
434        students, and all those things related to the
435        course, i always went to um ((SF's name omitted))
436        to discuss the [matters.]
437   IR:                 [mhm.] mhm.
438   HC:  and then, oh yeah. and then, she came to observe
439        my (.) class. twice.
440   IR:  okay.
441   HC:  this semester.
442   IR:  mhm. were those things helpful?
443   HC:  i think so, like, well, i think it's pretty much
444        because of ((SF's name omitted))'s personality,
445   IR:  mhm.
446   HC:  so she, it's more i think it's not really the
447        relationship between the course coordinator, and
448        the one who is supervised by her, but it's more
449        like, an experienced teacher, and an unexp-
450        INexperienced teacher relationship. so, and then
451        SHE has taught the class the the same course,
452        several times,
453   IR:  [mhm.]
454   HC:  [so,] she already knew, (.) the problems, or
455        issues that i ha- that i have had in this course
456        this semester. so that was greatly helpful, and
457        she's always open to (.) questions. so, i was not
458        a- afraid to go to talk to her about the problems
459        that i had.
460   IR:  mhm. [mhm.]
461   HC:       [so]
```

Excerpt 4.22. HC discusses her relationship with SF, the course coordinator for the undergraduate linguistics class she was teaching.

```
593   RK: i've been able to manage it, i'm doing good NOW,
594       um
595   IR: [uh huh.]
596   RK:   [i'm] planning i have a repertoire of tasks,
597       which that i'm using for different aspect of my
598       class. but, it is not me. at least, i'm a kind of
599       trans- in a kind of transition now.
600   IR: mhm.
601   RK: i'm doing something that i do not much believe in.
602   IR: okay.
603   RK: yeah.
604   IR: which uh you don't believe in uh i think, what
605       part of it don't you believe in exactly?
606   RK: i believe in the dynamics of the classroom is
607       different, from (.) each classroom is different
608       from the other the next one.
609   IR: uh huh.
610   RK: and what i received as a feedback from my
611       observers, was a kind of like, one size fits all
612       (.)
613   IR: [mhm.]
614   RK: [thing,] that you know, you need to do this. you
615       need to do that. [okay?]
616   IR:                  [uh huh.]
617   RK: i know my chinese students love teacher fronted
618       LOVE [LIKE]
619   IR:      [uh huh.]
620   RK: style MUCH better.
621   IR: uh huh.
622   RK: and i know that if i putting them in task based,
623       it's a large class, i cannot (.) put that kind of
624       focus like i could before, on each student.
625   IR: mhm.
626   RK: and i know that, at the same time, i feel that, if
627       i'm not going through the g- the like the play, or
628       like the drama, that they want me,
629   IR: mhm.
630   RK: to be, (.) uh, i feel that, they they will (.) in
631       a way, i i cannot say REJECT me, or, DISAPPROVE
632       me.
633   IR: okay.
634   RK: yeah.
```

Excerpt 4.23. RK discusses his response to feedback from one of his observers.

RK's comments reveal that his experience with observations were not entirely positive,

setting forth changes in his teaching that he described as uncomfortable for both him and his

students, and he did not appear to believe that these changes resulted in more effective teaching and learning. RK's statements suggest that observation is not always interpreted as "formative assessment" as AJ described it, but is, sometimes, despite these apparent intentions and messaging, perceived as a form of institutional control over ITAs' teaching. While other ITAs seem to have viewed the use and refinement of institutionally-valued forms of instructional practice as directly compatible with their own development as instructors, RK seems to view these as distinct issues (i.e., he does not present learning to teach in a manner that is valued by his observer, specifically task-based language teaching, as equivalent to developing better instructional practices). Likely, these perceptions suggest deeper philosophical disagreements over what constitutes effective pedagogy, which might benefit from more open acknowledgement and deliberation within observational procedures or in other settings.

4.4.9 Overall impressions

The English department has instituted what is probably the most extensive set of assessment procedures at SWU to ensure that its ITAs have the English language proficiency necessary to be effective instructors. The proficiency-related requirements extend beyond the other departments that I examined both in terms of admission into the program and in terms of gaining eligibility to teach. The department also shields some new international PhD students (but not their native English-speaking peers) from teaching in their first semester, a practice that my informants argued provided an opportunity for international graduate students to gain some of the familiarity with US higher education that their US born peers could be assumed already to possess. Relative to some of the other departments, English also provides a fairly extensive support system for TAs, and ITAs report benefiting from these systems (e.g., EF's praise of the

department's observation system, see Excerpt 4.20 and Excerpt 4.21) despite the fact that most are not directed at *international* teaching assistants specifically.

Although the systems are mostly perceived by its stakeholders to be helpful, in some cases, there is some evidence of less than positive effects. For example, the additional language testing requirements appear to be in place largely to placate potential concerns from students or to legitimize instructors' credentials in the eyes of accreditors. Students' concerns about their nonnative instructors' language in particular were not necessarily viewed as legitimate by English department members, but they were nonetheless cited as reasons to implement policies. The negative effects of such policies fall on ITAs and range from inconvenience to a perception that the department lacks faith in their skills, competencies, and experiences.

4.5 Department of Biology

Graduate students in the Biology department can teach laboratory courses that are offered as part of many Biology undergraduate courses. These courses are divided into the more instructor-fronted, theoretically-focused lecture, taught by more senior faculty members, and the more hands-on, practically-oriented laboratory, taught by graduate teaching assistants. Perhaps because the TAs who teach these laboratory classes are not the instructor of record for their courses (instead the senior faculty member leading the lecture is), the Biology department does not require that TAs have an earned Master's degree in Biology or 18 credit hours of graduate coursework, as required for other TAs by the university's accreditation. As a result, the Biology department employs both Master's and PhD students as laboratory instructors, including those who have recently begun their graduate studies.

Prospective Biology TAs communicate their interest in teaching directly to laboratory supervisors, usually academic professionals, who administrate a teaching laboratory, supervise

the TAs working under them, and also teach sections of the corresponding lecture class. For example, I interviewed two of these academic professionals in my research: JG and AH. JG oversees a teaching laboratory used for an introductory sequence of two Biology courses. Students who are not majoring in Biology take one or both of these courses to satisfy general education requirements. JG teaches lecture classes for these two courses and also is involved in training and supervising the TAs who teach the laboratory classes. AH performs the same duties for a sequence of courses for Biology majors.

Both AH and JG are also aided in their considerable administrative duties by laboratory coordinators. I observed AH's laboratory extensively, and noticed that the laboratory coordinator working with him, AD, exercises considerable direct control over decisions related to which graduate students are assigned to teach laboratory sections and is very involved in their preparation. Thus, in the case of the sequence of courses for introductory Biology for Biology majors, both AH and AD serve instrumental roles in screening, supervising, and preparing TAs for their duties.

It is important to note that, as both JG and AH reported in their interviews, policies and practices related to TAs' preparation and screening are largely determined at the level of individual teaching laboratories. Hence, while I will describe the policies in operation in these two laboratories, practices differed, sometimes radically, across labs. In particular, there was apparently considerable variation in how weekly lab meetings were used. For example, one TA that I interviewed, FR, reported that she had been an apprentice (I explain apprenticeship procedures below) in both AH's laboratory and another that offered courses for more advanced Biology majors. She reported that the meetings in the other laboratory (which she had not gone on to be a TA in) were brief and did not involve TAs giving demonstrations of their teaching, a

routine feature of AH's laboratory meetings. As will become clear from my discussion below, these weekly meetings serve as one of the principal sources of support that Biology TAs receive. Hence, while my discussion will focus on the two laboratories that my informants worked in (and in particular AH's, which I collected a great deal more data from), it should be noted that policies related to Biology TAs differ substantially across different labs.

In my research on policies pertaining to ITAs in the Biology department, five major considerations emerged. First, admission into a graduate program is a requirement for being a TA (as it is for any department), and which program (Master's or PhD) the student enters affects when, how much, and how often they will teach. Second, all prospective TAs are required to attend an orientation about teaching in the Biology department prior to beginning their teaching. Third, prospective TAs must complete a semester-long apprenticeship in which they shadow an experienced TA in the lab they wish to teach. Fourth, new TAs are often assigned to team teach with a more experienced TA in their first semester. Finally, Biology TAs are required to attend weekly meetings in which pedagogical issues are frequently discussed. In the following sections, I discuss these five points in more detail.

4.5.1   *Program admission*

Although much of the policy-making and implementation regarding TAs in Biology takes place at the level of individual labs, there are some department-level requirements that prospective Biology TAs must meet before being allowed to teach. First, they must be admitted into a PhD or Master's program in Biology. However, which program they are admitted into impacts their experience with teaching, because, as my informants reported, Master's and PhD students often have different incentives to seek out TA positions. Both AH and JG mentioned that Biology Master's students are more likely to depend on teaching lab classes as a way to pay

for their education and receive a stipend. In contrast, PhD students are usually funded through another source, usually as research assistants, and teach lab classes as a way of supplementing their income and fulfilling a requirement of their program that they teach for at least five semesters during their first four years in the program (as specified in a policy document from the Biology department).

Since admission to Biology graduate programs and teaching assignments are handled at different administrative levels (i.e., department-level administration versus laboratory-level administration), it seems unlikely that decisions about admissions into Biology graduate programs consider teaching experience or preparation (although I was unable to interview any department-level administrators from the Biology department). Instead, my informants report that most Master's students are admitted without funding and must seek out teaching opportunities after enrolling in the program, and most PhD students are admitted with some other form of funding, usually tied to the laboratory research of a Biology faculty member.

4.5.2   Orientation

A second department level policy requires that all prospective TAs attend a one-day orientation offered every summer before being assigned to teach laboratory courses. More experienced TAs are permitted to attend (and some do as, as PS reported), and some more experienced TAs serve as panelists during the orientation. My informants from the Biology department provided insight into the range of issues that can be covered in this orientation in any given year. They include general expectations for Biology TAs, instructions for dealing with disruptions, handling dangerous situations in the laboratory, handling two sets of responsibilities as research and teaching assistant (as well as presumably graduate student), and dealing with student academic dishonesty.

The ITAs and administrators I talked with about the orientation seemed mostly positive about it, while attempting to remain realistic about the amount of preparation TAs can truly get from a one day orientation.

4.5.3 Apprenticeship

Although the orientation I have described in the previous section serves as a minimal level of required preparation for all TAs in the Biology department, the additional preparation that is offered to Biology TAs is largely dependent on which lab they are teaching in, as the academic professionals and lab coordinators that supervise these laboratories take on the responsibility of ensuring that TAs are prepared to teach sections of the courses they are in charge of. All of the laboratories that my informants were knowledgeable of required a semester long apprenticeship from all prospective TAs before they could begin teaching and receive compensation for their work. In addition, an apprenticeship is referenced in the requirements for all Biology PhD students, so it is likely that all other labs require the completion of an apprenticeship semester as well, although the expectations for apprentices appears to vary across labs.

According to my informants, apprentices shadow a more experienced TA for an entire semester and also attend all laboratory meetings; they are then evaluated at the end of the semester to determine whether they will be eligible for a teaching position in the laboratory the following semester. During his interview, JG described this requirement as it pertains to his implementation of it in his lab. JG reported that "the best" (already experienced) TAs in his lab are assigned graduate students who have expressed interest in becoming a TA in the lab. JG reported that it was his intention that, through shadowing the experienced TA for a full semester, the apprentice would gain a basic knowledge of the laboratory, the course, and the students.

Toward the end of their apprenticeships, JG reported that the apprentices are evaluated on their

ability to present at least one of the introductory lab lectures to a class. In making final decisions

as to whether they will be hired as TAs, JG also reported considering criteria like whether they

put in effort and whether they know how to take attendance and grade tests. According to JG,

some prospective TAs may have to repeat the apprenticeship if their performance is

unsatisfactory.

```
174    IR: ((...)) what were you doing (.) as a t as an
175        APPRENTICE, what were you [doing,]
176    MZ:                          [mhm.]
177    IR: before that demo?
178    MZ: mm so you just go to the (.) lab class, every time
179        they have a class,
180    IR: mhm.
181    MZ: so like you uh (.) how to say? you paired with a
182        experienced t a.
183    IR: mhm.
184    MZ: and you go to that t a's class.
185    IR: mhm.
186    MZ: every week.
187    IR: mhm.
188    MZ: and you also go to the t a meeting. which happens
189        (.) for us, every friday.
190    IR: okay.
191    MZ: mm so in that teaching class, you can observe the
192        experienced t a, how they (.) deliver the (.)
193        information, and how they interact with student.
194    IR: mhm.
195    MZ: and in the t a meeting, you can (.) hear some pe-
196        some (.) t a talking about their (.) thin- the
197        things they met in the class. like, (.) if a
198        student do this, what i what should i do?
199    IR: [mhm.]
200    MZ: [if i] met this situation, what should i do?
201    IR: mhm.
202    MZ: and i think that's very (.) useful. like, at least
203        you (.) you have an idea what things you may (.)
204        f- face too. when you teach.
205    IR: mhm. mhm.
206    MZ: and, also, (.) you can learn how you should deal
207        with that.
```

Excerpt 4.24. MZ discusses being an apprentice in AH's Biology laboratory.

During his interview, AH described very similar procedures for apprentices in his lab. He also mentioned that apprentices are not paid and do not receive a tuition waiver, to which he added, "it's not a great deal for them, but it's something that has to be done before they get the chance to teach".

Most of the ITAs that I interviewed were largely positive about the apprenticeship. In Excerpt 4.24, MZ describes her experience serving as an apprentice in one of the laboratory courses under AH's supervision, which she characterized as "very useful" (line 202).

Of the six Biology ITAs whom I talked with, only one presented problems with the preparation he received through the apprenticeship. When I asked him during his interview whether he felt prepared to become an instructor after his apprenticeship, HS, an ITA teaching in JG's laboratory, responded, "not really, to be honest". When I asked him why, he mentioned that the summer course that he observed as an apprentice had very few students registered. In Excerpt 4.25, HS describes how the low enrollment in the summer course (lines 378-381) did not provide conditions for him to observe a more experienced TA teaching as they might otherwise have done. According to HS, this difference led to the more experienced TA adopting a very different set of teacher-student interactional norms than he would need when he later began teaching. As a result, it is unsurprising that HS felt that he had not been adequately prepared to handle the "messy" (line 416) reality of teaching in the laboratory. Course enrollment appears to be an additional factor that would be helpful for administrators to bear in mind when assigning apprentices to courses.

```
378   HS: ((...)) in the summer, the students are less, way
379       less,
380   IR: mhm.
381   HS: there were only uh (.) five, or six, students,
382   IR: mm
383   HS: in that class, during summer,
384   IR: okay.
385   HS: uh (.) however, in the fall semester, there are
386       like, thirty, twenty to thirty students,
387   IR: oh wow.
388   HS: so that is a big difference. and also, because,
389       there were less students, in the class, actually,
390       the t a is not teaching (.) like we (.) what we
391       SUPPOSED to do,
392   IR: okay.
393   HS: so you know, if there were less students, she was
394       just sitting with them, and, (.) like, doing
395       something face to face,
396   IR: mhm. mhm.
397   HS: uh oh and also the class we taught is (.) uh more
398       like experiment. class. uh the t a needs to (.)
399       tell you how to do experiments.
400   IR: mhm.
401   HS: uh so when there were less people, there's only
402       one group.
403   IR: mhm.
404   HS: of (.) just one group to do the experiment.
405   IR: mhm.
406   HS: they do just ONE experiment. so it's more it's
407       EASIER for the t a to HANDLE it.
408   IR: mhm.
409   HS: uh that (.) that is when i did the apprenticeship.
410   IR: mhm.
411   HS: however, when i start to teach, there were like
412       thirty twenty thirty students, there were SIX
413       groups, five or s- or six [groups,]
414   IR:                           [mhm.]
415   HS: to do the experiments, it's more like, (.) kind of
416       messy.
417   IR: mhm.
418   HS: uh and sometimes, i don't know (.) what to do.
419   IR: mhm.
420   HS: cuz, i mean, like, THIS group is ((inaudible,
421       whiny voice)) have a problem, that group has a
422       problem,
423   IR: mhm.
424   HS: uh (.) can't handle it.
```

Excerpt 4.25. HS describes his apprenticeship in JG's laboratory during a summer semester.

4.5.4   Co-teaching

Once a TA has completed the apprenticeship to the satisfaction of those overseeing the laboratory, they are eligible to be assigned laboratory sections. Most TAs have sole responsibility over their laboratory classes. However, sometimes newer TAs are paired with another more experienced TA, and the two are assigned to jointly teach the section. During his interview, JG reported that this was sometimes the case for international teaching assistants "the first couple of times they try to teach", although later he mentioned that this was no longer done "because of the economic difficulties" facing the university.

Nonetheless, of the six Biology ITAs I interviewed, four reported that they had been assigned a co-TA at least one semester: FR, UB, MZ, and HS (twice, although the second time he was the more experienced TA). All of them reported that they divided the class sessions between themselves and their co-TAs. For most, this meant alternating every other week. One week they would take responsibility for and lead the pre-exercise lecture, and the next week their co-TA would do this and the interviewees would sit off to the side, contributing to other tasks like helping students with the experiments and preparing materials for the activities. However, MZ reported that she and her co-TA divided the work with the more experienced TA leading for the first half of the semester and MZ taking over after the halfway point (Excerpt 4.26, lines 386-394).

These ITAs mentioned a few advantages of having a co-TA. In particular, most mentioned that dividing the work of teaching, grading, and assisting students with their exercises between two people made it much more manageable. UB mentioned that she would occasionally confirm information that she was unsure about with her more experienced co-TA. She also mentioned an instance where her co-TA had helped the students to understand what she was

saying to them. In her interview, FR brought up her co-TA in response to my question about whether her lab coordinator had observed her, stating that she felt that having the co-TA in the room was like being observed by a more experienced instructor every session, and she reported the co-TA would occasionally give her feedback about her teaching.

One ITA, MZ, displayed ambivalence toward the decision to pair her with a more experienced TA during her first semester. In Excerpt 4.26, MZ attributes her supervisor's decision to pair her with a more experienced co-TA during her first semester to the supervisor's concerns about MZ as an instructor, especially that she was quiet and may not have been able to get and keep the respect or attention of the students (lines 353-361). MZ did not necessarily dispute her supervisor's apparent concerns with her teaching; indeed, she reported at other times to me that she continued to struggle to project a confident, authoritative teaching persona that the students would respect and listen to well past her first semester teaching (see also Chapter 6 for discussion of MZ's and her students' perceptions of her as an authority figure). Nonetheless, in Excerpt 4.27, she reports that, at the time, she did question whether it was truly necessary for her to be assigned a co-TA (lines 420-421) and describes some of the dilemmas that having a co-TA who was her peer and friend (lines 401-410) created.

```
353   MZ:  ((...)) at that time, because (.) she's a little
354        bit worried about i'm kind of a soft person,
355   IR:  mhm.
356   MZ:  so, she (.) i i guess, she is a little bit worried
357        that student will not afraid of me. and will not
358        LISTEN to me.
359   IR:  oh. [@@]
360   MZ:      [i i] may out of control in the class, so she
361        paired me with another experienced t a.
362   IR:  okay. (.) that's (.) this was (.)
363   MZ:  [d-]                [yeah]
364   IR:  [in] your first [semester], as a t a?
365   MZ:  yeah.
366   IR:  so you there were two of you together?
367   MZ:  yeah.
368   IR:  okay. (.) what was that like?
369   MZ:  mm (.) so we can work out how we are going to
370        teach.
371   IR:  mhm.
372   MZ:  like, (.) because it's like students has two boss.
373        in their class.
374   IR:  mhm.
375   MZ:  and we need to find out (.) a way, to (.) like (.)
376        make the students listen to both of us.
377   IR:  mhm.
378   MZ:  at first, i feel a little bit difficult.
379   IR:  mhm.
380   MZ:  s- because (.) the other t a is more experienced,
381        and i'm less experienced.
382   IR:  mhm.
383   MZ:  and thi- sometimes students can easily (.) f- feel
384        @that. @
385   IR:  right. yeah.
386   MZ:  uh and we find out a way (.) is, (.) like w- we do
387        half and half, befo- before midterm, she (.)
388        teach.
389   IR:  mhm.
390   MZ:  and she's the main boss.
391   IR:  mhm.
392   MZ:  and i'm just here to help them.
393   IR:  okay.
394   MZ:  and after midterm, i i will be the @boss. @
395   IR:  okay. okay.
396   MZ:  yeah. i i feel like that works better.
```

Excerpt 4.26. MZ discusses her experience teaching with a co-TA (part 1).

```
399   IR:  mhm. so how did you feel about uh being paired
400        with another t a?
401   MZ:  mm (.) the other t a is also my friend, so at
402        first, i'm a little bit (.) shy, about that.
403        because i'm tend to (.) come back to (.) a role,
404        that between (.) the other t a and me.
405   IR:  okay.
406   MZ:  so (.) because in the friendship, i'm usually not
407        the one (.) who make all the decisions. i'm not
408        the one who DRIVE the @directions. [@@]
409   IR:                                      [okay.]
410   MZ:  and i feel that affect me.
411   IR:  mhm.
412   MZ:  but when i realize it, i try to (.) get rid of
413        that.
414   IR:  okay. [okay.]
415   MZ:        [so] that's a potential @problem. @@
416   IR:  okay. okay. (.) um (.) uh were you HAPPY to have
417        (.) the (.) um (.) the lab coordinator suggest
418        that you need more support? or did you feel (.)
419        that the support was not necessary?
420   MZ:  mm (.) at first when she tell me, i feel the
421        support is not necessary.
422   IR:  mhm. okay.
423   MZ:  i- (.) but later, i feel, oh it's a good way to
424        work,
425   IR:  mhm.
426   MZ:  so especially, when one of us is in emergency, (.)
427        and we cannot go to the class, we have another
428        person to back @up.
429   IR:  okay.
430   MZ:  @immediately. @@
431   IR:  @@@ yeah?
432   MZ:  yeah. and, it's also, a separation of the work
433        load.
434   IR:  mhm.
435   MZ:  like, you o- you just only need to grade HALF of
436        the quiz.
437   IR:  mhm.
438   MZ:  and half just one exam.
```

Excerpt 4.27. MZ discusses her experience teaching with a co-TA (part 2).

4.5.5   Lab meetings

In addition to the apprenticeship that Biology TAs in these two laboratories must

complete and the possibility that they will be assigned a co-TA in their first semester, they

receive ongoing preparation from weekly laboratory meetings run by the academic professionals,

AH and JG, and, at least in the case of AH's laboratory, the lab coordinator, AD. AH, JG, and

the ITAs that I interviewed all reported that at least part of each weekly meeting is dedicated to

preparing the TAs to teach and lead the following week's laboratory exercises. The two

laboratories, however, have different procedures for this preparation. In his weekly meetings, JG

provides information and directives to the TAs teaching under him. During his interview, he

described the meetings as a time for the group to "review the material", which is contained in

PowerPoint presentations already provided to all of the TAs to ensure uniform instruction across

the different laboratory sections. HS, an ITA teaching under JG also described the meetings,

stating that JG "will tell us like, what you need to do" as well as "which part gonna be a problem,

which part is hard for them [the students taking the laboratory class] to understand, how you

should explain this, so that they can understand".

JG's meetings can be contrasted with AH's weekly meetings, in which TAs are more

directly involved. I observed several of these meetings and also heard them described by AH and

several of the ITAs teaching in his lab. The meetings began with what AH described as "general

items" which pertained to all TAs, regardless of whether they were teaching Biology 201 or 202.

This included issues like lab supplies, schedules, and expectations for TAs' performance. AD,

the lab coordinator, usually ran this part of the meeting. After this, TAs broke into groups based

on which course they were teaching so that one TA could give a demonstration of how they plan

to deliver the introductory lecture for the following week's lab, speaking as if they were teaching

and using whatever materials (usually a PowerPoint presentation or notes and visuals drawn or

written on the white board) they planned to use. Although they all follow a laboratory manual

which lays out experiments and basic content standard across the different sections of the course,

TAs in AH's laboratory are not given prescribed presentation materials and instead have some

degree of autonomy over how they will present the content they are assigned to cover each week.

The other TAs and either AH or AD watch and provide feedback throughout the demonstration

and after it. Demonstrations were usually followed by a great deal of discussion among the TAs

and supervisors about the best strategies and methods for making the content accessible,

managing time, ensuring safety, and other important issues.

```
332   IR: mhm. have you uh have you taken any classes on
333       teaching?
334   DC: no.
335   IR: no?
336   DC: yeah.
337   IR: um
338   DC: but uh eh our lab meetings are really helpful.
339   IR: [mhm.]
340   DC: [for teaching,] i mean. they're really helpful
341       because, uh there are more than one, eh lab
342       coordinator.
343   IR: mhm.
344   DC: and there are really well prepared, experienced
345       teaching assistants.
346   IR: mhm.
347   DC: and and they really give good s- great
348       suggestions. and, they (.) feel they make me feel
349       comfortable,
350   IR: [mhm.]
351   DC: [and] i can ask any question that i have,
352   IR: uh huh.
353   DC: to them.
354   IR: okay.
355   DC: so, these are, really qualified as a lecture.
356       (("these", possibly referring to the weekly
357       meetings))
358   IR: okay. [okay.]
359   DC:       [mhm.]
```

Excerpt 4.28. DC discusses weekly meetings for AH's laboratory.

```
403   PS: ((...)) my class was on wednesday and thursday.
404   IR: mhm.
405   PS: fr- in my first year, uh in my first semester of t
406       a, i came to i i went to another t a's class.
407   IR: mhm.
408   PS: on tuesday.
409   IR: mhm.
410   PS: so, i just like for first semester, i did that.
411       because i know i faced the i (.) i was there in
412       the demo presentation,
413   IR: [mhm.]
414   PS: [in friday] meeting, but STILL, i was not that
415       much confident.
416   IR: mhm.
417   PS: i i wanted to be MORE confident, MORE prepared,
418       before [i] go to the class.
419   IR:        [mhm.]                 mhm.
420   PS: that's why i attended uh (.) senior t a's. i i was
421       just there.
422   IR: mhm.
423   PS: so yeah, i guess, there was enough facility,
424   IR: mhm.
425   PS: for our group to become more efficient.
426   IR: mhm.
427   PS: uh and cross the transition from apprentice to t
428       a.
429   IR: what gave you the idea to (.) observe the senior t
430       a's class? before you taught your section of it?
431   PS: i (.) because i thought (.) uh (.) the demo
432       presentation is just (.) it's it's a theoretical.
433   IR: mhm.
434   PS: uh t a will tell you okay, do (.) uh i will tell
435       this in front of my student, and i will tell to do
436       this, this, and this.
437   IR: mhm.
438   PS: but in our demo presentation, we do not do any
439       experiment.
440   IR: mhm.
441   PS: so i was thinking, what if i stuck in in
442       experiment in front of my student?
443   IR: mhm.
444   PS: that will be REALLY embarrassing for ME.
445   IR: mm mhm.
446   PS: and i don't want that.
447   IR: mhm.
448   PS: so i wanted to see like, everything practically in
449       front of me.
```

Excerpt 4.29. PS discusses the weekly laboratory meetings and her decision to attend a more experienced TA's class.

Most of the ITAs in AH's laboratory whom I interviewed reported that the meetings provided helpful preparation. In Excerpt 4.24, MZ described how attending the meetings was helpful to consider some of the situations she would face after completing her apprenticeship (Excerpt 4.24, lines 195-200). In Excerpt 4.28, DC, a TA in AH's laboratory, discusses why she finds the weekly meetings helpful.

One ITA, PS, did raise a potential shortcoming of the weekly meeting procedures in AH's lab. A relevant segment of her interview is presented in Excerpt 4.29. PS reports that even after attending the weekly meeting she was "not that much confident" (lines 415-416) and decided to observe a more experienced TA's course (lines 420-421) so that she would get a fuller sense of how the entire class session was run (lines 448-449).

Much of the preparation that PS and her fellow TAs receive is focused on the beginning fifteen or twenty minutes of each class meeting, when the TA is supposed to be delivering an introductory presentation. However, most of any given class meeting is dedicated to the students actually undertaking an experiment or exercise. In these cases, the TA is expected to help guide students through the procedures. While I observed that issues that might arise during these times are covered to some degree during the group's discussions of the laboratory activities, it appears that they were treated as marginal relative to the importance placed on the introductory lectures both in terms of the preparation they received to deliver them and the apparent weight placed on them in assessing apprentices.

4.5.6 Overall impressions

The Biology department's procedures for the preparation and ongoing development of TAs is in some ways more informal than the other departments I have discussed above in which the TA serves as the instructor of record. In particular, TAs in the department are not required to

take ENG 600 or any other formal course on teaching, and none of the ITAs I spoke with had

elected to do so. The opportunities for engagement with issues of pedagogy that Biology TAs

have largely take the form of the laboratories' weekly meetings, which show a great deal of

variation across laboratories in how much is done to help TAs develop as instructors.

In addition, unlike some of the other departments, neither of the Biology laboratories I

became familiar with had a formal system for observing TAs' teaching in place. Although they

were initially observed as apprentices, and the TAs in AH's laboratory are routinely required to

give a teaching demonstration during weekly meetings, none of the TAs reported being observed

by their supervisors while teaching. During his interview, JG reported that no formal observation

procedure was in place in his laboratory but offered a number of other procedures he used to try

to informally monitor TAs' performance in the classroom. In the interview, he mentioned that by

opening the door from the center office into the laboratory classrooms he could (and often did)

listen as TAs were teaching. He suggested that this avoided putting "extra pressure" on the TAs

but still allowed him to "track a lot of different labs". In a later conversation, he added that he

also uses other procedures to determine how TAs are performing as instructors such as

examining their student evaluations and looking for patterns of incorrect response among their

students on exams. JG stated that, when he discovers worrying patterns such as a tendency

among one TA's students to incorrectly respond to an exam item or consistently negative

evaluations of the TA by students, he will ask the TA to meet with him privately to try to

determine what aspect of the TA's instruction might need to be improved. He mentioned also

that TAs themselves often sought his help by coming to see him in his office.

Nonetheless, no formal systems for observing TAs during their teaching and providing

them direct feedback on it was reported by my informants in Biology. This may suggest a gap in

what supervisors are able to ascertain about how well TAs work with students, since what is informally overheard by JG and what is observed by AH during weekly meetings is likely to come from the pre-exercise lectures. How TAs interact with and guide individual or small groups of students, which is a major part of their instructional duties, appears to be something that the supervisors are not fully aware of, although in Chapter 6 I discuss this in greater detail. Furthermore, such informal procedures do not seem to promote the type of discussion and reflection reported by English ITAs, who, as I discussed above, had more extensive discussions about their teaching with those who observed them.

Overall, although much of the assessment and preparation of TAs in the Biology department is administered at the level of laboratories and might be characterized as relatively informal, it appears that Biology TAs receive quite a bit of preparation for teaching and undertake a seemingly rigorous assessment of their preparation. This assessment requires the prospective TA to prepare to deliver a lesson and deliver it in front of an audience. In the case of the Biology laboratories I examined, this involved all apprentices (regardless of national origin) delivering a lesson in front of an actual intact laboratory class and being evaluated by one of the people in charge of the laboratory (either the academic professional or the laboratory coordinator). Through serving as apprentices for a semester and getting preparation during weekly laboratory meetings, TAs also seem to have quite a bit of opportunity to observe others teaching, discuss pedagogical issues, and receive feedback on their teaching practice.

4.6 Department of Physics

The Physics department at SWU uses its PhD students to teach the laboratory courses attached to some of its undergraduate courses or to assist in laboratory activities that take place in some courses taught in a studio format (discussed more below). The department includes two

programs that both employ ITAs and are more or less separate from each other: Physics and Astronomy. Indeed, when I spoke with administrators from each side, they were not fully aware of the structure or procedures of the other program. Nonetheless, the programs have very similar procedures and policies for assigning and preparing teaching assistants.

In the following sections, I provide detail about the policies related to ITAs in the Physics department at SWU. These include how teaching is considered in graduate admissions in the department and how TAs are assigned courses strategically in their first semester. The policies also include a set of pedagogy courses and some informal systems of observation and feedback all for TAs currently teaching.

4.6.1 Program admission

For both Physics and Astronomy, the main criterion for becoming a TA is admission in the PhD program. Admission into both PhD programs uses very similar criteria to most of the other departments I have discussed above: Computer Science, Mathematics, and Biology. Both the Astronomy and Physics programs look for high grade point averages and GRE scores, and both consider the research experience the applicants have and consider whether the applicants are interested in research related to the department's ongoing research. During interviews, I asked administrators from both programs whether teaching ability, training, or experience were considered in their PhD admissions. AT, graduate director for the Astronomy program, stated that teaching "usually doesn't factor in much in our selection" but that it is "one of the minor criteria we're using". He stated that the department believes that research abilities and motivation to undertake research are better predictors of whether the student will eventually finish the PhD program. Likewise, during his interview, GH, associate chair of the Physics department and director of the Physics undergraduate program, mentioned three criteria that the SWU Physics

program and other physics programs consider in deciding whether to admit students to their PhD

program: academic record, research experience, and whether the student can be funded with a

teaching assistantship. GH suggested that there was a "low bar" for the last criterion and that

Physics program faculty and administrators "expect to have to train" new PhD students and are

accustomed to employing "international students who don't have great English skills". GH

suggested that candidates whose personalities make it so that they "cannot interact well with

other people" are the only ones likely to be prevented from receiving a teaching assistantship.

4.6.2   Teaching in the first semester

In both programs, PhD students take up some form of teaching responsibilities

immediately. GH, associate chair of the department, pointed out that this is possible because

teaching assistants in these programs are "not an instructor of record in any of our classes";

rather, they are "teaching just the lab portion". Thus, alluding to an accreditation requirement,

GH stated that Physics teaching assistants are not required to have completed eighteen credit

hours of graduate course work prior to beginning to teach. Acknowledging that they are placing

inexperienced instructors immediately in the classroom, both programs take some steps to

support their new TAs.

In his interview, GH reported that the Physics program had recently adopted a new

instructional style for some of its courses: studio laboratory. GH reported that, in contrast to a

more traditional laboratory teaching format, in which the TA is solely responsible for leading the

class in laboratory activities that take place in a space separate from the lecture, in a studio

laboratory, teacher-fronted lecture activities and hands-on laboratory activities take place in the

same space. In Physics classes using the studio model, GH states that the primary instructor is

assisted by two TAs, although all of these people may not be in the room at one time. According

to GH, this format is particularly conducive to providing a space for newer PhD students to be peripheral participants in teaching activities, allowing them to receive preparation both in the form of a pedagogy course as well as through their experiences in the classroom working alongside a more experienced TA and instructor. GH reported that the studio laboratory format has many advantages for the SWU Physics program including allowing the program to use resources efficiently by placing new PhD students immediately into the classroom (instead of keeping them out of the classroom in their first semester as was the practice before), while also providing continued support for them, in the form of co-instructors to work alongside. In addition, the format gives TAs training in a teaching style that GH reports is currently "a growing trend" in undergraduate physics education, which may help graduates of the program secure teaching positions.

Of the five Physics ITAs that I interviewed, three had taught in the studio laboratory format: AE, BG, and KY. Interestingly, I received somewhat conflicting reports about the instructional demands of studio and traditional formats. KY claimed that the traditional format is "easier" in part because "there is less interaction between the student and the TA". In contrast, AE's comments in Excerpt 4.30 suggest that he preferred to teach in the studio format (he had not yet been assigned to the traditional format, per his requests, although he was familiar with it, having, for example, served as a substitute instructor for his peers), because of the support the studio format offered for him as a "newcomer" who was not confident in his teaching or English.

```
138   IR: wh- what were you (.) doing as a teacher in fall
139       thousand twelve?
140   AE: um basically, at THAT time, we (.) we uh were
141       offered a course eh (.) titled uh eh (.) teaching
142       physics. eh so, in in this (.) in this course, we
143       we we were taught, some some of some of the
144       regulations, and the difference cultural
145       difference between the (.) between the way that WE
146       did, in our c- uh em eh em meh (.) countries, in
147       our country, and, the way that the STUDENT behave,
148       or, the teacher has to mm (.) uh um OBSERVE in the
149       in the cl- in the class, in the U S, uh (.) and,
150       at the uh uh in the in the s- FIRST semester, we
151       we supposed to do we supposed to do a course,
152       named, studio.
153   IR: [mhm.]
154   AE: [um] eh studio, either one oh one, or one oh two.
155       one oh one is mainly related to newtonian physics,
156       mechanical physics. and one oh two is about
157       electricity as and magnetism. and, um th- so, we
158       could choose the the hours, and the department um
159       um um uh assigned us with one of those those (.)
160       uh after the first semester, we could uh we could
161       choose either, uh do again, continue the studios,
162       or, do the regular lab. which in which you you are
163       mm (.) totally responsible for (.) for the whole
164       class, but, in the studio, um it was a little
165       easier, for for newcomers, because, eh you are n-
166       you have a a f- a (.) a professor, uh uh em (.)
167       next to yourself, so, you c- you you you can learn
168       some teaching styles, or, whenever you you could
169       not explain very well because, y'know b- b- b- (.)
170       initially, it happens to me, i KNOW english, but
171       because i didn't USE mm it (.) em ordinary in MY
172       country, i whenever i want to say something, so eh
173       when my sentences was a little vague, or it
174       happens. but, n- (.) little by little, whenever uh
175       when you try to think, and, speak, um in english,
176       um (.) th- th- the words that i- is on the BACK of
177       your minds, comes forth uh FORWARD, and you can
178       you can utilize and use the words mm v- much
179       better. and because of that, they they do NOT the
180       department do NOT assign for the f- newcomers,
181       initially, to to go to the regular labs. yeah.
```

Excerpt 4.30. AE discusses his experience teaching in the Physics program's studio laboratory courses.

Although I obtained conflicting reports, it may be relevant to note that KY had far greater experience using English in instructional settings, having received all of his formal education (beginning in primary school) in English medium schools, whereas AE reported less experience using English in educational settings and a great deal of insecurity with his English. Thus, AE's preferences seem to better reflect the perspective of an ITA with deep concerns about English language competence, suggesting that the support to be gained from the studio format may be particularly relevant to ITA preparation as it has usually been understood in applied linguistics.

The other half of the Physics department, the Astronomy program, also places new PhD students immediately in teaching positions, teaching traditional laboratory courses (the Astronomy program does not use the studio model) for two different introductory astronomy classes (ASTRO 101 and 102). In his interview, AT, director of the Astronomy graduate program, discussed an "informal internal policy" intended to support new PhD students in their first semester involving strategic scheduling of the laboratory sections. Since laboratory lessons are pre-established by the program's curriculum, all TAs teaching the same course (either 101 or 102) deliver the same lesson every week. AT reported that the program uses this fact to their advantage, placing the more experienced TAs in the sections that meet on Monday, which gives less experienced TAs an opportunity to attend those sections to get a better idea of what is expected of them. AT reported that new PhD Astronomy PhD students are "strongly encouraged" to attend the sections offered by more experienced TAs earlier in the week.

I was able to interview only one Astronomy ITA (the Astronomy program is smaller and enrolls fewer international students than the Physics program), VD, who was, at the time, in his first semester in SWU's Astronomy PhD program and also teaching for the first time. VD reported that he was required to observe another section of the lab course for the pedagogy

course he was taking. However, the schedule for that semester did not follow the parameters that

AT outlined to me. Rather, the first two laboratory sections of each week that semester were

taught by one of VD's first-year classmates and himself, which VD pointed out meant that "we

don't get to shadow anyone before our first labs". However, VD reported that, after a few weeks,

a more experienced TA volunteered to lead a "tutorial" for the less experienced TAs on Fridays,

giving VD and his peer the opportunity to delve into the laboratory activities before they teach

on Mondays. While VD appeared satisfied with this solution, it is unclear whether such a tutorial

would provide the same level of preparation given that students would not be present (see PS's

comments in Excerpt 4.29 about wanting to observe Biology laboratory activities being carried

out with students).

4.6.3   Pedagogy courses

In addition to the care taken in scheduling and selecting the teaching assignments for new

PhD students in the Physics department, they are also required to take courses in teaching during

their first year in the program while teaching for the first time.

In the Physics program, new PhD students take a two credit hour seminar, Physics 710, in

their first semester, and then register for an additional one hour practicum, Physics 711, in their

second semester. GH, associate chair of the department, reported during his interview that

Physics 710 was recently "revamped" when a new faculty member specializing in Physics

Education Research joined the faculty and began teaching it. During his interview, GH also

stated that he had become more satisfied with the preparation Physics TAs receive as a result of

these changes and the requirement that new TAs teach in the studio laboratory format. In Excerpt

4.31, GH elaborates on this increased satisfaction.

```
960   GH:  i think we're doing much better, now, um i think
961        the (.) the (.) the COURSEWORK that they take,
962   IR:  mhm.
963   GH:  i think is is (.) FAR above what it used to be.
964   IR:  okay.
965   GH:  um (.)
966   IR:  why why do you (.) think that?
967   GH:  well i think because it's main thing is it's based
968        on uh th- (.) um (.) uh (.) on (.) uh best
969        practices in research based instructional
970        strategies,
971   IR:  mhm.
972   GH:  and not on (.) just (.) experience. or,
973   IR:  [okay.]
974   GH:  [i- it] y'know, or, it i- they they really are (.)
975        so they're they're (.) it's (.) um (.) um so
976        that's that's the m- MAIN part of it. i (.) have a
977        lot of faith in the person who's teaching the
978        class,
979   IR:  mhm.
980   GH:  cuz i work closely with that person and i know (.)
981        um (.) um (.) how they're thinking about what
982        they're trying to do, and and so i think (.) uh
983        (.) and the goals of the class, in the past, the
984        class, part of the goals were (.) uh (.) in some
985        ways, th- th- the class in the past, had a lot of
986        attention to international students. it was the
987        graduate director doing it,
988   IR:  mhm.
989   GH:  and it was (.) it WAS some of it is this is the
990        way you do things in the u s. [kind] of thing.
991   IR:                                [mhm.]           mhm.
992   GH:  so it was a it there was some intentional stuff
993        that was good for international students. but
994        there wasn't very much (.) uh preparation for the
995        teaching.
996   IR:  okay.
997   GH:  so now the emphasis is kind of the the other way,
998        whereas we're emphasizing (.) um y'know what how
999        you should be approaching your teaching, and
1000       what's important in teaching physics.
```

Excerpt 4.31. GH describes the Physics program's courses on Teaching Physics, Physics 710 and 711.

At another point in the interview, GH also described the purpose of Physics 711, stating

that it was designed to give new TAs an opportunity to examine the laboratory activities "and see

why they're designed the way they are and to think about the principles that they have learned

about".

```
323   IR: ((...)) let's talk about the seminar, did you
324       think the seminar was helpful?
325   RT: REALLY REALLY helpful.
326   IR: okay.
327   RT: yes, it's otherwise, it would be HARD for the NEW
328       students,
329   IR: mhm.
330   RT: who are they were trained with the different
331       culture, different teaching style,
332   IR: [mhm.]
333   RT: [kind] of i- (.) this for ME, i had a teaching
334       experience back to ((country of origin omitted)),
335       i taught undergrad student there TOO.
336   IR: mhm. mhm.
337   RT: but the teaching style here and there is very
338       different.
339   IR: mhm.
340   RT: even grading style is different.
341   IR: mhm. (.) can you tell me how?
342   RT: different? how? okay. for example, (.) in
343       ((country of origin omitted)), (.) everything is
344       like a closed book, closed notes, (.) and the
345       YEARLY EXAM basically.
346   IR: okay.
347   RT: and then, (.) so, how we grade is (.) there is a
348       limitation kind NOT a limitation, but, kind of (.)
349       if you get sixt- th- there is a pass mark out of
350       hundred, like (.) thirty percent forty percent is
351       a pass mark.
352   IR: mhm.
353   RT: and it's HARD to get pass mark, and, in ((country
354       of origin omitted)), that sixty percent is kind of
355       for student, excellent grade.
356   IR: @@@@ mhm.
357   RT: and, then, but HERE, if you the a, b, c, d, the g-
358       is seventy percent is FAIL. sixty percent is FAIL.
359   IR: mhm.
```

Excerpt 4.32. RT discusses the Physics program's courses on teaching physics (part 1).

```
360   RT:  and i train to grade like this. how we grade in
361        ((country of origin omitted)), like uh okay, see
362        this is mistake, this is mistake, that is minor
363        thing, and y'know?
364   IR:  mhm.
365   RT:  if you if you do like THIS HERE, everybody will
366        fail.
367   IR:  mhm.
368   RT:  and not i'm saying everybody, but most of the
369        student will fail.
370   IR:  mhm.
371   RT:  that's the different train.
372   IR:  mhm. mhm.
373   RT:  and then, THIS CLASS make me like okay. i
374        understand this. okay. this is a training here.
```

Excerpt 4.33. RT discusses the Physics program's courses on teaching physics (part 2).

The Physics department's process of revising their courses designed to prepare TAs

appeared to impact the way the ITAs I interviewed viewed these courses, particularly what they

reported having learned from them or how they benefited from them. Regardless of when they

arrived at SWU, the ITAs I spoke with were mostly positive about the impact of the Physics

program's courses in teaching Physics, but I compare two Physics ITAs' discussions of these

courses that suggest a profound shift in the impact these courses are having.

First, in his interview, RT reported that he arrived at SWU in 2008 (six years prior to

when interviews were conducted) and began taking Physics 710 at that time. In Excerpt 4.32 and

Excerpt 4.33, RT elaborates on how his experience in the pedagogy classes (prior to the more

recent redesign) informed him about the differences in the educational system between his

country of origin and the United States.

In contrast to RT, during his interview, BG, who arrived at SWU in 2012 (two years prior

to when interviews were conducted), described the purpose and benefit of the courses on

teaching physics as largely about learning strategies for making concepts in physics accessible to

undergraduate students without substantial background in physics or calculus as shown in

Excerpt 4.34 and Excerpt 4.35.

```
102   IR: okay. um did you take any CLASSES about teaching?
103   BG: yes, i did. i took TWO classes.
104   IR: okay.
105   BG: i- it's called physics seven ten, the cou- the
106       name of the course.
107   IR: mhm.
108   BG: and physics seven eleven.
109   IR: okay.
110   BG: two courses. that is specifically about teaching
111       (.) physics. in undergraduate class.
112   IR: mkay. (.) and, um (.) what were those courses
113       like?
114   BG: that's about uh (.) how to explain certain
115       concepts in th- (.) to undergraduate students.
116   IR: [mhm.]
117   BG: [undergrad] physics students specifically. when
118       they are n- (.) not non physics major.
119   IR: mhm.
120   BG: uh there are lot of physics students who are not
121       physics majors.
122   IR: mhm.
123   BG: and they (.) have NOT taken calculus based course
124       either. so, (.) we focus on (.) how to explain
125       concepts to those students.
126   IR: mhm.
127   BG: and we focus on (.) how to uh yeah i- it's uh
128       basically, (.) telling (.) physics in simple
129       terms.
130   IR: [mhm.]
131   BG: [because] for physics major, (.) uh ph- physics
132       major it's lot more easier. (.) uh you can (.)
133       explain based on the core physics ideas, based on
134       calculus, mathematics, all those. (.) but for non
135       physics majors, it's lit- little uh (.) more
136       tricky.
137   IR: mhm.
138   BG: and esp- uh yeah especially, that's the focus on
139       those courses.
```

Excerpt 4.34. BG discusses the Physics program's courses on teaching physics (part 1).

```
142   IR: mhm. mhm. (.) kay. and what kinds of things um (.)
143       what kinds of TRICKS, or STRATEGIES, are there for
144       (.) making (.) uh (.) the content accessible?
145   BG: well, we have to let (.) a lot of times, we have
146       to relate uh (.) things, physics concepts, to real
147       world.
148   IR: mhm.
149   BG: that's how uh students grasp things more easier.
150   IR: mhm.
151   BG: for for example, for physics major, okay, he do
152       the mathematics, formula, and, different
153       variables, they kind of understand.
154   IR: [mhm.]
155   BG: [because] they are a bit more used to mathematics.
156       y'know variables. how things change. how things
157       are related to each other.
158   IR: mhm.
159   BG: and, (.) uh it's not that difficult for them. but,
160       for (.) um non physics majors, yeah, first you
161       have to explain it examples. what happens?
162   IR: mhm.
163   BG: in real world. and why that happens.
164   IR: mhm.
165   BG: and you have to relate laws of physics, to that
166       example. (.) so that, (.) so that that makes
167       things more clear.
168   IR: mm.
169   BG: rather than just (.) abstract mathematical
170       formulation. yeah.
```

Excerpt 4.35. BG discusses the Physics program's courses on teaching physics (part 2).

Importantly then, the ITAs' responses appear to show a move away from cultural or

linguistic differences as a subject of the Physics program's teaching courses toward more general

pedagogical technique aimed at making Physics accessible to students. Of course, both of these

may be important topics to cover, since both ITAs seem to have found what they learned helpful.

However, the Physics program's earlier curriculum appears to have overlapped considerably

with ENG 600, suggesting that Physics ITAs may benefit even more from ENG 600 than they

might have in the past, although only AE reported taking ENG 600.

```
317   VD:  so, we're being trained, we follow a book, by
318        ambrose, [it's] called how learning works, [and,]
319   IR:           [mhm.]                                [mhm.]
320   VD:  we're following that book, professor ((name
321        omitted)) is teaching us some strategies, to use
322        in class, and how uh a student's prior knowledge
323        affects his learning, how his motivation, and his
324        particular goals affect learning. and, how we can
325        um (.) help students organize their knowledge.
326        like, ask some prior questions in the class, so
327        that we can assess what everyone knows,
328   IR:  mhm.
329   VD:  then teach them something, and then, grade them
330        according to their prior knowledge.
331   IR:  mhm.
332   VD:  and not assuming that they know. all the pre-
333        requisites. (.) ah we require in our labs. so,
334        we're sort of having (.) these (.) um (.) um (.)
335        like, (.) he's teaching us how to teach. and we're
336        teaching at the same time.
337   IR:  mhm.
338   VD:  but, by the end of the semester, i i guess we'll
339        be better teachers, because we will be done with
340        that (.)
341   IR:  mhm.
342   VD:  teaching astronomy course.
343   IR:  mhm. have you have you found the course helpful
344        for your teaching?
345   VD:  yeah. [it's pretty] helpful.
346   IR:        [how so?]
347   VD:  uh so, mm (.) in my first lab, uh it was about
348        celestial spheres,
349   IR:  mhm.
350   VD:  so i had to connect between the latitudes and
351        longitudes.
352   IR:  mhm.
353   VD:  and how the g p s works, on the earth,
354   IR:  kay.
355   VD:  to the (.) uh positions of stars.
356   IR:  okay.
357   VD:  on the sky. (.) but, (.) in the first lab, i i
358        kind of (.) ASSUMED everyone knew latitudes and
359        longitudes, because,
360   IR:  mhm.
361   VD:  people use g p s all the time.
362   IR:  mhm.
```

Excerpt 4.36. VD describes his perceptions of the Astronomy program's courses designed to prepare graduate students to teach (part 1).

```
363  VD:  but, s- eh that was on (.) the MONDAY.
364  IR:  mhm.
365  VD:  on MONDAY. so, we teach the same lab three times,
366  IR:  [mhm.]
367  VD:  [to] different students in a week, and, so, my lab
368       on m- monday, didn't went (.) didn't go that well,
369  IR:  [mhm.]
370  VD:  [s- i-] i was a little nervous, it was my first
371       lab,
372  IR:  mhm.
373  VD:  and, there was no one to @watch,
374  IR:  mhm.
375  VD:  or no one to (.) ah guide us, so, um (.) but, that
376       (.) wednesday, we had a class, in which (.) uh the
377       first chapter of the book, was to be read, and
378       that was about prior knowledge.
379  IR:  mhm.
380  VD:  so, um (.) after having that class, when i went to
381       the lab,
382  IR:  mhm.
383  VD:  on wednesday, i asked them first, if they knew how
384       g p s works,
385  IR:  mhm.
386  VD:  and then, i (.) explained them the latitudes and
387       longitudes on EARTH,
388  IR:  mhm.
389  VD:  and how they're defined, and connected to (.) IT
390       to the latitudes and longitudes on the SKY.
391  IR:  mhm.
392  VD:  how we figure out the positions of stars on the
393       sky.
394  IR:  mhm.
395  VD:  and that seemed to work out pretty well.
396  IR:  mhm.
397  VD:  so, IN GENERAL, i think because it is our FIRST
398       TIME, [teaching] all these labs,
399  IR:          [mhm.]
400  VD:  uh (.) the labs on MONDAYS suffer a little bit.
401  IR:  mhm.
402  VD:  but, we get it. (.) i mean, we get (.) we count on
403       that experience to make the other labs better.
```

Excerpt 4.37. VD describes his perceptions of the Astronomy program's courses designed to prepare graduate students to teach (part 2).

The Astronomy program offers its own courses on teaching astronomy, ASTRO 710 and

711. New Astronomy PhD students register for a one credit hour seminar, ASTRO 710, in their

first semester and also a one hour practicum, ASTRO 711. They then repeat ASTRO 711 for an

additional one credit hour in their second semester. AT, graduate director for the Astronomy program, described these courses to me during his interview stating that they were offered by an instructor who had also written the materials that are used in the Astronomy lab courses. According to AT, ASTRO 710 involves introducing new TAs to "various teaching methods" and considering the types of "problems they might be facing when interacting with the students", while the practicum course (ASTRO 711) is "essentially coaching" in which new TAs are encouraged to discuss the kinds of experiences they are having as new laboratory instructors.

I also spoke with VD about his experience taking ASTRO 710 and 711 in his first semester, as shown in Excerpt 4.36 and Excerpt 4.37. VD's comments suggest that the Astronomy program's first semester of courses on teaching astronomy have given VD useful tools for reflecting on what might make his teaching more effective.

4.6.4   Informal observation and feedback

In both programs, once TAs have completed their courses on teaching, they typically continue to teach laboratory sections throughout their careers as PhD students (although the Physics TAs usually move from teaching only in the studio laboratory to also teaching in the more traditional laboratory format) with only informal forms of feedback or supervision from the department. AT reported that as a faculty member teaching the lecture course that the TAs' laboratory courses are connected to, he checks in with the TAs by, for example, asking them about which students are attending and also tries to attend at least one of their laboratory class meetings. VD also reported that the instructor for his ASTRO 710 course (and also the instructor for the introductory Astronomy class that VD's laboratory is part of) had visited and observed his course as well, but only given him minimal feedback, saying he was handling things well.

Physics TAs who are teaching in more traditional laboratory formats are also not typically observed, although one of the ITAs I interviewed, RT, reported that the coordinator of the laboratory courses observed his course but did not discuss the observation with him. KY stated that he wished that administrators or faculty would observe his courses. During his interview, GH, associate chair of the department, reported that the Physics TAs are not observed and stated that "it would be nice to observe every TA every semester and give them some constructive feedback on what they're doing". GH suggested, however, that disagreements among different parties in the Physics program about how TAs should be trained weaken the potential value of such feedback to the TAs.

4.6.5   Overall impressions

Overall, Physics TAs receive quite a bit of support in carrying out their teaching responsibilities. Physics department TAs (including those in the Astronomy program) are the only ones who begin teaching immediately upon entering their PhD program without having prior teaching experience or preparation. Some measures are taken to support them in this, especially in the Physics program where they are assigned responsibilities in the studio laboratory format which includes working together with another TA and an instructor. In the Astronomy program, new TAs also immediately begin teaching and taking classes on teaching. The program sets out to assign new TAs sections to teach that meet later in the week, allowing them to attend the sections of more experienced TAs that occur earlier in the week. However, as the case of VD suggests, the scheduling does not always work out this way. It is also worth noting that revisions to the preparation Physics TAs receive have resulted in less support directly aimed at ITAs, particularly in terms of the issues that have been concentrated on in the applied linguistics literature.

4.7 Discussion

This chapter has provided a description of policies and procedures at SWU that pertain to ITAs. I began by attempting to situate ITAs within a process of internationalization at SWU, showing that SWU has explicit commitments to internationalization of the curriculum and fostering what it refers to as "global competence" for all of its stakeholders. When it comes to ITA-student communication, however, the focus is generally on the ITA. As I discuss more thoroughly in later chapters, SWU, like many US HEIs, appears to be focused on one half of the communicative equation, making little (if any) effort to intentionally and explicitly prepare students for communicating with their international instructors across linguistic difference.

Nonetheless, in this chapter, I have provided an overview of the policies and procedures that help create the conditions for assessing, preparing, and supporting ITAs, noting places where genuine opportunities for ITA socialization were created and also making note of missed opportunities and potential negative effects that SWU policy and procedure creates in this regard. This description I believe gives me a starting point from which to make meaningful suggestions about how ITA preparation, assessment, and support might be improved to ensure that ITAs are better prepared to communicate across linguistic difference as well as to make suggestions about how ITA policy might be more consistent with the discourse of inclusiveness that SWU promotes itself with, including in its vision of becoming a recognized leader in "globalizing".

In the remainder of this section, I discuss general aspects of ITA policy at SWU, comparing and contrasting the five departments that I have described and pointing to alternative ways forward for ITA preparation. In the chapters that follow this one I more explicitly take up the issue of balancing the communicative equation and attending to students' socialization as well.

4.7.1   Assessing (international) teaching assistants

For most of the departments, the most important aspect of the determination of whether someone is qualified to serve as a teaching assistant or will eventually be qualified is made at the admissions stage. Most of these departments expect to employ graduate students (especially PhD students) as teaching assistants. Nonetheless, with the exception of the English department, which reportedly takes teaching experience into consideration in admissions decisions, the departments I studied tended to report that teaching ability, training, and experience receive only minimal (if any) consideration during the admissions process. All of the departments expect to have to provide some level of training to graduate students who will serve as teaching assistants, although, as I will discuss in the next section, the preparation that ITAs receive is, in some cases, quite minimal.

In addition, again with the exception of the English department, prospective ITAs' language proficiency is generally assessed using standardized tests like TOEFL or the ILPT at the admissions or matriculation stage, and, presently, no further assessment, particularly any language-focused test employing a teaching demonstration (e.g., COLT), is utilized in any of the other departments I examined (although I discuss the Biology department's assessment below). Hence, in all cases, ITAs at SWU are required to demonstrate some level of English language proficiency. However, unlike at other US universities prominently featured in the applied linguistics literature on ITAs (e.g., Xi, 2007 discusses local ITA testing procedures at UCLA, the University of Florida, and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte), at SWU, this demonstration is almost never done through a test designed specifically for ITAs and their unique communicative needs (with the English department being the main exception to this).

Crucially, this leads to the question of whether a greater degree of attention to ITAs' language proficiency would be warranted, in other words, whether there is a language problem in classes taught by ITAs at SWU. The answer to such a question cannot be straightforward as it is necessarily shaped by the ideological positioning of different actors (Lo Bianco, 2010; Park & Wee, 2009) and their own expectations for who should take on which aspects of the communicative work of teaching and learning. In order to understand the perspectives of different actors, I examine participants' perspectives with respect to language and communication problems involving ITAs in SWU classrooms in greater detail in the next two chapters.

Nonetheless, a couple of pieces of information that I have reported in this chapter are relevant to this question. First, some of the evidence I have presented above suggests that there may be consequences of ITA test requirements that are not regularly considered in decision-making around these requirements. In particular, it seems that there has been little consideration of how the implementation of a requirement for testing tacitly communicates to those who are required to take the tests that their Englishes are perceived as a problem. Such policies might communicate to individual ITAs or ITA candidates that departments or the university lack confidence in their language, and it does not appear that this has been thoroughly considered in policy-making around ITAs.

Second, since it is difficult to tease apart what an ITA teaching demonstration assesses, teaching or language, it is worth considering whether such an assessment might reasonably be expected of all TAs, not just international TAs. This is already the practice in the Biology department at SWU, in which all apprentices in Biology laboratories (whether they are international students or not) are required to prepare and deliver a lesson in the class that they

have been apprenticing in, and their performance is assessed by a supervisor. While this

assessment is not specifically aimed at language proficiency, as the COLT is, some quite

substantial level of language proficiency must serve as a prerequisite for successful instruction.

Thus, it may be reasonable to advocate that all prospective TAs, regardless of national origin, be

required to complete the COLT or some other similar assessment. Such a requirement might, for

example, allow administrators to balance the need to address apparent stakeholder concerns (e.g.,

those of accrediting agencies or of students) about ITAs' language while also avoiding

stigmatizing ITAs' Englishes and identities through institutional policymaking.

Finally, my research suggests also that the implementation and the administration of the

COLT could be improved to help alleviate the surprise that my participants reported

experiencing when they learned of the requirement. These suggestions may also help alleviate

negative perceptions, like that of SW, who interpreted the COLT requirement as a sign that the

English department, after seeing his performance for a semester, lacked confidence in him. First,

it seems important that the requirements be clearly listed as a requirement in the PhD handbook

(not just in the MA handbook). Second, since administrators reported to me that it is expected

that AL PhD students will eventually teach in the department, it seems reasonable for COLT

requirements to be communicated to all incoming PhD students who do not qualify for an

exemption immediately upon their entry into the program. In principle, the results of the COLT

may show that a prospective ITA may be required to take ENG 600 before being allowed to

teach. The PhD students I interviewed reported that they took the COLT well after the beginning

of their first semester. Had any of them failed or provisionally passed the test, they would have

been required to take ENG 600 in the semester after they took the COLT, potentially causing

further delays in their eligibility to teach. Thus, it appears that administering the COLT at the

beginning of these students' first semester so that they might register for ENG 600 during that same semester, if necessary, would be in the best interests of everyone involved. Of course, such a suggestion would have the disadvantage of causing administrators to have to coordinate students and administrators at a potentially hectic time (the beginning of the academic year) and/or creating an unwelcoming welcome for new PhD students.

4.7.2 Preparing (international) teaching assistants

For most departments, there were additional requirements, beyond admission into the program or associated language proficiency requirements, that had to be satisfied before graduate students were eligible to serve as teaching assistants. Only in the Physics department were ITAs routinely placed immediately in the classroom; PhD students in the Physics and Astronomy programs received preparation for teaching during their first semesters teaching. In addition, in the English department, some ITAs began teaching immediately in certain programs, especially the IEP or the ESL program. Some of the English department's international PhD students serve as tutors before teaching, and all English TAs must complete a specific pedagogy course before being allowed to teach undergraduate linguistics courses. In the remaining three departments, other requirements prevented graduate students from teaching immediately. PhD students in the Mathematics and Computer Science departments are not immediately eligible to teach for two related reasons. First, they are not required to have past teaching experience or a Master's degree in their subject area for admission into their academic programs. Second, TAs in these departments serve as the instructor of record for their courses (unlike Physics or Biology TAs) and are thus subject to accreditation requirements (e.g., having eighteen graduate credit hours before being assigned a course). Instead, they complete a course in pedagogy and serve as tutors or assist with instructional responsibilities during their first year or more in their programs. In

addition, although their TAs do not serve as the instructor of record for their courses, the Biology

department requires that prospective TAs complete a semester long apprenticeship, and thus new

graduate students are generally not eligible to teach immediately (unless they completed this

requirement prior to beginning their graduate program, e.g., as undergraduate students or during

a semester prior to entering the program).

What these requirements show is that ITAs at present day SWU are generally not

assigned to teach immediately without any form of preparation or support. Such circumstances

have been reported in the literature (Ross & Krider, 1992), and, when I spoke with some

members of the SWU community with interests in providing support for ITAs but without

knowledge of the practices of other departments, they wrongly assumed that many ITAs received

no preparation for teaching. Nonetheless, as administrators in other departments often

acknowledged, there is, of course, plenty of room for additional preparation or support for TAs

or specifically ITAs.

As I made clear in the first section of my analysis on university-wide policies, the ITA

preparation course, ENG 600, is not well utilized as a form of support at SWU. Few of the ITAs

I interviewed reported taking the course, and enrollment numbers suggest that only a small

fraction of ITAs at SWU enroll in it while at the university. Those ITAs who reported to me that

they had taken or were taking the course expressed very favorable opinions of it, believing it to

have been a valuable experience leading to their development as instructors (see LH's comments

in Excerpt 4.13 or YV's comments in Excerpt 4.2). Furthermore, the course incorporates forms

of preparation that were highly valued even by ITAs who had not taken it. TL, for example,

reported that he valued the instances of practice teaching incorporated into MATH 850 (Excerpt

4.12); students in ENG 600 receive even more opportunities for such practice teaching. Presumably then, TL or others might have appreciated and benefited from ENG 600.

Although not every ITA I interviewed was aware of ENG 600, and this lack of awareness may contribute to some degree to its low enrollment, I argue instead that the principal cause of low enrollment is the course's status as an elective course for most international graduate students. This is supported in part by the fact that even when I informed participants of the course, they expressed interest in it but still seemed ambivalent about enrolling. ITAs that I interviewed, whether they were aware of ENG 600 or not, often presented other commitments as receiving their priority. As a competitive arena, graduate school requires that ITAs keep up with their peers by continuing to dedicate their time to other pursuits more highly valued in their departments and disciplines, especially research. In this regard, ITAs may not be showing disinterest in teaching (as is sometimes reported in the ITA literature), since many of them reported in their interviews that they enjoyed teaching and some spoke at length about their commitment to teaching. Nonetheless, in their preference for time dedicated to research over an elective course in teaching, these ITAs demonstrate an implicit understanding of the economics of graduate school and the demands of the academic labor market. For example, in her interview, Computer Science ITA LX reported that she is very passionate about teaching but suggested that some tenured faculty in her department may not be (see Excerpt 4.4), and this sentiment was shared by other Computer Science ITAs in their interviews. Her choice not to take ENG 600 appears to have been influenced by a sense that what is especially valued in her department and her field is not teaching excellence but research accomplishments.

Thus, I argue that the incentive structures at work at SWU and in academia more broadly create a situation in which offering ENG 600 as a form of optional (even remedial) support

leaves most ITAs with little real option to take the course. They can only do so by making

sacrifices in the energy and resources they expend on their research or other pursuits, and they

see very little potential for accruing the types of returns that will help them advance their careers

by taking ENG 600. Indeed, while participants acknowledged the benefits of the course for

improving their teaching, none discussed it as something that would directly help them make the

case for securing employment later, a major concern of those seeking advanced degrees.

For those looking to promote enrollment in ENG 600 (or similar courses at other

universities) and help ITAs receive greater support to prepare them for teaching, I believe that

there are two possible routes. The first is to work toward creating a real requirement for

prospective ITAs to enroll in the course. Many of the ITAs I interviewed reported taking other

courses from the ESL program (i.e., speaking and listening or writing) and having been

compelled or required to do so when their departments received their ILPT results. Thus, one

clear avenue for promoting enrollment in ENG 600 would be to include recommendations for the

course in score reports from the ILPT. Some of my informants argued that, in its current form,

the ILPT is not an adequate test of whether prospective ITAs have the language abilities

necessary to succeed as instructors. As a result, the test might need to be expanded in order to

add a potential section for testing prospective ITAs. As AJ pointed out to me in her interview,

resources are of concern here, and the ESL program may not be able to provide this service to all

incoming international graduate students. However, much like the English department does not

require the COLT of all its incoming international graduate students, a teaching simulation

designed for the ILPT could be offered to only a subset of testees. Those scoring above and

below a particular benchmark on the ILPT's oral interview would not need to be tested; only

potential borderline cases would need to complete this task. High scores from the TOEFL

speaking test have been recommended as a valid replacement for more involved ITA teaching

demonstrations (Xi, 2007), and the SWU English department uses these recommendations in its

policies concerning which graduate students are required to take the COLT. High scores on the

interview portion of the ILPT might reasonably serve a similar purpose. Furthermore, low scores

on the ILPT interview result in a recommendation for an ESL speaking and listening course,

which is itself a prerequisite to ENG 600. Thus, those test-takers who receive an ILPT

recommendation to take the speaking and listening course can simply be automatically

recommended for ENG 600 as well.

   While, I believe that the above is a potentially pragmatic reform that would likely result

in increased enrollment in ENG 600, I argue that it has disadvantages. In particular, while it is

likely that such reforms would result in prospective ITAs being more frequently required to take

ENG 600, this may place an undue burden on international graduate students, taking them away

from their research and other commitments when their domestic counterparts are not similarly

required to undergo such preparation and can instead devote their time to their disciplinary

coursework, research, and other pursuits.

   Thus, I prefer an alternative approach, which rather than imposing a requirement, instead

seeks to increase the incentives for enrolling in courses designed to prepare ITAs for teaching. In

its current form, ENG 600 is largely understood as a remedial course, which means that, even

though ITAs who take the course report benefitting from it, there appears to be little officially

recognized value in taking the course. A graduate student who takes and successfully completes

ENG 600 is assumed not to have added to their value as an instructor but rather simply

remediated existing deficiencies that brings them more closely in line with their counterparts

who are assumed to have been more proficient from the start (much the same way any of the ESL program's other courses for international graduate students are treated).

In reality, I think there is a strong argument to be made that ITAs who complete the course (and similar courses) have indeed acquired awarenesses and competencies as instructors that their native English speaking, US-born peers cannot necessarily be assumed to possess merely because of their prior socialization. For example, as part of my research, I observed SWU's ENG 600. On the days I attended, the class discussed strategies for responding to student questions. In some instances, the discussion was focused on aspects of the linguistic code, for example, providing sample responses to classroom situations and commenting briefly on the grammar of these. Such grammatical issues can reasonably be assumed to be part of any native English speakers' linguistic competence. However, I observed the class focused at least as much on issues related to the creation of a positive learning environment and a credible identity as an instructor. For example, I observed a lengthy discussion on how an instructor should handle a situation when they are unable to answer a student's question. The class discussed various strategies such as offering to seek out an answer and give it to students within a particular, specified time frame. While a native English speaker undoubtedly would be able to formulate a grammatical utterance for accomplishing this, s/he may not have thoroughly considered students' expectations and how best to meet them, and therefore cannot be expected to handle the situation in an entirely satisfactory manner. Students in ENG 600, however, have had their awareness of these issues raised and may therefore be better prepared to handle such a situation. Indeed, the ITAs I interviewed who had taken the course discussed these very issues as a benefit of taking the course (for example, see LH's comments on ENG 600 in Excerpt 4.13).

Hence, I believe that the institutional discourse around ENG 600 should more clearly frame it as adding value to prospective and current teaching assistants who complete it, rather than merely remediating deficits. One possible way of attempting this would be to reframe ENG 600 as a course that aims to prepare TAs for communication in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. This would allow for a continued focus on ITAs making themselves understood in the classroom, but it would also open up the possibility of examining cultural and linguistic diversity of the student population at SWU, something that several of my ITA interviewees suggested often caused difficulties for them (e.g., ND in Excerpt 5.13). Furthermore, it would allow the course to engage more critically with questions about the roles and responsibilities of students in promoting successful communication (Lindemann, 2002), prejudice (Kang & Rubin, 2009; Rubin, 1992), microaggressions (Gomez et al., 2011), or other relevant topics. Making such a reframed course fulfill a requirement in a higher education teaching certification program (such as that recently begun by TESS at SWU), may also help provide greater incentive for teaching assistants, or prospective teaching assistants, with diverse backgrounds to take it (Winter, Turner, Gedye, Nash, & Grant, 2014). Indeed, it would be unwise from a legal perspective to restrict the course to international teaching assistants, since any course purporting to offer additional preparation to teaching assistants should, for legal and ethical reasons, be available for any wanting to take it (Brown, Fishman, & Jones, 1990).

Another major form of preparation that many teaching assistants receive is the chance to be peripherally involved in instructional practices. In the Biology department, this takes the form of the semester long apprenticeship. In the Computer Science department, graduate students assist instructors of record by grading and holding office hours. In the Mathematics department, new graduate students are required to serve as tutors. Finally, in the Physics program, new

graduate students work in studio laboratory settings where they work alongside other more experienced peers and faculty members to deliver instruction. Such peripheral participation is generally reported by administrators and ITAs alike as useful preparation. However, these forms of preparation also have apparent limitations with respect to the quality of preparation that TAs can receive, some noted by my participants, others that I surmised myself. Here I consider the potential shortcomings of Biology's and Computer Science's modes of peripheral participation, since I believe that, in the other departments, other forms of preparation (especially required coursework) come much closer to addressing areas important to teacher development that cannot be fully addressed through such peripheral participation.

As I reported above, the Biology department's requirement of a semester-long apprenticeship was regarded as excellent preparation by several of the ITAs I interviewed (see MZ's comments in Excerpt 4.24). Nonetheless, while apprentices have the opportunity to observe and even participate in ongoing classroom activities, they do not receive much explicit theoretical guidance in instructional practice. While core topics of educational theory and practice, like student diversity (racial, gender, socioeconomic, etc.), motivation, learning styles, dialogic learning, or assessment, might be broached momentarily in laboratory meetings, they are unlikely to be discussed at any length, because the focus of these meetings is not on long-term professional development but rather on preparation for the next week's lesson. This in itself is not necessarily a problem, since discussing concepts like motivation within the context of a lesson could help to bridge the oft-reported divide between theory and practice. However, without preparation in such educational theories, TAs may not have conceptual frameworks that allow them to consider the full range of possible benefits or consequences of their pedagogical decision-making.

A further issue of relying on peripheral participation such as that used in Biology laboratories is that the more experienced TAs that apprentices are implicitly asked to view as models do not always model effective or ethical teaching practice. In my own observations of these meetings, I personally found much of the advice offered to less experienced TAs and apprentices by more experienced TAs to be productive, but there were moments where worrisome messages, especially unproductive negativity about students, were disseminated. On more than one occasion, I observed veteran TAs openly disparage the student population that the laboratory served during meetings where newer TAs and apprentices were present, for example, using insulting language to characterize the students as less capable than their peers at other universities, especially those that the veteran TAs had attended. Of course, such discourse is quite common, so I do not mean to imply that any particular TAs are themselves problematic. Rather, my point is that a TA preparation system that merely asks TAs to observe and emulate the practices and discourses of its more experienced TAs is likely to continue to reproduce the practices and discourses, both the good and the bad, that already dominate within the teaching setting. Ultimately, I believe it would be best if prospective TAs were encouraged and prepared to examine and reflect on their own and others' teaching practices and discourses, such that they can carefully and critically consider what they hear, especially through lenses provided by educational theory.

I believe a course in pedagogy (along the lines of MATH 850) that could be taken at the same time as the apprenticeship would help to address some of the apprenticeship's limitations. Such a course would give apprentices greater structure to reflect on how the instructor in the laboratory courses they are observing incorporates elements of effective instructional practice (or not). For example, after reading about student learning styles, apprentices could engage in guided

observation in which they try to observe whether different learning styles are accommodated in the laboratory. As a group, apprentices could discuss what they saw in their classrooms and share effective strategies for accommodating different learning styles. Furthermore, such a course would ideally also provide aspiring TAs with alternative perspectives on the diverse student population that they serve, beyond the dominant deficit ideological framing. Such a course would also have the added benefit of allowing apprentices to receive course credit for completing their apprenticeship. Apprentices currently receive neither course credit nor financial compensation for their apprenticeship semester. This has the added problem of making the apprenticeship essentially officially invisible, meaning that it may be difficult for TAs to later claim the apprenticeship as part of their training in teaching.

The Computer Science department likewise provides prospective TAs with opportunities that are similarly intended, in part at least, to offer some preparation for their later teaching in the form of peripheral participation in instructional responsibilities (see AC's comments in Excerpt 4.3). Computer Science graduate students assist instructors especially by grading and by holding office hours, although the ITAs I interviewed suggested that students rarely ever utilized these office hours. While the act of grading for the course provides, among other possible things, some degree of familiarity with the course content and the possible forms of assessment used, for the most part, Computer Science graduate students do not actually attend the course they are assisting in. As a result, most ITAs have very little, if any, exposure to classroom instructional practices used in US undergraduate education generally or in their department specifically, by the time they assume responsibility for their own courses (although some of my informants reported that Computer Science graduate students are encouraged to pay attention to the instructional practices of the faculty teaching the graduate courses that they take). Since their

office hours are rarely attended, they also have very little interaction with SWU undergraduate students before they begin teaching. LX's comments about the benefits of attending a course while serving in an assistant capacity before later serving as the course's instructor present some suggestion of the possible benefits of Computer Science TAs observing the teaching of the instructor of record they are assigned to (Excerpt 4.4 and Excerpt 4.5).

While the opportunity to observe is always in principle available to Computer Science graduate students, I believe that few can be reasonably expected to take advantage of such an opportunity, given that they are incentivized to devote their time and energy to other pursuits, particularly research. Furthermore, implementing a more formal requirement for new Computer Science graduate students to attend one or more of the courses they assist in would open up the opportunity for more structured observation through the introduction of an additional course (or the expansion of the existing one credit hour CSCI 900) with a similar focus as what I described for Biology: guided observations focused on allowing graduate students to discuss, reflect on, and critique what they see in the classroom and what they read about in required theoretical readings.

4.7.3   *Continuous development for (international) teaching assistants*

Finally, in most of the five departments I examined, there appear to be scarce policy efforts made toward encouraging further professional development among already practicing TAs. One potentially effective way of encouraging such growth is through regular, formative observations with opportunities to discuss the observation with the observer, but three of the departments I studied, Biology, Computer Science, and Physics, lack systems for formal observation of practicing TAs, although, as I noted above, there are reports of some informal observation ongoing in both Biology and Physics, and the Computer Science department requires

a yearly portfolio from graduate students that includes a component on their teaching. The Mathematics department has a formalized system of observation which includes mid-semester feedback from students, but ITAs' reports about it raise questions about the degree to which they receive detailed or useful feedback, since most ITAs reported mostly receiving simple forms of praise. In both the English and Mathematics department, there is some evidence to suggest that observation requirements are not consistently met (i.e., TAs are not always observed when they are required to be).

TAs who serve as instructors of record receive student evaluations with feedback on their teaching. Such feedback may provide some opportunity for reflection on teaching practice and growth as an instructor. However, many TAs in Physics and Biology do not receive such feedback since it is not elicited and disseminated via formal university systems and must therefore be elicited via ad hoc evaluation by the department or laboratory and then later distributed to the TAs. I did observe that the two Biology laboratories I examined had systems for eliciting such feedback and then providing it to TAs, but there is not yet a similar system in place in the Physics department.

Furthermore, few ITAs reported utilizing resources from Teaching Excellence Support Services, including attending the annual teaching assistant pedagogy conference. However, reports of attendance at this conference were quite high among TAs working in AH and AD's Biology laboratory. Having observed some of the group's meetings, I believe that this has to do with efforts made, especially by AD, to encourage TAs to attend. The group's weekly meeting was cancelled on the day of the conference, and TAs were encouraged to go to the conference instead. I also observed that she encouraged and facilitated an opportunity for some TAs to present at the conference. These efforts seem to have resulted in a number of the ITAs I

interviewed as well as other TAs taking advantage of the opportunities for development offered at the conference.

In the next two chapters, I look at some aspects of ITA-student communication and the difficulties that arise in it that are not addressed under the current policies at SWU. In Chapter 5, I look at how students orient to communication difficulty and how ITAs understand students' use of avoidance strategies or their attempts to repair communication. In Chapter 6, I explore how communication difficulties in the classroom are repaired and how they affect ITAs' and students' perceptions of each other.

5   ORIENTATIONS TO COMMUNICATING ACROSS LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCE

In the previous chapter, I discussed how Shrinking World University attempts to deal with communication difficulty through the socialization of ITAs into their roles as instructors. Although different units on campus are perhaps more successful than others at preparing their ITAs, it is important to note that the thrust of policy-making is on addressing ITAs' competencies and experiences, as it is at most universities. To the extent that stakeholders believed that ITA-student communication was problematic, they sought to deal with the issue by assessing and remediating ITAs' English and providing or requiring greater pedagogic training for them. Even though administrators I spoke with sometimes alluded to students' contributions to difficulties in ITA-student communication, I found no evidence of sustained effort at SWU to address students' competencies, attitudes, or strategies for engaging in communication across linguistic difference with their ITAs. Nonetheless, as I also pointed out in the previous chapter, SWU, like many US and other Anglophone universities has made an explicit commitment to

"globalizing" the university (Dippold, 2015; Gaffikin & Perry, 2009; Jenkins, 2014), including calling for increased "global competency" among university stakeholders, including students and faculty.

Given that communication across linguistic difference is a ubiquitous phenomenon in any community that might be characterized as "globalized", I take it as important that students and ITAs be prepared to productively and respectfully use Englishes to undertake their common educational purposes. In this chapter, I describe potential obstacles that remain unaddressed at SWU and undertheorized in applied linguistics (and other research) literature specifically related to how students and ITAs understand their communication with each other and how they orient to and report dealing with the difficulties that may arise during it.

This difficulty I argue is a ubiquitous feature of communication in linguistically diverse settings. Communication in any setting can hardly be expected to proceed precisely as all interlocutors hope it will, but the presence of linguistic and cultural diversity raises the likelihood that communication will be perceived as problematic. Research by Chiang has shown that through actively and strategically repairing communication difficulties, students and ITAs are able to arrive at mutual understanding during office hour interactions (Chiang, 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Chiang & Mi, 2008). Similarly, research into English as a lingua franca (ELF) used in higher educational settings suggests that participants are able to ensure successful communication in spite of the linguistic diversity that characterizes these spaces by relying on similar strategies (e.g., Björkman, 2013; Kaur, 2010; Mauranen, 2006). Taken as a whole, this work establishes the possibility for achieving mutual understanding in communication across linguistic difference in higher education settings.

However, by focusing solely on collaborative referential meaning making, research like that in the ELF literature may present communication across linguistic difference too optimistically (Park & Wee, 2012). Such research shows that, when they choose to do so, participants can successfully complete the informational exchange that is part of most communicative acts. However, such research often does not consider other aspects that are relevant to the development of successful ITA-student relationships such as participants' willingness to engage each other in communication, how participants view each other's and their own language or discourse, or how those perceptions influence other aspects of the educational pursuit they are engaged in. For example, in more recent work, Chiang (2016) has explored students' use of a strategy he calls "sentence completion", in which the student attempts to complete an ITAs' utterance when the ITA appears to pause to because of difficulties in lexical recall. Chiang argues that the strategy may be useful in helping ITA and student achieve mutual understanding but that it also reveals an underestimation of the ITAs' competence on the part of the students. Thus, certain instances of this strategy may, intentionally or not, communicate perceptions that the student believes the ITA is not a capable instructor.

There is a precariousness in the difficulties that characterize much communication across linguistic difference and different ways of responding to them. In trying to understand whether, how, and why students and ITAs fail to engage with each other in ways that allow them both to feel that their educational goals have been fulfilled and that their persons have been respected, I consider it important to explore how students and ITAs understand and choose to deal with the social dangers of ensuring successful information exchange. Therefore, in this chapter, I consider SWU students' and ITAs' views of dealing with communication difficulty in the classroom.

5.1 Students' orientations to communicating across linguistic difference

In this section, I explore students' orientations to communicating with their ITAs across linguistic difference. Specifically, I have identified two general orientations, partially based on the strategies discussed in Lindemann (2002). Lindemann describes three strategy choices that native English speaking participants used in their interactions with nonnative English speakers. Two of these strategy sets are the basis for the two orientations I describe in students' discussions of ITAs: Avoidance and Collaboration. In her work, Lindemann shows how native English speakers who avoided repairing communication difficulties caused themselves and their partners to be unsuccessful at completing a communicative map task. In contrast, native English speakers who collaborated with their nonnative partners to address difficulties that arose in communication were able to work past them and successfully complete the task with their partners. These collaborative strategies were similar to those I have already reported as having been used to deal with communication difficulty by students in Chiang's research as well as by participants in ELF research.

However, as I have already mentioned above, reducing communication merely to achieving the exchange of information artificially narrows the range of potentially relevant communicative processes that characterize any given interaction. In particular, it is important to consider that what might be considered Collaboration can often have other effects. Indeed, Lindemann (2002) names her third strategy set "problematizing" and characterizes it as a set of strategies that native English speakers used to address communication difficulty but in a manner that drew attention to and represented difficulties as stemming from the alleged 'inadequacies' of the interlocutor. Of course, the distinction between problematizing and collaborative strategies is not always terribly clear, since many strategies might be viewed as accomplishing both

assistance in communication as well as the construction of the other speaker as inadequate communicator. Participants in conversation may disagree about whether a particular repair attempt reflects negatively on the original speaker.

Some forms of Collaboration, then, are potentially face-threatening for any of the parties involved, but this is particularly true of nonnative English speakers, whose Englishes are readily constructed as 'deficient' and a driving force behind communication difficulties by dominant language ideologies (Shuck, 2006). This precariousness may explain the "let it pass" strategy commonly reported in ELF research (Firth, 1990, 1996), in which interlocutors appear to avoid drawing attention to their own nonunderstanding instead preferring to allow communication difficulties to pass without comment or repair attempt. Crucially, however, Firth argues that ELF speakers are strategic in their use of "let it pass", showing that in certain contexts they deem information that is missed in interaction to be too important to let pass and thus they engage in other collaborative strategies to try to achieve mutual understanding. Thus, in instances of communication across linguistic difference including ITA-student communication, Collaboration is procedurally necessary but can also be socially precarious. Interlocutors must find a way to balance their goals of information exchange with those of the need for ensuring mutual respect.

5.1.1 *Avoidance and collaboration in ITA-student communication*

In my analysis of students' orientations to communication with ITAs, I go beyond conceiving of Avoidance and Collaboration as simply conversational strategy choices. Rather, I consider them to be larger orientations to human relations that include conversational strategy choices but also include other more basic tendencies, notably, decisions of whether to interact with another person at all. For example, I believe that it is productive in the context of ITA-student communication to conceive of students' Collaboration as involving decisions like the

Table 5.1. Comparison of students' Collaboration and Avoidance orientations toward international instructors.

Collaboration	Avoidance

When greater effort is needed to understand the instructor…

Deliberate effort	Zoning out
K2: "…a lot of times, you can understand what they're saying. It's just whether you put in the effort to pay attention to them or let the accent distract you."	**C5:** "...after a while, like, when you realize you can't really understand her, you just kinda zone out…"

When communication difficulties occur…

Interactive repair	No direct repair
E1: "Whether I'm asking for um a repeat of what was just said or another classmate, there's always someone who needs to hear the information again..."	**F5:** "…sometimes, when I don't understanding something that like [the ITA in my Biology lab, FR,] said, I would just go to the other [US-born] TA, and he would clarify it."

When student needs additional help understanding course material…

Willing to turn to international instructors	Prefer to avoid international instructors
F2: "I'm shameless when it comes to, like, I need help. I'm gonna go to your office hours and get help... if I don't understand you, like, I'm gonna sit there until I understand what you're saying…"	**B1:** "Even if I go up and ask them a question, they're not gonna help me at all."

When registering for courses…

No reported bias	Bias against international instructors
S4: "I've never purposely avoided a teacher for being international."	**R4:** "…if I had a choice, I definitely would not choose international, just because it's too big of a risk, and it's like your GPA's on the line, and who wants to mess with that?"

When opportunity for improving own understanding of linguistic diversity arises…

Welcoming opportunities	Seeing little value in opportunities
I2: "...that's what's great about SWU... you have so many people from… so many different countries… just getting used to like people with different um dialects…. I think it's just important to learn how to keep up..."	**F5:** "I wouldn't go [to a workshop to learn to communicate with ITAs] just because I would just rather use that time, instead of trying to understand them, to try to understand the material that they're trying to teach."

choice to register for a course with an ITA, the choice to attend the course regularly, or the choice to go to office hours or ask questions in class when they do not understand something.

In Table 5.1, I present an overview of how I conceive of Collaboration and Avoidance in students' statements about communication with ITAs and other international instructors made during the focus groups that I conducted during the first phase of my data collection. As can be seen from the table, Collaboration involves an orientation to interacting with the instructor despite difficulties that might arise in the course of communicating across linguistic difference.

My analysis of students' orientations into these two broad categories, Avoidance and Collaboration, was produced by looking at each student participant's discussion about communication difficulties with their international instructors and how they reported responding to it or their opinions about how they and their peers should respond to it. I produced summaries of each participant's statements from the focus group they participated in. Having noticed a general trend toward either actively engaging with their international instructors or instead seeking to avoid them, I attempted to categorize each participant as showing an orientation toward Avoidance or Collaboration. It is important to note that, while I approached my analysis systematically, it was nonetheless an interpretive process (as described in Chapter 3).

In the end, I found that eleven participants showed a generally consistent orientation toward Collaboration. Seven showed a generally consistent orientation toward Avoidance. Seven more showed a mixture of the two, usually preferring one or the other orientation in different contexts and with different interlocutors. For example, Nwaha demonstrated a Collaboration orientation toward her Biology ITA, MZ, but she reported relying on Avoidance for another ITA in chemistry. Finally, I could not classify five more, usually because they did not report experiencing communication difficulty with their international instructors or did not say how

Table 5.2. Demographic information for focus group participants.

pseudonym[a]	gender	race/ethnicity	languages[b]	major	standing	orientation
Anthony (A1)	male	Black		Biology	Sophomore	Collaboration
Boris (B1)	male	White	Russian	English	Post-Bac	Avoidance
Crystal (C1)	female	White		Comm.	Senior	Collaboration
Danh (D1)	male	Vietnamese	Vietnamese	Bio & Chen	Sophomore	Avoidance
Evelyn (E1)	female	Black		Biology	Senior	Collaboration
Francine (F2)	female	Black		Education	Sophomore	Collaboration
Gladys (G2)	female	Caribbean		Education	Sophomore	Unclear
Heather (H2)	female	White		English	Sophomore	Mixed
Ijeoma (I2)	female	Black	Igbo & Yoruba	Biology	Senior	Collaboration
Juan (J2)	male	Hispanic	Spanish	Biology	Senior	Collaboration
Kyle (K2)	male	White		Computer Sci.	Grad.	Collaboration
Laila (L2)	female	Pakistani / Saudi Arabian	Urdu	Biology	Senior	Avoidance
Montel (M3)	male	Black		Crim. Justice	Freshman	Collaboration
Nwaha (N3)	female	Black		Chemistry	Freshman	Mixed
Octavia (O3)	female	Black		Neuroscience	Sophomore	Mixed
Paola (P3)	female	Hispanic	Spanish	Nursing	Freshman	Collaboration
Queisha (Q4)	female	Black		Psychology	Junior	Mixed
Rashona (R4)	female	Black		Biology	Sophomore	Avoidance
Sofía (S4)	female	White/Hispanic	Spanish	Biology	Junior	Mixed
Traci (T4)	female	Asian		English	Senior	Unclear
Vantrice (V4)	female	Black		Biology	Junior	Unclear
Whitney (W4)	female	Black		Chemistry	Sophomore	Collaboration
Yara (Y4)	female	Chinese		Biology	Senior	Unclear
Anushka (A5)	female	Asian (Nepali)	Nepali	Computer Sci.	Sophomore	Mixed
Baraka (B5)	female	Black		Neuroscience	Sophomore	Avoidance
Charlotte (C5)	female	Black		Comm.	Sophomore	Avoidance
Dedra (D5)	female	Black		Comm.	Sophomore	Collaboration
Ebony (E5)	female	Black		Education	Junior	Unclear
Faiza (F5)	female	Pakistani	Punjabi & Urdu	Neuroscience	Sophomore	Avoidance
Gloria (G5)	female	Asian	Vietnamese	Chemistry	Junior	Mixed

a. Codes used in transcription (a letter and number, e.g., A1) are included in parentheses.

b. Languages participants reported having strong proficiency in, in addition to English. All participants reported strong proficiency in English.

they responded to it. For example, both Traci and Ebony reported no real difficulties communicating with the ITAs that had given them the flyers to participate in the study. Table 5.2 shows how each of the participants was categorized.

In the following sections, I discuss some of the factors that participants pointed to as justifications or motivations for their actions or preferred responses to communication difficulty and linguistic diversity.

5.1.2   Instructional context

In general, the students I spoke with tended to present whole class modes of instruction, especially monologic ones like lectures, as less conducive to a Collaboration orientation. The general effect of the instructional context was a frequent topic of conversation during my first focus group. Excerpt 5.1 presents part of a discussion among those students about their sense that they felt unable to persist in asking questions in large lecture courses. Prior to the beginning of Excerpt 5.1, Boris had re-raised the topic that had been discussed earlier in which students reported feeling it was "rude" to ask questions in lecture. Adding to this discussion, Boris reported that, after asking the instructor a question, he and others in his classes would report falsely that they understood because they didn't want to "hold up the whole class" and also did not want to have to say "no, I still don't get what you're saying". Excerpt 5.1 begins with me asking the other participants what they thought students should do in this situation (lines 1084-1087). In the ensuing discussion, three other students appeared to support Boris's statements.

```
1084   IR:  ((...)) what do you (.) what do you think people
1085        should do in that situation? ((referring to B1's
1086        comment that students feel they can't persist when
1087        they don't understand something in lecture))
1088   D1:  ((sighs)) i mean (.) i feel like what you- it's
1089        true. like, you just have to let it go. cuz, you
1090        can't hold up a class,
1091   IR:  [mhm.]
1092   D1:  [y'know?] it's a hundred, two hundred people in a
1093        lecture,
1094   IR:  [mhm.]
1095   D1:  [one person] doesn't understand, the teacher asks,
1096        y'know, everyone to ask questions, but, if there's
1097        a communication barrier, that has to be resolved
1098        outside of the class.
1099   IR:  mhm. mhm. mkay. (.) what about in your small labs?
1100   D1:  oh then yeah, you can just keep talking. @
1101   IR:  okay.
1102   D1:  @@
1103   E1:  you typically have a longer time, spent in lab
1104        than lecture.
1105   IR:  [mhm.]
1106   E1:  [so there's] a lot more time for questions to be
1107        answered, or OR the lab instructor to go more in
1108        depth with the information, versus LECTURE, when
1109        you only have that FIFTY minute time frame,
1110   IR:  [mhm.]
1111   E1:  [to teach] your you know, your lesson. and then
1112        move on. @ [so]
1113   IR:              [mhm.] mhm. mkay. (.) thoughts about
1114        that situation?
1115   C1:  um. yeah, i'd be more likely to i guess keep
1116        asking the teacher for more information, i- if i
1117        don't understand in the lab, um, because i
1118        remember like being in lectures before, and then,
1119        asking for help and then still not understanding
1120        it, and i'd just be like, oh yeah i understand
1121        now. cuz i don't wanna hold up the lecture.
1122   IR:  mhm.
1123   C1:  but THAT wasn't because of communication issues.
1124        just because i didn't understand content.
```

Excerpt 5.1. Students in focus group 1 discuss preference for Avoidance in lecture settings

One reason that the students mentioned for preferring Avoidance in lectures was that the needs of one student experiencing communication difficulties should not outweigh those of all the other students in a lecture course (e.g., lines 1088-1098), which usually have high

enrollments as Danh mentions. This reason is curious since, at other times, these same communication difficulties were represented as shared among many students in the class. For example, prior to the beginning of Excerpt 5.1, Boris remarked that, when students falsely claim that they have understood, the instructor may believe that students understand even though "the majority of people still don't get it". It would seem that the participants are aware that the communication difficulties may be more widely shared among the students in the class. What they may be reporting then is social pressure not to persist in seeking repair that stems not from being in the position of being the only person who has not understood but rather from being the only person who is willing to publicly acknowledge this. This social pressure may stem in part from the instructor and the curriculum. In Excerpt 5.1, Evelyn suggests that lecture courses focus on the coverage of expansive amounts of material, allowing very little opportunity for students to ask questions (lines 1103-1112). Undoubtedly then, students' tendency to avoid engaging in collaborative meaning-making is a common phenomenon in university lecture halls, and is not necessarily tied to communication difficulties with international instructors as Crystal's comments suggest (lines 1115-1124), but its prevalence is perhaps compounded by the presence of linguistic differences between students and instructors.

The preference for Avoidance in lecture situations was, however, not confined to courses with high student enrollments delivered solely through lectures. Rather, even in lab courses, TAs frequently deliver introductory lectures (as I have discussed in Chapter 4 and discuss again in Chapter 6). Some students in the focus groups reported a dispreference for clearing up communication difficulties during these lectures. For example, Anthony, who in most circumstances demonstrated a Collaboration orientation, reported using Avoidance when the ITA in his physics lab was delivering introductory lectures at the beginning of lab. Excerpt 5.2 comes

from an earlier point in the same focus group as the previous excerpt. In it, Anthony reports that

he tends not to ask questions during whole-class interactions with the ITA (lines 721-724),

preferring instead to let the difficulty pass (lines 726-727) or asking later (line 729), most likely

during the period of lab instruction when students are expected to work on lab activities on their

own or in groups, and the TA moves about the room assisting them.

```
715   D1: it does seem a little awkward, or rude, to go, (.)
716       i didn't @understand what you were @saying,
717       [could] you say that again?
718   IR: [uh huh.]                      uh huh. uh [huh.] (.)
719   D1:                                           [yeah.]
720   IR: do you guys feel that way?
721   A1: yeah definitely. i (.) i usually barely ever ask,
722   IR: uh huh.
723   A1: if if i feel like i didn't understand what they
724       were saying, cuz i didn't i don't want them to
725       feel like, (.) oh i can't speak english. or
726       something like that. so i just kinda keep to
727       myself.
728   IR: uh huh.
729   A1: or ask them later.
730   IR: uh huh. does that, ever (.) cause you (.) to miss
731       anything?
732   A1: mm (.) sometimes i guess, but, (.)
733   IR: mhm.
734   A1: more often than not, i get the issue fixed.
735   IR: okay, kay. (.) uh danh, you were, i think,
736   D1: yeah.
737   IR: [shaking] your head vigorously, [@@]
738   D1: [yes.]                         [because, I mean]
739       (.) sorry. @
740   IR: it's okay.
741   D1: i mean ideally, when you don't understand
742       something, you would go, and fix it.
743   IR: [mhm.]
744   D1: [but] it doesn't always happen, we'll forget, and
745       we might say, i'll go to her office hours and ask,
746   IR: mhm.
747   D1: but it doesn't always happen.
748   IR: mhm. mhm.
749   D1: so, (.) THERE IS missed information there.
750   IR: mhm.
751   D1: sometimes it's corrected, sometimes it's not.
```

Excerpt 5.2. Students in focus group 1 discuss preference for Avoidance in whole class
instruction

There was some disagreement among the participants about the effectiveness of the strategy of waiting to repair difficulties in understanding until a later point. In Excerpt 5.2, Anthony appears unconcerned, reporting few lingering issues as a result of his strategy choices of letting difficulties during whole-class instruction pass or waiting until later to repair them (lines 730-734). Danh, however, was less optimistic about the effectiveness of these strategies, arguing that they do lead to the student missing information, since the student inevitably sometimes forgets or simply is unable to find the opportunity to clear up the communication difficulty (lines 741-751). Likewise, in another focus group, Gloria reported that strategies of avoiding repair in whole-class instructional contexts were not always effective because "it just starts piling up and… before you know it, you're just lost".

While participants who usually preferred Collaboration sometimes reported a situational preference for Avoidance in whole-class instructional situations, it was also the case that those who usually preferred Avoidance sometimes reported using Collaboration in more dialogic contexts (despite this contextual convergence, the two participant groups' general preferences still appeared to diverge). For example, when I asked Baraka, a participant who made a few statements that strongly indicated an Avoidance orientation, if she asked her ITA, FR, questions, she responded "not when she's presenting, no, I kinda like zone out, and just like not really pay any attention", but she continued on to report that she did occasionally ask FR questions when she and her group were working on the lab activities.

Participants who preferred Avoidance also tended to have lower evaluations of their international instructors' communicative capacities than participants who favored Collaboration. However, participants favoring Avoidance tended to evaluate their instructors' communication

abilities higher in more dialogic settings. For example, Gloria evaluated FR's communication more highly in more dialogic settings. During the focus group she stated "she's good at communicating one on one", including through email and when students ask her questions, but Gloria stated that when presenting material to the whole class, FR's communication ability was "not good".

5.1.3   Face concerns

As I have mentioned above, Collaboration has the potential to be face-threatening for interactants. In particular, Collaboration may draw attention to nonnative speakers' supposed linguistic 'inadequacies'. This constitutes a particular dilemma for international instructors whose ability to construct an authoritative teacher identity may be undermined by students' attempts to repair communication difficulties. In this section, I explore how participants in my study understood this dilemma and pointed to it often as a way of justifying Avoidance orientations.

One aspect of the face concerns that students expressed during focus groups was the possibility that repair attempts would make international instructors experience embarrassment concerning their English language proficiency. In Excerpt 5.2 above, Anthony raises this issue, suggesting that his tendency to avoid repairing communication difficulties during whole-class instruction stems from a concern that the instructor might feel that s/he "can't speak English" (lines 723-727). As shown in Excerpt 5.3, Charlotte raised similar concerns during the fifth focus group. This excerpt begins shortly after I asked the group "do you think there's anything that um students could do to make the communication go better?" Charlotte expresses concerns for ITAs' feelings, suggesting that an ITA who lacks English proficiency may be hurt by consistent indications that students do not understand (lines 1055-1064). These concerns lead Charlotte to

```
1044  C5:  don't ask them so many times, like what did they
1045       say, like, (.)
1046  IR:  mhm.
1047  C5:  if you can use context clues, use them, (.) but if
1048       you can't, just let it go. like, or not let it go,
1049       but like,
1050  E5:  ask [them questions.]
1051  C5:      [just understand] yeah. like, understand that
1052       maybe go to your notes, or go to the notes that
1053       they gave you, and you'll figure it out.
1054  IR:  [mhm.]
1055  C5:  [like,] cuz a- i'm a like, i always look at
1056       people's feelings, and it's like s- (.) a- (.)
1057       when i'm looking at a t a, who like doesn't
1058       understand, like, or isn't really good at english,
1059       like ME [asking] you, all the time,
1060  IR:          [mhm.]
1061  C5:  i don't or me telling you all the time, like, i
1062       don't understand what you're saying,
1063  IR:  [mhm.]
1064  C5:  [that] would hurt your feelings,
1065  IR:  mhm.
1066  C5:  so it's like, i mean, just use context clues, or
1067       just forget about it.
1068  IR:  mhm. what k- so, you're saying that, (.) um some
1069       of the students are as- eh or maybe in the
1070       beginning of the semester you're saying, they
1071       asked questions repeatedly, (.) do you know, i
1072       mean, what kind of (.) what did THEY ASK?
1073  C5:  like things about (.) like, (.) we have a sheet of
1074       notes, that she [gave us.]
1075  IR:                  [mhm.]
1076  C5:  which was also weird to me, cuz it's like, you can
1077       see on the notes, what she's trying to say,
1078  IR:  uh huh.
1079  C5:  but it's like, we have a sheet of notes, but you'd
1080       still be asking, like, (.) what she said, but it's
1081       RIGHT THERE on the notes.
1082  IR:  uh huh. [so they're]
1083  C5:         [so it's like] you can just read it.
1084  IR:  so they're asking, (.) WHAT did you say?
1085  C5:  mhm.
1086  IR:  okay. so they don't ask something like, (.)
1087  C5:  can you explain blah blah? no. it's just like,
1088       what? i don't what'd you say?
1089  IR:  okay. okay.
```

Excerpt 5.3. Charlotte argues that repair attempts can hurt instructors' feelings.

advocate for students using strategies like using other sources of information (e.g., the written notes distributed by the instructor) rather than engaging in the types of repair attempts that her classmates were apparently using with the ITA teaching her course (lines 1067).

Charlotte's comments and her responses to my questions in Excerpt 5.3 suggest that how students attempt repair is an important consideration in whether repair is seen as face threatening. Charlotte provides examples of ways of attempting repair that she believes may embarrass international instructors, including: "I don't understand what you're saying" (lines 1061-1062) and "what'd you say?" (line 1088). When I ask her to elaborate on what kinds of questions students in her class ask, Charlotte rules out a more specific question frame like "can you explain…?" (lines 1084-1087). In Excerpt 5.2 above, Danh similarly suggests that it is "awkward" or "rude" to attempt repair by saying "I didn't understand what you were saying. Could you say that again?" (lines 715-717). Similarly, during the third focus group, Paola suggested that some of the students in her math class "act out" in a way she characterized as "rude", when they experience difficulties understanding their international instructor. Specifically, she reported that when the instructor "mispronounce[s]" a word, a student would say "I don't know what you said" with "a mean attitude". Later in the discussion, Paola was also critical of her classmates' complaints about not understanding course content, specifically criticizing them for failing to ask questions when the instructor tries to elicit them.

Other forms of repair were perceived as equally or more face-threatening by the students. During the fourth focus group, Sofía reported that her difficulties understanding one of her ITAs stemmed from the fact that the instructor needed "to just speak slower and to enunciate". However, Sofía reported that she felt that she could not ask the instructor to make accommodations because the request would "be really rude". She specifically formulated the

request in the course of her discussion in the following manner: "Can you stop talking and just slow down and enunciate?" In Excerpt 5.4, which took place shortly after Sofía's comments, Queisha questions Sofía's claim that international instructors would be offended by her request (lines 928-934). Sofía's response to Queisha's comments suggest that she views the potentially offensive nature of the request as connected somehow to the way she might formulate it, suggesting that she would not "sound polite" (lines 944-951). However, she frames her inability to make the request in a way that would be acceptable to the instructor as a stable feature of her personality ("it's just the kind of person that I am", lines 945-946), apparently anticipating the potential objection that she could simply ask in a different way, one that she would consider "polite".

In Excerpt 5.4, Rashona also responds to Queisha's objections, raising the possibility that some instructors may respond better to students' accommodation requests or repair attempts than others. In the excerpt, she suggests that some instructors' backgrounds might compel them to respond to students' requests for accommodation in a manner that could be interpreted by students as "rude" or may sound like the instructor is "snap[ping] back" at the student (lines 954-964). At another point in the focus group, Rashona spoke positively about a male Chinese chemistry instructor who she claimed was "really, really good" in spite of his "really thick" accent. Rashona reported that the instructor's language did not, in her view, pose a problem, because of how he oriented to it. Specifically, she stated "he made fun of himself sometimes" and students "were very open with like correcting him". Rashona's comments appear to imply that the instructor's self-deprecation, apparently about his own language, made students feel more at ease with confronting communication difficulties in class.

```
928  Q4:  ((...)) what she said about um like, not wanting
929       to be rude, ((referring to Sofía's comments about
930       it being rude to ask her ITA to slow down)) or
931       whatever, (.) but like SOME PEOPLE might not take
932       it as being rude, cuz maybe that's not rude to
933       them, like, they WANNA learn our language. so,
934       they want all the help that they can get.
935  IR:  mhm.

          ((several turns omitted – IR and participants
          laugh about and discuss something visible through
          the window))

941  IR:  she ((referring to Queisha)) mentioned a couple of
942       people's points, does any of you wanna respond to
943       that?
944  S4:  well i agree that it WOULD help them out. but i
945       just feel like, MAYBE it's just the kind of person
946       that i am, i wouldn't say it in a way that would
947       (.) i guess (.) sound polite,
948  IR:  mhm.
949  S4:  i don't know. i'm i'd be very FORWARD with them.
950  IR:  [mhm.]
951  S4:  [so,] they would probably take offense to it.
952  IR:  okay.
953  S4:  @@
954  R4:  and i think it also depends on the t a, cuz even
955       though um (.) some t a's would be more
956       understanding, OTHERS they know that they have a
957       harsh accent, but, because of their culture, they
958       might not MEAN to be (.) to take it as like rude
959       or like snap back at you, but because of how
960       they're raised, and like their culture, it might
961       come off that way. based off of like their
962       inflection, and,
963  IR:  [mhm.]
964  R4:  [stuff] like that. and their tone of voice.
965  IR:  mhm.
966  Y4:  i agree.
```

Excerpt 5.4. Students in Focus Group 4 discuss whether requests for speech accommodations would cause offense.

```
742  F2: ((...)) i don't really feel like, it's
743      ((communication with ITA in her math class)) that
744      big of a problem at all, like, when he's teaching
745      in class, we all understand him.
746  IR: [mhm.]
747  F2: [THERE'S] TIMES like, i think he was trying to say
748      like, sphere,            [((inaudible))]
749  G2:               uh s- uh [yeah, he kept] saying like
750      /səfir/, we were like, [SPHERE, and like, it took
751      him like two minutes to get it.]
752  F2: [yes and we were, like, no. sphere. and he was
753      just like you know what i'm saying.] like sphere.
754      @@@
755  MU: @@@@@@@
756  F2: [and it was FUNNY,] but,
757  G2: [it was just a joke.]    yeah. @@@
758  F2: i mean i i also think too, just because um (.) i'm
759      a spanish minor, and more aware of like other
760      languages around me, i'm not as HARSH on people i
761      know are non-native english speakers uh (.) so for
762      him i don't think it's a problem ever.
763  IR: so he was trying to say SPHERE?
764  F2: yeah.
765  IR: and he said /səfir/?
766  F2: [mhm.]
767  G2: [yeah.]
768  F2: like, like, [that's literally what he thought it
769      was, and we're like, no. sorry.]
770  G2:             [he just he literally couldn't like,
771      pronounce it. he couldn't do] /sf/. like it was it
772      was difficult.
773  IR: okay. and and you said that (.) you said that you
774      felt that the students UNDERSTOOD him?
775  F2: yeah. oh, we all did. [i mean,] [even,]
776  G2:                            [yeah]
777  IR:                                  [but they,]
778  G2: but people were like, ((higher pitched voice))
779      this is how you say it, ((normal pitch)) like, way
780      too much.
781  IR: okay.
782  F2:                [yeah.]
783  G2: like, it was [funny] the first time. they were
784      like, i think you guys understand what he's
785      saying.
786  F2: right.
787  G2: like, y'all can calm down.
```

Excerpt 5.5. Francine and Gladys tell a story of their and their classmates' correcting TL's pronunciation.

Students did not always perceive their peers' 'corrections' of their instructors' language positively. In the second focus group, as shown in Excerpt 5.5, two students, Francine and Gladys, co-reported on an event in their mathematics class, taught by TL, in which students corrected his pronunciation of the word "sphere" (apparently pronounced with the difficult-to-produce initial consonant cluster /sf/ rendered with an epenthetic vowel). Gladys reports that, in her view, her peers took the humorous corrections too far (lines 778-787). Although the two do not elaborate on or problematize their own contributions to the event, she and Francine appear to recognize that the group's orientation to his language is not based on genuine communicative need and may thus be particularly likely to threaten TL's face. Later in the discussion, although she was not actually present for it, Laila reintroduced the incident as an example of the negative experiences that many ITAs may have. She speculated that TL was "trying his best, and people were mocking him essentially". The incident these students report and their perceptions of it suggest that students' engagement in certain repair strategies may not be based on actual communicative need, and thus not attempts at Collaboration, but may stem from an attempt at humor that is potentially threatening to the instructor's face as a nonnative English speaker.

Students participating in these focus groups often reported that repair work with their international instructors could be face threatening, and they often used this as justification for their preferences for an Avoidance orientation. Their perceptions of the face threatening nature of repair work in this and other contexts are certainly valid. However, it is important to consider the characteristics of repair attempts that the students imagined taking place. Many of the repair strategies they suggested were unspecific and thus probably unhelpful to the instructor in repairing communication. In other cases, the students suggested that the 'tone' that was used in the repair work was crucial. It appears then that the argument that face threats necessitate

Avoidance relies on an assumption of listener powerlessness and an artificially narrow set of options available to students for negotiating meaning with their instructors. Danh, for example, could conceivably ask more specific questions or make more specific requests to deal with his nonunderstanding than "I didn't understand what you were saying. Could you say that again?" (Excerpt 5.2, lines 715-717). It also seems unlikely that Sofía's personality truly precludes her from making repair requests in a manner that mitigates the face threat to her instructors. Finally, Rashona's concerns about the possibility that an instructor's response to a repair request might be initially interpreted as confrontational could be mitigated through her or her peers using their awareness of the potential for cross-cultural miscommunication to look past their immediate perceptions and consider that the instructor may intend to respond in a cooperative manner. In general, there appears to be greater room for student agency in managing face threats during repair work than students who are looking to justify Avoidance orientations acknowledge.

5.1.4   *Perceptions of ineffectiveness*

Another set of justifications for Avoidance relied on assumptions that Collaboration with the instructor was ultimately an ineffective or less efficient means of achieving the student's class-related goals, like completing assignments or activities, learning course material, and earning a high grade. While these arguments were grounded in a discourse of rational decision making, it is important to keep in mind that the participants' assumptions about the effectiveness of Collaboration are influenced by assumptions about their instructors' communicative abilities, assumptions that are influenced by a host of other factors beyond the instructor's language proficiency.

In some cases, students' assumptions about the ineffectiveness of Collaboration with international instructors were demonstrably based in prejudice. For example, Baraka reported

that when she registers for class she attends to the last name of the instructor and specifically avoids taking classes from "foreign teachers". Later in the discussion, Baraka reported that, when she comes to a class and discovers that an ITA will be teaching, her response is "oh my god, no", because she expects that she's "not gonna learn nothing". As shown in Table 5.1, Rashona reported similar expectations, suggesting that she views international instructors as a threat to her grade point average. While these comments transparently involve prejudices against international instructors, such prejudices are also likely a factor in other students' perceptions about their instructors' communicative competence, even if they do not explicitly voice them.

In many cases, participants' beliefs about the ineffectiveness of Collaboration with a particular international instructor seemed to be informed by past experiences with the instructor. For example, Boris reported that he preferred not to ask his international instructors questions because, based on his past experiences with these instructors, he anticipated that they would not be more helpful than looking for the information he sought in the textbook. Excerpt 5.6 contains another example, in which Rashona explains why she prefers to use Avoidance with her Biology ITA, UB. In her narrative, Rashona describes how UB misunderstood her and her peers' question and responded inappropriately to it (lines 178-185). Rather than attempting repair, Rashona reports that she and her peers feigned satisfaction and instead sought the assistance of the other ITA (lines 187-189), whom, at another point in the conversation, she identified as "international" but assessed as not having "an accent whatsoever". Rashona recounts the events to illustrate an apparent tendency characteristic of UB which she cites as justification for her and her peers' use of Avoidance with her (lines 198-199).

```
166   IR:  okay. um (.) can you give me an example, of a
167        question, that, she asked, that,
168   R4:  um (.)
169   IR:  you couldn't understand?
170   R4:  (.) like, when we were doing, when we were looking
171        at the (.) we were TALKING about (.) respiration,
172        something with plants. and le- the leaves of
173        plants. when we were looking at monocots, and
174        dicots, and stuff. and we were looking at
175        different um (.) factors, environmental factors
176        that, affect- oh. transpiration. when we were
177        looking at different effects that affect
178        transpiration. and, um (.) my group, and i, were
179        asking her, a question about, cuz our OURS was
180        wind, and we were asking her a question about how
181        far away we should put the plant, and, i just
182        remember i don't exac- exactly remember what she
183        said verbatim, but, it was just SO OFF. she was
184        talking about completely different (.) um (.)
185        factors.
186   IR:  mhm.
187   R4:  she didn't even talk about wind. so, we were just
188        like, oh. okay. and then we just asked ((the other
189        TA)) when she left.
190   IR:  uh huh. was the (.) was your assessment of the
191        situation, that she didn't understand your
192        question?
193   R4:  um (.) partly yes, (.) but when sh- when i would
194        notice whenever she doesn't u- understand, she
195        asks for clarification, but sometimes, she thinks
196        she understands, and she doesn't,
197   IR:  mhm.
198   R4:  and so after just too many q- times, of just, (.)
199        wrong direction, you just stop talking to her.
```

Excerpt 5.6. Rashona reports using Avoidance with UB due to fatigue with negotiating meaning.

Crucially, students who perceived Collaboration with their international instructors to be

ineffective or inefficient did not simply give up on accomplishing class-related tasks. Rather,

they looked to learn material or get their questions answered by turning to other sources. As I

have already mentioned, Boris preferred to consult his textbook, and Rashona preferred to

interact with UB's co-TA. Indeed, these students often employed a discourse of personal

responsibility, arguing that, when faced with communication difficulties with international

instructors, students needed to take matters into their own hands and find other ways of learning

material and earning high grades. This discourse, however, may also mask resentment toward the apparent misfortune of having been assigned an international instructor in the first place. Rashona remarked that finding alternative ways to learn material "takes a lot of time" and is therefore "kinda frustrating" because "you'll have friends who have similar classes but they don't have the same difficulty". Rather than advocating that students find other value in having an international instructor, however, Rashona simply concluded that "you just got to suck it up, cuz that's just how the cookie crumbled". In the next section, I consider the students' perception of interaction or Collaboration with international instructors as potentially holding value beyond merely learning course material.

5.1.5 *Communication across linguistic difference as life and professional skill*

In the previous sections, I have discussed some of the justifications students presented for their preference for Avoidance orientations. Those who advocated for Collaboration with international instructors tended to rely on a set of arguments that presented communication across linguistic difference as a crucial life or professional skill. In particular, these participants asserted the normality and ubiquity of diversity, linguistic or otherwise, and suggested that being taught by ITAs and other international instructors granted them opportunities to learn about and ultimately adapt to this diversity, something they felt provided preparation relevant to their future lives and professions but which were not always otherwise available to them. In this way, for these participants, Collaboration served an additional purpose or held additional value beyond simply enabling them to accomplish course-related tasks.

```
1661   IR:  ((...)) do you have any suggestions, about how
1662        things like that could be (.) um (.) made better?
1663   O3:  i don't think that language is th- the accent or
1664        (.) language is a big deal. cuz w- i mean, for the
1665        ones that are in my s- um (.) my physics class,
1666        they speak english. of course, they're not
1667        speaking their language to you, but, um (.)
1668   IR:  mhm.
1669   O3:  it's just up to the individual as a student. like,
1670        if you're gonna (.)
1671   IR:  [mhm.]
1672   O3:  [TRY] to understand, cuz some people like, she was
1673        saying earlier, some of em DON'T try, they just
1674        like, well i can't understand. like, i'm listen-
1675        i'm just gonna nod my head, and keep writing but,
1676   IR:  mhm.
1677   O3:  if you TRY, then, yeah, i mean most americans
1678        aren't used to having to conform to other people's
1679        [ways.] [stuff like that.]
1680   IR:  [mhm.]
1681   P3:  [yeah.]
1682   M3:              [i don't] i don't think you
1683        should CHANGE anything, because,
1684   IR:  mhm.
1685   M3:  you not gonna go through life,
1686   IR:  mhm.
1687   M3:  um meeting people that (.) s- meet -- uh speak the
1688        same language as you, and all that right [there.]
1689   IR:                                           [mhm.]
1690   M3:  so, (.) it kinda cultivates you in a s- in a way,
1691        into reaching the different eth- ethnicities.
1692   IR:  mhm.
1693   M3:  like i would never understand -- i would never
1694        have HAD a ASIAN teacher, cuz from where i'm from,
1695        [y'know,]
1696   IR:  [mhm.]
1697   N3:  [mm.]
1698   M3:  my uh hometown, (.) @it's black teachers.
1699   IR:  mhm.
1700   M3:  y'know, some white teachers, but, i never had like
1701        the domestic -- i mean (.) i mean a wh- uh
1702        INTERNATIONAL teacher before. [so,] i like THIS.
1703   N3:                                [yeah.]
1704   M3:  [i like] it.
1705   N3:  [yeah.]      diversity.
1706   M3:  yeah.
```

Excerpt 5.7. Participants in Focus Group 3 discuss value of diversity.

In Excerpt 5.7, participants in the third focus group discuss the value of linguistic and cultural diversity in response to my question about what could be done to make communication better. Octavia suggests that "most Americans" do not expect to have to adapt to "other people's ways" (lines 1672-1679), including presumably their Englishes or communicative norms. Montel's comments suggest that they often have few opportunities to do so. As a result, he appears concerned that institutional changes might affect the opportunities he is currently afforded as an SWU student to come into contact with others from diverse backgrounds (lines 1682-1706). In these participants' views, Collaboration with their international instructors provides an opportunity for developing skills and knowledge that they are otherwise not afforded.

In Excerpt 5.8, Ijeoma and Juan discuss similar views during the second focus group. These participants' discussion illustrates an important aspect of the discourse of those students who preferred Collaboration, namely that it often drew on deficit discourses in its representation of international instructors' Englishes. Ijeoma frames the linguistic diversity that students will encounter in their lives as a symptom of a widely held linguistic deficit, stating that not everyone will be "American" or able to "speak clearly" (lines 973-976), ideologically conflating nationality or 'nativeness' with communication abilities or intelligibility. However, Ijeoma argues that exposure to her instructors' Englishes grant her and her peers the opportunity to become accustomed to linguistic diversity (lines 977-982).

Juan's comments similarly suggest that Collaboration with international instructors provides students with an authentic challenge in that they are asked to try to cope with the same types of communication difficulties they might experience in their later professions (lines 997-999). His rhetorical question, "what are you gonna do, ask for a better teacher?" (lines 999-1000)

suggests not only that he feels his peers' desire to be sheltered from the work entailed in communicating across linguistic difference is an unrealistic (perhaps even immature) expectation but also that he views his instructors' linguistic diversity through a deficit lens.

Another instance where participants' views concerning the value of linguistic diversity and learning to communicate across linguistic difference became apparent was when I asked students whether they would be willing to participate in a hypothetical workshop that focused on helping

```
972    I2:  um i think it's also important, (.) um (.) just to
973         know that like, (.) i don't know. (.) not all of
974         us are (.) always going to be around people that
975         are, y'know, that are american, and can speak
976         clearly, so, (.) um i think it's (.) i think
977         that's what's great about shrinking world
978         university, is that you have so many people from
979         (.) so tha- so many different countries, that you
980         can learn from them, and, you can work with them,
981         and, (.) um (.) i think just yeah. just getting
982         used to, like, people with different um dialects,
983         and (.) um people that are you're gonna come
984         across someone that's, y'know, doesn't really
985         speak english that well so, (.) um i think it's
986         just important to (.) learn how to keep up,
987         basically. (.)
988    J2:  and, to go off of that, it takes the individual.
989    I2:  [mhm.]
990    J2:  [that's] why i say,
991    ??:  mhm.
992    J2:  it's mostly on you. because y'know, HERE, we have
993         a educational setting, where it's, y'know, you're
994         (.) you're trying to (.) GAIN something out of
995         whether it's math, science, uh (.) linguistics, um
996         (.) uh whichever type of class. and so, um (.) you
997         know, at the end of the day, you're gonna move on
998         to a profession, where you might not be able to
999         understand someone. (.) and, what are you gonna
1000        do, ask for a better teacher?
1001   MU:  @@@@@@@@
```

Excerpt 5.8. Ijeoma and Juan discuss need to learn to communicate across linguistic difference.

```
1334   IR: ((...)) does anybody have an opinion about whether
1335       they would GO to such a VOLUNTARY workshop? (.) or
1336       voluntary HELP session?
1337   F5: um i wouldn't go, just because (.) i would just
1338       rather use that time,
1339   IR: mhm.
1340   F5: instead of trying to understand them,
1341   IR: mhm.
1342   F5: try to understand the material [that] they're
1343       trying to @teach.
1344   G5:                                    [@yeah.]
1345   IR: okay.
1346   MU: @@@@@@@
1347   F5: @honestly, (.) um (.) that's all.
1348   IR: yeah? okay. baraka, do you have any thoughts?
1349   B5: @no.
1350   MU: @@@@@@
1351   B5: no.
1352   IR: okay, gloria?
1353   G5: um (.) i agree with her, and her, like uh it
1354       depends on the course, and, i would rather learn
1355       the materials on my own, because, (.) i mean, this
1356       is a university, we barely have time [to] (.)
1357   IR:                                      [mhm.]
1358   F5: yeah.
1359   B5: yeah.
1360   F5: that's [true.]
1361   G5:        [work,] [y'know?]
1362   IR:               [mhm.]
1363   G5: and pay for our daily needs, whereas, we can't be
1364       wasting time going to a workshop.
1365   IR: mhm. okay. um, anushka?
1366   A5: yeah. i do agree with them, [it's -]
1367   IR:                             [okay.]
1368   A5: it WOULD depend on the class,
1369   IR: [uh huh.]
1370   A5: [and all,] i would RATHER like try to learn the
1371       material.
1372   IR: okay.
1373   A5: than ((inaudible))
1374   IR: okay. ((...))
```

Excerpt 5.9. Participants in Focus Group 5 report preference for learning material alone over spending time trying to better understand instructors.

students understand and communicate with their international instructors (see Subtirelu &

Lindemann, 2014, online access for an overview of what such a workshop might include). Those

participants who advocated for Collaboration tended to view the suggestion positively. For example, Kyle expressed a favorable opinion of the idea, arguing that students would encounter those with backgrounds that differ from their own throughout their lives, "so it's a valid skill for school or otherwise".

In contrast, participants who favored Avoidance tended to see little value in this hypothetical workshop. For example, in Excerpt 5.9, participants from the fifth focus group discuss their reasons for not viewing it favorably. Faiza's reasoning appears to draw on the type of reasoning discussed in the previous section, in which participants see means other than Collaboration with their international instructors as more effective or more efficient ways of completing their academic tasks (lines 1337-1343). Both Gloria (lines 1354-1364) and Anushka (lines 1370-1371) report similar preferences, although both also add that it would depend on the class (lines 1353-1354; 1368). Thus, these participants' reported preferences suggest that they see little value in improving communication with their instructors, beyond potentially understanding the material better, which they apparently felt they could more efficiently accomplish through other means in most cases.

5.2 ITAs' perspectives of communication across linguistic difference

During their interviews, most ITAs mentioned less-than-ideal moments of classroom communication, times when talking with their students did not go as they or the students would have liked. Nonetheless, while, as I will show, they often demonstrated a great deal of anxiety about communication difficulty, unlike the students I spoke with, none of the ITAs I interviewed presented classroom communication difficulties as insurmountable. Though often challenging or even embarrassing, they presented such difficulties usually as being resolved when they and their students engaged in Collaboration. In this section, I explore ITAs' perceptions of their students'

orientations toward communication difficulties, how they attempt to foster Collaboration among the students, and how Collaboration can be threatening for them. My analysis is based on my interviews with 29 ITAs, whose demographic information was presented in the previous chapter in Table 4.2.

5.2.1   *ITAs' perceptions of students' orientations to communication difficulty*

Although, as I discuss below, Collaboration was not without its problems for them, the ITAs I spoke with seemed to show a dispreference for students engaging in Avoidance when they encountered difficulties understanding their instructors or the course material. Of course, this is not to assert that they gave students every possible opportunity to engage in Collaboration or that they may not have sometimes avoided difficult situations themselves. However, all of the ITAs spoke as though they saw asking and answering questions and engaging in dialogue with students as an important means of ensuring student learning generally. In particular, some of the ITAs specifically discussed their perceptions of students' tendencies toward Avoidance.

In some cases, behaviors that ITAs identified in their students could be seen as Avoidance of the difficulties inherent in communicating across linguistic difference, but since the ITAs were not necessarily privy to students' motives, they often framed their behavior in ways that did not suggest communication difficulty as the source but rather other issues like students' lack of respect, preparation, or motivation that any instructor, regardless of language background, might observe in his/her students. Indeed, most of the behaviors that characterize Avoidance (see Table 5.1) are behaviors that students could engage in because they lack interest or motivation, because they feel unable to learn the material, or because they dislike their instructor. Many ITAs reported that at least some of their students did not pay attention in class, did not ask questions, and did not participate in class or attend office hours even when they

encouraged them to. Although, in our conversations, ITAs often did not connect these things to students' Avoidance of communication across linguistic difference, some of the students' comments in the previous section suggest that they often see their own behavior as motivated by such Avoidance.

In Excerpt 5.10, FR discusses difficulties assessing students' understanding when she is presenting introductory material in her Biology lab class. She notes that in one on one settings, she finds communicating with students "pretty easy" (lines 881-883), corroborating some of the reports from her students that I mentioned above. However, she suggests that when presenting information in whole-class instruction, she finds it more difficult to ensure that students understand her (lines 883-893). FR appears unsure about whether students' silence in these moments is connected to difficulties communicating across linguistic difference. At first, she argues against this, suggesting that she encourages students to raise communication difficulties on the first day using an accent disclaimer (lines 896-905), a strategy I discuss more below. However, she then suggests that this disclaimer is not sufficient to dispel any discomfort students may have with attempting repair in these contexts (lines 905-908). Thus, FR's comments suggests she is not entirely sure whether students are engaging in Avoidance due to communication difficulty, although some of the comments her students made during focus groups suggest that they were indeed practicing Avoidance with her, particularly in whole-class instructional contexts (e.g., Baraka's comments above about how she "zone[s] out" when FR is lecturing).

```
874  IR: ((...)) do you think that there are any uh (.)
875      issues related to language, in your classroom?
876  FR: when i teach?
877  IR: mhm.
878  FR: mm (.)
879  IR: or y'know, when you're walking around with the
880      students. (.) helping them.
881  FR: um not when helping them, and asking (.) them.
882      because i think it's like interaction one on one.
883      it's pretty (.) it's pretty easy. but when i i
884      think when i teach, (.) i have to like, um (.) say
885      things in different ways, so they can understand
886      me,
887  IR: mhm.
888  FR: because if i said it once, and then, (.) i see,
889      (.) uh confusion faces.
890  IR: mhm.
891  FR: and then i'll try to (.) say it in other words, so
892      they can understand, and then i ask, do you guys
893      understand this? or do you want me to repeat it
894      again?
895  IR: mhm.
896  FR: um but y'know, i don't think so. i (.) if it is
897      for my um (.) for my accent, or the way i talk, or
898      say things, (.) i think i address that the first
899      day of class. because i told them, (.) um please
900      stop me if you don't understand. because i know i
901      have an accent, and y'know,
902  IR: mhm.
903  FR: i told them i am from ((country of origin
904      omitted)), (.) um (.) and don't (.) i won't get
905      mad if you stop me, and ask questions, but i feel
906      like students, (.) even though you tell them that,
907      uh they feel (.) they don't feel uh (.) um
908      comfortable, asking you, or stopping you,
909  IR: mhm.
910  FR: yeah. @@@
911  IR: have they stopped you?
912  FR: um (.) yeah, few times ((...))
```

Excerpt 5.10. FR discusses her students' potential Avoidance when she is lecturing.

5.2.2   ITAs fostering Collaboration

Many of the ITAs I spoke with discussed strategies that they used to encourage their

students to engage in Collaboration with them. Of course, these strategies were not necessarily

specific to getting students to interact with them to repair communication difficulty caused by linguistic difference. Rather, most of their strategies were techniques that were intended to open up space for dialogue between instructor and student to help students work through issues they had with the material regardless of the cause of their confusion. DC, for example, reported a particularly robust variety of strategies for encouraging students to interact with her and eliciting their feedback. She reported trying to make herself available to students while they were working on their lab activities by approaching each student group throughout the lab time and checking in to see if they had questions. She also described a creative method of eliciting her students' feedback: setting up an anonymous online survey to allow students to report their confidence levels with particular concepts in the class so that she could focus future instruction and review sessions on those issues that they still struggled with. Such strategies can respond to student difficulties caused by a myriad of potential factors.

Very few of the strategies that I discussed with ITAs seemed particularly targeted at addressing potential difficulties in communicating across linguistic difference. However, several ITAs mentioned one particular strategy: openly acknowledging their language differences at the beginning of the semester and inviting students to ask questions, when they do not understand. I believe this particular strategy is emblematic of a larger issue that I have already touched on above, namely ITAs needing to fashion their selves in a manner that makes them appear to students as the kind of person that will respond sympathetically and productively to students' attempts at communication repair, a concern that some students voiced (for example, Rashona in Excerpt 5.4, see also my more extensive discussion of this issue in Chapter 6). There are two issues that I believe are important about this particular strategy, which I label the accent disclaimer. First, I am skeptical about its effectiveness at achieving its desired outcome, namely

encouraging students to engage in Collaboration. Second, I believe that, especially since these

disclaimers are made very early in the semester when ITAs are making their first impressions on

students, they have the potential to undermine the ITA in the eyes of the students.

```
1104    IR: ((...)) do you ever feel that your students have
1105        trouble understanding YOU?
1106    PS: uh (.) now, no. because now, what i do, uh in the
1107        very beginning of the class, i told them, as you
1108        can see i'm not american,
1109    IR: [mhm.]
1110    PS: [and] english is not my first language, so
1111        obviously, you WILL face some difficulty to
1112        understand ME, so if you feel that, please raise
1113        your hand,
1114    IR: mhm.
1115    PS: i will try to (.)
1116    IR: [mhm.]
1117    PS: [make it] clear, if i can't, then i will write in
1118        the board.
1119    IR: mhm.
1120    PS: so you (.) can understand everything.
1121    IR: mhm.
1122    PS: yeah. they do that.
1123    IR: [mhm.]
1124    PS: [so if] they don't understand, they will come to
1125        me, and then they will ask, usually so far, i did
1126        not need to write on the board, i @can
1127        @communicate orally.
```

Excerpt 5.11. PS describes encouraging her students to ask questions by discussing her accent.

Although ITAs' intentions of promoting Collaboration are admirable, some appeared to

overestimate the effectiveness of the use of an accent disclaimer. In Excerpt 5.11, PS reports her

use of an accent disclaimer (lines 1106-1120). She appears more confident than FR that her early

encouragement is sufficient to encourage students to adopt a Collaboration orientation in

confronting communication difficulty, which she reports allows her and the students to address

these difficulties (lines 1124-1127). However, as my discussion of my observations in her

classroom and discussions with her students presented in Chapter 6 suggests, PS appears

understandably unaware of the degree to which students are engaging in Avoidance in her classroom in spite of her use of this accent disclaimer.

In Excerpt 5.10, FR discusses the strategy's effectiveness with more ambivalence about its effectiveness, at first acting as though it sufficiently addresses students' nonunderstanding in the class and later backing off of this claim suggesting that students may still not feel comfortable addressing these issues. FR's ambivalence is probably warranted given that some of her students reported using Avoidance with her.

This ineffectiveness is probably partially related to the fact that accent disclaimers are issued at the beginning of the semester and not necessarily repeated throughout the semester. In the third student focus group, Nwaha spoke positively about accent disclaimers, saying "I feel like that's really cool that she [her ITA] acknowledged that there is a small language barrier, because some don't even acknowledge it, and they just think that you know what they're saying." However, she also suggested that a more repeated, thorough engagement with the issue of language difference might be more effective stating, "I feel like I got that [explicit discussion of the ITA's language], but it wasn't like continuous, kinda like a one-time thing".

In addition to their questionable effectiveness, accent disclaimers may have other undesirable consequences. I observed Biology ITAs (PS, MZ, and FR) making such announcements at the beginning of their courses. During these observations, I saw different approaches to the accent disclaimer, drawing on different ideological positionings of the ITA as English user. In my field notes from my observation of PS, I wrote that her disclaimer came after she asked students whether they had questions about the topic she was discussing at the time (the group presentation they would have to undertake at the end of the semester), and I recorded the following as her announcement about this topic "As you all can see English is not my primary

language… I have some accent… If you do not understand, please do not be silent. Just stop me and then ask question".

I also observed FR making an accent disclaimer, and my field notes suggest that her approach was quite different. FR asked all of the students in the class to introduce themselves including giving their names and saying something interesting about themselves. FR began by modelling for the students how she wanted them to introduce themselves. For her "something interesting", FR reported her country of origin and said that she is bilingual. According to my field notes, she then announced that she wanted to "make a point", stating that she has an accent and inviting students to ask questions if they did not understand, which she insisted would not make her feel bad. FR's framing of her language(s) differs from PS's to some extent in that she presented herself as "bilingual" and presented her potential difference from the students as an interesting aspect of her background. In contrast, PS's framing of her English appears to focus entirely on potentially negative aspects, not for example mentioning the other language she speaks, although as should be clear from Excerpt 5.11, PS was not particularly unconfident in her ability to use English at the time of our interview (see lines 1104-1106; 1125-1127).

Students' responses to accent disclaimers in my focus groups suggest that there are mixed interpretations of them. Many students viewed the use of accent disclaimers favorably, but a few suggested that ITAs undermined themselves when they used them. For example, in the second focus group, Francine suggested that such disclaimers pointed to an unwarranted lack of confidence that international instructors had in their English. Kyle disagreed, framing accent disclaimer use as ITAs "trying to be open and humble and trying to allow you to approach them" when the student has "issues understanding how they're [the instructor is] saying it". While Kyle's comments frame the use of accent disclaimers in a way that attributes some positive

characteristics to the ITA, his appeal to humility in this context implies an appropriate acceptance of a deficit framing of their language on the part of international instructors. As such, his framing appears to preclude the possibility that ITAs might instead simply assert the legitimacy of their Englishes.

5.2.3 *Coping with the (perceived) need for repair*

Although the ITAs I interviewed reported inviting Collaboration, repair attempts and the negotiation of meaning with students were not without threats for them. As nonnative English speakers their language is consistently viewed through a deficit lens, which often positions them as responsible for communication difficulty merely because of their alleged linguistic shortcomings. This ideological framing of ITAs' language also invites negative perceptions of their Englishes as incompatible with an identity as an authoritative, knowledgeable instructor, perceptions that the ITAs often internalized themselves. For example, WM explained to me during his interview that, although he was quite confident in his ability to communicate course material to his students and reported that he has "a very strong communication ability", he viewed his spoken English as "not very professional". WM worried how his stigmatized speech patterns would affect students' evaluations of him at the end of the semester. Thus, ITAs' concerns about their Englishes and how they are perceived may impact how they feel about Collaboration and their teaching more generally. In the remainder of this section, I illustrate this by discussing ITAs' responses to particular scenarios of communication difficulty and their repair.

The most common type of communication difficulty that ITAs reported was their own difficulties understanding their students' questions and contributions, leading them to need to engage in some type of repair with their students. They offered a number of reasons for their

difficulties, including that students' questions and contributions were sometimes unclear.

Nonetheless, many of the ITAs reported anxiety about not being able to understand their students

and how this might reflect on perceptions of their linguistic and instructional competence. In

Excerpt 5.12, FR discusses her anxieties about not understanding her students' questions. She

specifically alludes to DB's (faculty member in English department) comments at an event we

had both attended. Echoing DB, FR expresses fear that each time a student raises their hand to

ask a question there is a possibility that she will not understand (lines 950-959).

```
939   IR: ((...)) do you have any do you ever have any
940       problems understanding your students?
941   FR: mm (.) no? (.)
942   IR: [no?]
943   FR: [so far] not. [@@]
944   IR:               [okay.]
945   FR: hope @that never @happens.
946   IR: so if they raise their hand and ask a question,
947       you will always know what they're saying?
948   FR: mhm.
949   IR: kay.
950   FR: yeah, but i always (.) uh (.) have a fear that
951       will n- that i won't understand a @question. @@
952   IR: uh huh. uh huh.
953   FR: like uh (.) ((DB's name omitted)) was saying.
954   IR: uh huh. [uh huh.]
955   FR:         [that day,]
956   IR: yeah.
957   FR: ((inaudible)) what if you don't understand, (.)
958       what's the MEANING of the the words that they are
959       saying?
```

Excerpt 5.12. FR discusses anxieties about not understanding students.

While FR reports not encountering any real difficulties understanding her students'

questions (Excerpt 5.12, lines 939-948), other ITAs told me stories of classroom incidents in

which they had been embarrassed because of their difficulties understanding their students. For

example, in his interview, KY told me a story about how, even after several repetitions, he still

did not understand a student's question. It was not until another student restated the question for

him that he understood. For KY, this incident was clear indication that his language posed a

problem for classroom communication. Similarly, in Excerpt 5.13 and Excerpt 5.14, ND

describes an "uncomfortable" (line 1059) recurring situation, in which she struggles to

understand a student's question (lines 1046-1054), and the students interact amongst themselves

to provide an answer to the question (lines 1062-1071). She also reports that, through listening to

their interactions, she often comes to understand what the original question was and is then able

to participate (lines 1073-1074).

```
1024   ND:  ((...)) in my RUSSIAN class, there are many
1025        AMERICAN students, and i find it more difficult to
1026        understand american accent. especially when they
1027        (.) speak FAST, and (.)
1028   IR:  in russian?
1029   ND:  no.
1030   IR:  [oh.]
1031   ND:  [yes.] in in in in (.) no- not in russian, in in
1032        english. they ask me a question IN ENGLISH,
1033   IR:  okay.
1034   ND:  and (.) i don't know. i feel like (.) american
1035        students (.) their language sounds different to me
1036        than what for example, our p h d @american
1037        @students um (.) say. like i i don't have problems
1038        understanding @p @h @d @students (.)
1039   IR:  okay.
1040   ND:  here. maybe i'm like more used to their language.
1041        or m- (.) maybe (.) their (.) variety of language
1042        is more STANDARD, to me, y'know?
1043   IR:  mhm.
1044   ND:  and um (.) i kind of (.) CATCH it (.) WELL. (.)
1045        but (.) um maybe it is more stressful situation
1046        there in the classroom when i hear some questions
1047        (.)
1048   IR:  mhm.
1049   ND:  um that (.) i don't understand, and i ask to
1050        repeat, i ask them to repeat several times, and
1051        (.) everybody knows what they were asking, @and
1052        @y'know @i @DON'T.
1053   IR:  uh huh.
1054   ND:  @and @i @have @to @answer. @
1055   IR:  uh huh.
1056   ND:  so that's a little bit um (.) difficult.
```

Excerpt 5.13. ND discusses difficulties understanding students' questions (part 1).

```
1057   IR:  um (.) and when that (.) when that happens, how
1058        does that make you feel?
1059   ND:  uncomfortable.
1060   IR:  uncomfortable?
1061   ND:  mhm.
1062   IR:  okay, and HOW do the students respond? do they
1063        just repeat their answer? or (.)
1064   ND:  yeah. they repeat or (.) uh @i @feel @like @some
1065        @students @might @GIVE @UP, and just tell THEM (.)
1066        y'know answer their questions, (.) instead of me.
1067        like, [y'know]
1068   IR:         [amongst themselves?]
1069   ND:  amongst themselves. like (.) okay, you are asking
1070        THAT. okay, that (.) probab- that is probably
1071        THIS.
1072   IR:  [mhm.]
1073   ND:  [and THEN] i might already CATCH like (.) @@ wh-
1074        what is going on there, and also give some input.
1075   IR:  mhm. and (.) uh how often does something like that
1076        happen?
1077   ND:  not very often. (.) i don't know.
1078   IR:  once a month? once a week? (.) once a semester?
1079   ND:  maybe once a month.
```

Excerpt 5.14. ND discusses difficulties understanding students' questions (part 2).

It is interesting to compare ND's and KY's apparent embarrassment at these moments
when other students get involved in resolving communication difficulty with LH's comments
presented in Chapter 4 (see Excerpt 4.13, lines 370-372). LH mentions asking other students to
address questions that she is having difficulty understanding. She reports that she learned this
strategy in English 600. The main difference in these perspectives may lie in the fact that LH's
loss of face may be mitigated by the fact that she has invited other student contributions, and can
thus obscure her own nonunderstanding, in contrast to the situation for ND and KY where
students entering the interaction have done so of their own initiative, without apparent
permission, and perhaps out of ever-increasing frustration. In some cases, strategic handling of
repair may help to mitigate ITAs' embarrassment at struggling to understand students' questions.

Fewer ITAs reported instances where students explicitly attempted to repair communication difficulties related to their nonunderstanding of the ITA's speech. This tendency may be partially explained by the fact that many students report engaging in Avoidance, not attempting to repair communication difficulty, especially in whole-class instruction. Another explanation is that a student's difficulty understanding something an instructor said need not be related to linguistic difference, and attempts at repair need not be framed in interaction as attempts to repair language-related nonunderstanding or miscommunication. This ambiguity can be a further source of anxiety for ITAs as HS describes in Excerpt 5.15, because they may, as he reports, interpret every question as an implicit acknowledgement of their linguistic 'deficiencies'.

```
918   IR: ((...)) um did they ever have (.) troubles
919       understanding what YOU say?
920   HS: um (.) not really. (.) no. (.) eh there are mm
921       some times, when they ask question, i don't know
922       if it was because of the language, OR, it was
923       because of the (.) the the the knowledge,
924   IR: [mhm. right.]
925   HS: [itself. so,] i can't tell,
926   IR: mhm.
927   HS: uh (.) but, (.) every time when they ask question,
928       (.) i will my first reaction is that, is that
929       because of my language?
930   IR: [mhm.]
931   HS: [is] that because of they don't understand me?
932   IR: mhm.
933   HS: that's my first reaction.
934   IR: you mean, in your HEAD, [that's what you're
935       ((inaudible))]
936   HS:                         [yeah, in my head, i was
937       like,] (.) uh did i say something wrong?
938   IR: uh huh. uh huh.
939   HS: mm is there any word, i pronounce uh like wrong?
940   IR: okay.
941   HS: yeah.
```

Excerpt 5.15. HS discusses language anxieties related to students' questions.

Many ITAs reported one form of communication difficulty that their students experienced, namely their inability to recognize some lexical item when pronounced by the ITA. These ITAs reported having a variety of strategies for repairing these difficulties when the students alerted them that they had not understood, such as repeating the word or especially writing it on the board. Some also reported trying to preemptively address such nonunderstanding by writing important but difficult to pronounce words on the board or including them in a PowerPoint slide where they could be conveniently pointed to. Some ITAs I interviewed reported that they tried to adjust their pronunciation of particular words so that they would be more familiar to their students. For example, SK reported that he adjusted his pronunciation of "event" and "query" to better conform to what he perceived were the norms of US English.

While the ITAs seemed confident that communication difficulties related to non-recognition of a single word could easily be repaired, in some cases, their reports of how such repair unfolded suggested face-threatening aspects for students or ITAs. Repair attempts draw attention to language, and ideologically constructed hierarchies of Englishes allow them to be used as a site for the reproduction of one variety's dominance over another. As nonnative English speakers, ITAs are potentially vulnerable to this, and a few ITAs reported scenarios where what appeared superficially as a repair attempt on the part of the student may have in fact been a way of drawing attention to the ITAs' language for the purpose of mocking it. In Excerpt 5.16, ND tells a story of a student who used a repair attempt to initially camouflage her apparent intention of mocking ND's pronunciation. The other students' reported responses suggest that students were sensitive and sympathetic to the potentially hurtful nature of this mocking (lines 817-822). Nonetheless, their characterization of ND's accent as "cute" may have been less

openly "aggressive" but could still be perceived as condescension, although ND did not report

interpreting it this way.

```
786   ND: ((...)) one girl, she didn't have like very good
787       (.) like BEHAVIOR in general, disciplinary um (.)
788   IR: mhm.
789   ND: oh dis- discipline discipline-wise. discipline-
790       wise?
791   IR: uh huh.
792   ND: yeah. (.) like she could like OPEN a (.) any any
793       OTHER stuff she was doing for her other classes.
794   IR: [yeah.]
795   ND: [and even] though i would tell her, PLEASE focus
796       on what we are doing here, she would just not
797       listen to me.
798   IR: mhm.
799   ND: and i remember one time she (.) um (.) asked me to
800       repeat what i said, and i repeated, y'know i
801       thought that she wanted to HEAR the content, but i
802       realized that she was (.) aim she she she aimed at
803       ONE WORD that i was saying,
804   IR: mhm.
805   ND: and she said, ((higher pitched)) can you say that
806       word again? ((normal pitch)) and she started
807       laughing. (.) y'know like, i was probably saying
808       it um (.) i don't know. (.) maybe (.) uh with an
809       accent? like and [and]
810   IR:                  [sure.]
811   ND: and she HEARD it. and (.) i heard the other
812       students started like smiling, uh when when they
813       heard ME saying that word again and again, and i
814       didn't want i i didn't know how to REACT, y'know
815       like (.) um (.)
816   IR: yeah.
817   ND: they would just (.) i don't know. be laughing at
818       at that a- WORD that i was saying, and then the
819       other students said, oh that's so CUTE, like i i
820       love your accent, or something like that. so it
821       kind of like made the @situation @ @less (.)
822       [aggressive,]
823   IR: [right.]
824   ND: in my eyes. y'know, like they were not really um
825       (.)
826   IR: uh huh.
827   ND: making that much fun of me, but, i mean ((sighs))
828       who knows (.) what was in their heads? ((...))
```

Excerpt 5.16. ND describes how a student mocked her accent in class.

```
441   IR:  ((...)) was the issue of like english language
442        ever brought up in the class?
443   NT:  um (.) yes. yes. yes. a few times. like um (.)
444        y'know. uh i was (.) um (.) i was raised in a
445        british school,
446   IR:  okay.
447   NT:  so i say /pɑθ/, not /pæθ/.
448   IR:  yeah.
449   NT:  i say /klɑs/, not /klæs/. y'know and,
450   IR:  @@@ @okay.
451   NT:  things like that, yeah, and whenever y'know you
452        say oh, it's it's a it's a /pɑθ/, and then (.) and
453        it's just like, ((imitating US student,
454        whispering)) ah hey dude, what's what's a /pɑθ/?
455        ((inaudible)) @ @kinda @thing y'know, and
456   IR:  okay. (.) okay.
457   NT:  and whenever i when i like spell it out, p a t h,
458        and then ((imitating US student)) oh. /pæ::::θ/.
459        oh::. @@ @kinda @thing. yeah.
460   IR:  okay.
```

Excerpt 5.17. NT discusses differences between British and US English and appears to mock his students' language.

Intriguingly, in one case, I observed an ITA using students' repair requests as an opportunity to mock the students' US English. In Excerpt 5.17, NT positions himself as a speaker of British English (lines 444-445), allowing him to assume a position of greater status in the global language hierarchy than his students. He discusses how alternating pronunciations of the vowel in the words "path" and "class, which vary between varieties of British (pronounced as [ɑ]) and US English (pronounced as [æ]), occasionally led to minor communication difficulties in the classroom (lines 450-457). He appears to mock US English pronunciation as he performs it (lines 447-448), including affecting a comical voice when, apparently encouraged by my laughter in the previous lines, he ventriloquizes a student who whispers "ah, hey, dude, what's a [pɑθ]?" (lines 452-453). NT's claim to being a British English speaker seemingly allowed him to brush these instances of communication difficulty aside as comical episodes in a way that did not

reflect negatively on his language. NT's strategy may be a way of trying to resist the devaluation of his own language, but it seems to also problematically involve the dismissal of his students' language and potentially their need for accommodation in communication across linguistic difference.

5.3 Discussion

In this chapter, I have argued that students' Avoidance orientation to responding to the difficulties that arise during communication across linguistic difference is a crucial aspect of what is often referred to as 'the international teaching assistant problem'. Students' Avoidance results in opportunities for repair going untaken, leaving communication difficulties that likely could be repaired unresolved. Hence, Avoidance is often a crucial component of the very communication problems that students complain of. Furthermore, Avoidance involves students engaging in behaviors that are clearly counter to SWU's and other universities' aims of creating global communities, since it involves students choosing not to engage with their international instructors because of their linguistic and cultural differences.

I have also explored some of the justifications and motivations that students offer for their orientations to communication across linguistic difference. Exploring students' reasoning for preferring Avoidance or Collaboration provides some insight into how we might address some of the issues that occur in ITA-student communication. I also examined ITAs' perceptions of Avoidance and Collaboration, and their perspectives also shed light on these issues.

The instructional context clearly has an effect on students' preferences. Whole-class instruction, especially monologic instruction like lecturing, is a contributing factor to many students' Avoidance, including those who report using Collaboration in other settings. ITA preparation can address this by attempting to promote more dialogic forms of instruction among

ITAs, especially in settings like the lab classroom where this can be accomplished. ITAs, for example, might be encouraged to replace parts of their introductory lecture with activities that allow students to discuss and explore the pertinent issues in groups while the ITA moves around the room in much the same way that they do during the practical lab activities.

There are also issues related to the instructional setting that could be addressed at higher levels of administration. Although universities are deeply invested in providing mass instruction through large lectures, such settings are unlikely to promote the type of "globalized" communities that SWU and other universities explicitly aspire to be. While many students get an opportunity to be exposed to an international instructor in such a setting, this exposure is merely superficial and provides little opportunity for true interaction. This may do more harm than good since the instructional setting does not encourage students to engage in Collaboration with their instructor, and the frustration they feel when communication difficulties arise without real opportunities to repair them may simply help engender negative attitudes toward international instructors.

Both students and ITAs discussed possible threats to their face, especially the ITAs' face, as an impediment to engaging in Collaboration. As I have shown, many students show awareness of and sensitivity toward the stigma associated with ITAs' nonnative Englishes. I believe, however, that students who advocated for Avoidance because of these concerns often portrayed themselves as having less agency to negotiate meaning in a respectful and productive way with their instructors than is warranted. The strategies that they reported having access to in these cases were indeed problematic (e.g., simply telling the instructor that they did not understand), but their representations of the situation ignored the myriad of other possible approaches that they could have taken, for example, asking more specific questions and not framing their

questions as a direct result of alleged ITA linguistic incompetence. I believe that these students' discomfort with repairing communication difficulties shows the necessity of socializing students into productive and respectful ways of communicating across linguistic difference if SWU and other universities wish to create truly "globalized" communities.

Some of the ITAs I interviewed seemed aware that students might have such concerns, and they made some attempts to dispel these concerns, most notably through their use of accent disclaimers. I believe that ITAs and international instructors can have a positive impact on the socialization of students into productive and respectful practices for communicating across linguistic difference, although, importantly, they should not be expected to undertake these endeavors on their own.

Nonetheless, in their roles as instructors, ITAs are charged with a great deal of responsibility for facilitating instructional communication. While certainly other institutional efforts should be made to help address students' roles (as I discuss in Chapter 7), ITAs can be better prepared to facilitate communication through explicit discussion of classroom procedures for communicating across linguistic difference. A mere accent disclaimer is unlikely to be sufficient to address students' discomfort. Rather, a more thorough and ongoing discussion of classroom communicative norms is warranted, like that recommended by Shaw (1994). Shaw recommends that ITAs engage in an open discussion with their students at the beginning of their course to discuss procedures for the classroom.

Of course, my own research suggests that, engaging in such discussions, ITAs risk presenting their language in a deficit manner. ITA preparation could help better prepare ITAs to discuss language difference with their students in a way that promotes the legitimacy of their Englishes while still seeking respectful and productive Collaboration with students. The

reception that awaits ITAs' representation of their language as legitimate may not be immediately warm given dominant language ideologies that position their Englishes as deficient and which invite native English speakers to reject their share of the communicative burden (see my discussion of these ideologies in Chapter 2). HEIs then will need to promote a broader engagement in issues of linguistic diversity on university campuses than can be currently found, since students may have little to draw on to understand and evaluate ITAs' positioning of their linguistic resources other than these dominant ideologies. A more comprehensive attempt to address deficit ideologies across the internationalizing HEI may also help to mitigate students' perceptions that Collaboration with their international instructors is an ineffective means of accomplishing their educational goals and tasks since such beliefs are demonstrably grounded in negative assumptions about ITAs' and other international instructors' communicative competence.

In addition, administrators at SWU and elsewhere should consider how students engaging in Avoidance of their international instructors often seek out other usually native English-speaking instructors instead. Some of the policies at SWU I documented in Chapter 4 seem to provide a great deal of opportunity for this type of Avoidance. Many of the ITAs in my study, particularly in Biology and Physics, reported co-teaching with other TAs and instructors, and the administrators in these departments often reported that such practices were intended to provide opportunities for ITAs to grow as instructors. Indeed, ITAs reported that these teaching scenarios were beneficial for them. However, my research suggests that students may utilize these co-teaching situations as a way to engage in Avoidance of international instructors. For example, Faiza reported preferring to interact with her native English-speaking TA in her Biology lab rather than the ITA, FR, who was co-teaching the class. Faiza stated "sometimes, when I didn't

understand something that like [FR] said I would just go to the other TA, and he would clarify it". Such comments suggest that there is a need for more attention to how co-teaching in these settings promotes students' Avoidance as well as how all of those involved in co-teaching can take deliberate steps to counteract students' Avoidance of certain international instructors.

Finally, my research suggests that, while SWU as an institution and many of its administrators have an explicit commitment to creating more "globally competent" students, faculty, and other stakeholders, only some of the students appear to view their international instructors as an asset in this type of development. Perhaps even more concerning, few of the ITAs I interviewed viewed themselves as such an asset. As I have already suggested, more explicit attempts at addressing linguistic diversity on campus, particularly with students, is clearly necessary if the university's goal of fostering more "globally competent" students is to be fulfilled.

6   CLASSROOM INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTY

As I argued in the previous chapter, ITAs' language was commonly discussed as a source of difficulty in instructional communication both by Shrinking World University (SWU) students and SWU ITAs. While in the previous chapter I reported on interview and focus group data from ITAs and students recruited from across SWU's campus, in this chapter, I present findings from data gathered in a particular set of Biology lab classes connected to the course BIO 201. The data I collected for this work includes my field notes from participant observation in laboratory meetings and other informal discussions with ITAs, interviews with administrators and ITAs, observations and video-recording of lab interaction, instructional documents gathered from ITAs (e.g., PowerPoint slides and the laboratory manual), ITAs' teaching evaluations, and stimulated

recall-style interviews with students and ITAs. This rich set of data allows me to take an in-depth

look at what kinds of communication difficulties arose in the classroom, what may have

contributed to those difficulties, how ITAs and students felt about these events, and what

consequences such issues might have for ITAs. Ultimately, this data illustrates how attitudes and

ideologies related to language arise from and contribute to ITA-student communication.

6.1 Phases of instruction in the laboratory classroom

I organize this chapter around the type of instruction that occurred in the laboratory

classrooms, presenting examples of communication difficulties that arose during each of two

instructional phases. Laboratory instruction in BIO 201, as with a great deal of the laboratory

instruction at SWU (and likely at other HEIs), can largely be broken into two distinct phases of

instruction. The first of these phases is an introductory lecture or whole-class activity. BIO 201

TAs are instructed by their supervisors to keep their lectures brief, only about fifteen minutes

long. During this time, TAs disseminate administrative information and present an overview of

basic theoretical concepts or laboratory techniques that are relevant to that day's activity or

experiment.

For example, in one lesson, TAs discuss the cellular structure of two different types of

bacteria, Gram-negative and Gram-positive, paying specific attention to how these structural

differences are exploited in a procedure called Gram staining, that the students undertake

themselves later in the lab activity in order to classify bacteria colonies they have grown as

Gram-negative or -positive. In addition, the TAs walk students through the multifaceted

procedures, which involve staining and washing a sample with different dyes and chemicals. The

order of the application of these different substances as well as the relative amount of each that is

used is crucial to the procedure. As a result, I observed TAs spending a great deal of time demonstrating and discussing these procedures before allowing the students to do it on their own.

During these introductory lectures, in addition to talking, TAs frequently used visual aids, like drawing or writing on the whiteboard and text, images, and videos displayed using PowerPoint slides. Except for answering TAs' questions with brief responses, students were usually quiet during these phases of whole-class instruction, usually listening and taking notes.

These introductory lectures, although intended to be brief, were a major focus of BIO 201 TAs' preparation. During laboratory meetings, TAs would present their lectures to the group and would receive feedback from their peers and supervisors. As I discussed in Chapter 4, prospective TAs in training (apprentices) were also evaluated on their ability to lead a lecture before being allowed to serve as TAs in the lab.

After an introductory lecture is completed, students begin working on laboratory exercises, hands-on activities in which they practice employing the scientific method, receive hands-on experience and training with equipment common to biology research (e.g., microscopes), and are socialized into best practices related to safety in biology laboratories (e.g., learning about how to properly dispose of biological material). During this time, groups of students (two to four) follow procedures outlined by the TA and in their lab manuals, which they are expected to have read prior to coming to class, although most students that I spoke with reported that they did not regularly read their lab manuals in advance. The lab manual contains, among many other things, step-by-step procedures for completing the day's activity. Students are expected to follow these instructions and record their findings in lab notebooks, which they later hand in to the TA. All students are expected to be actively involved in the activities, although I observed that one or two students in each group often performed the bulk of the work, such as

preparing all of the microscope slides and operating the microscope, while other students passively observed and merely recorded the findings that were dictated to them by the more active students. The TAs spend much of the lab activity time moving from lab bench to lab bench checking in with groups of students to ensure that they understand the procedures, to make themselves available for questions, and to try to keep students on track so that they finish stages of the activity in a timely fashion. Occasionally, TAs spend some of this time checking over and grading assignments or quizzes or preparing some other activity or materials for use later in the class session.

These phases of instruction were usually paired inside of a class session such that a lecture would proceed an activity. More than one cycle of these phases was common so that the class session might include a lecture followed by an activity followed by another lecture and then another activity. For example, in one ITA's class (PS's), on the day the students did the Gram staining activity, PS began the class by having students review concepts learned in a previous class for about ten minutes. She then explained how students would be recording colony growth data from the bacteria samples they previously collected and how they should do so safely. After providing an explanation that lasted about five minutes, she let the students begin analyzing and recording their data. PS and her apprentice (see Chapter 4 for details on the TA apprenticeship in Biology), Mary, answered questions and made preparations for upcoming tasks while the students worked on this activity for about forty minutes. PS then began explaining the Gram staining technique to the whole class. Her lecture on this technique lasted about twenty minutes. After she finished, she allowed the students to work on Gram-staining for about an hour. She used the remaining time to make administrative announcements and to review material in preparation for the final exam.

The two instructional phases were characterized by different types of communication difficulty, and I organize my findings around these two phases beginning first with whole-class instruction and then moving into the interactive instruction that took place at individual lab benches between the ITA and just one or a few students. In each section, I interpret and discuss a few characteristic episodes, explaining how I believe the difficulty arose and how it appeared to be understood by the students and instructor. I then follow up these findings with discussion of how these difficulties might impact ITAs.

6.2 Participants and setting

As I discussed in Chapter 3, I observed and made video recordings of two sections of the BIO 201 lab taught by two different ITAs, MZ and PS. Both of the ITAs I observed were PhD students in the Department of Biology at the time, and both were experienced TAs in the BIO 201 lab, each having taught for several semesters prior to my observations. PS also had some experience teaching in her home country prior to coming to the United States. For MZ, teaching in the BIO 201 lab was her first teaching position. MZ is originally from an East Asian country, and PS is originally from a South Asian country. Both women learned English as an additional language beginning in later childhood and adolescence.

The lab sessions were designed as a form of additional instruction to complement basic introductory biology classes taught in large lecture formats, usually by full time faculty members. These labs were taught to smaller groups of students. MZ's section had twenty-four students enrolled, and PS's had seventeen students enrolled. The lab sessions lasted about two and a half hours. For each ITA, I observed their first lab of the semester without recording and returned three other times during the semester to record the class, resulting in about six lab session's worth of data, approximately 14 hours of classroom interaction. It was from these

recordings that the episodes I discuss below were drawn, and each was also presented to the ITA and some of the students in the class during an interview or focus group. I was able to recruit four students from each of the ITAs' classes (for a total of eight students). In both cases, one student was interviewed individually and three others participated in a focus group. Table 6.1 contains some biographical information about the eight students.

Table 6.1. Demographic information for focus group and interview participants.

pseudonym[a]	gender	race/ethnicity	languages[b]	major	standing	ITA[d]
Hannah (H6)	female	White		Neuroscience	Sophomore	MZ
Isabel (I6)	female	Hispanic		Psychology	Junior	MZ
John (J6)	male	Black		Exercise Science	Junior	MZ
Kyung-Hee (K7)	female	Asian		Biology	Sophomore	MZ
Manesh (M8)	male	Indian	Gujarati	Biology	Junior	PS
Naveen (N9)	male	Indian	Gujarati	Biology	Sophomore	PS
Parth (P9)	male	Indian	Tamil	Neuroscience	Sophomore	PS
Rebecca (R9)	female	White/Black	Danish	Psychology	Junior	PS

a. Codes used in transcription (a letter and number, e.g., H6) are included in parentheses.
b. Languages participants reported having strong proficiency in, in addition to English. All participants reported strong proficiency in English.
c. Instructor of the class the student was taking.

6.3 Whole-class instruction and communication difficulty

6.3.1 Scenario 1: MZ explaining resolution

When I observed the lectures in these classrooms, it appeared, on the surface, that communication difficulty was infrequent. In particular, I observed very few instances in which the instructors and students engaged in overt conversational repair during whole class instruction. I came to find, however, that participants, especially the students, perceived difficulties. In particular, students reported that they occasionally could not understand ITAs' explanations during these lectures but that they remained silent in these situations.

```
 1   MZ:  ((writes "resolution" on the board, pointing at the word)) another
 2        concept similar with magnification is resolution.
 3        (.) so the concept for resolution is, it measures
 4        the smallest distance between two (.) things. that
 5        can be separate apart from each other. (.) i- i
 6        feel like the concept here is a little bit
 7        confusing, so, a easier way to say resolution is
 8        like the higher the resolution, the CLEARER, you
 9        will see things. and what can influence
10        resolution? (.) ((changes PPT slide)) here, i want to
11        tell you the formula to calculate the resolution.
12        but i will never ask you to do any calculation.
13        from this formula, i want you to understand there
14        are two things can influence or impact,
15        resolution. ((pointing at formula on PPT slide)) one is
16        lambda, which is the light wave length, you are
17        using, when you use the microscope. ((pointing at word
18        on PPT slide)) the other is called (.) numerical /ap-/
19        /əpɑɪtɚ/ ((intending to say "aperture")). and that
20        number is what you can easily find. in the
21        objective lens. so for example, the four x,
22        objective lens, you can see the number point one.
23        and ten x is point twenty five is the number.
24        written here. (.) ((walks out from behind front desk)) so
25        these are the TWO THINGS can impact the resolution
26        you will get. (.) and, (.) usually people, when
27        use the microscope, ((gesturing to show position of objects))
28        the thing between your (.) s- specimens, your
29        objectives, and the objective lens, is air. but in
30        some uses, people will put /ʌ:jəl/ ((intending to
31        say "oil")) between the slides and the objective
32        lens. so by using /ʌjəl/, you are changing you are
33        changing the ((pauses to walk around to computer to point with
34        cursor to "NA" in formula)) n a here. so it can (.) make
35        resolution better. (.) ((points to word "magnification" on
36        white board)) and magnification is just make things
37        bigger. so, now are you confident about, telling
38        the difference, between magnification and
39        resolution?
40   SS:  [yes.]
41   S?:  [no.]
42   MZ:  yes? (.)
```

Excerpt 6.1. MZ explains the concept of resolution during an introductory lecture.

I present an example of this type of communication difficulty from a lecture delivered by

MZ in Excerpt 6.1. I selected this instance because, when I observed the course, I wrote in my

field notes that, after MZ asked whether the students were "confident about telling the difference between magnification and resolution" (lines 37-38), from my position at the back of the room, I heard one student say "no". MZ apparently did not hear this student over the sound of other students saying "yes" or the other ambient noises in the lab (e.g., a constant sound emitted by a large chemical hood) since she did not stop to address the student's concerns. She also did not recall having heard the student when I asked her later. I also recorded in my field notes that I had personally experienced difficulty understanding some of the words MZ said during this explanation (e.g., "oil"). Thus, I decided that it would be useful to explore this particular segment to try to understand how these communication difficulties played out and how the participants understood them.

Looking at Excerpt 6.1, it is clear that MZ uses a number of techniques to try to ensure the students will understand the concept of resolution as it relates to the student's use of the microscope. While lecturing about the concept, she draws on visual modes of communication to help the students understand, including writing on the white board, using PowerPoint slides, and gesturing. For example, when first introducing resolution, she writes the word on the board (lines 1-2). She also projects a PPT slide that summarizes the distinction between resolution and magnification by stating "Just because something looks bigger doesn't mean it's seen clearly!" In her discussion of resolution, MZ acknowledges that the technical definition is "confusing" (lines 5-7) and so provides a simpler, more practical explanation (lines 7-9). She is also explicit about what the important aspects of her discussion are, pointing out that students will not be assessed on whether they can use the formula for resolution (line 12). Instead, she states that she wants them to know what factors can influence resolution, specifically light wave length

(lambda) and numerical aperture (lines 13-19). She also presents a picture illustrating how the numerical aperture is usually labelled on a microscope (lines 22-24).

I met with MZ the day after she taught this lesson, and we discussed how she felt about it. In my field notes, I recorded that MZ was generally satisfied with the lesson, but she felt the students had become bored and started to pay less attention by the end of her introductory lecture recalling that fewer students were actively watching her while she was explaining the difference between magnification and resolution. Later in the semester, when I played the video recording of this excerpt to her, MZ remarked "From their response, I'm not sure whether everyone confident in distinguish the two concept", since she only heard one of the students respond enthusiastically; the others provided only half-hearted responses or remained silent.

MZ's suspicions about students' less than enthusiastic response were confirmed when I played the video recording of this excerpt for four of her students. All of them reported that they had difficulties understanding the recording and that they had found it difficult to understand at the time as well. I present portions of their responses from one focus group in Excerpt 6.2, which begins immediately after I played the video, and Excerpt 6.3, which begins with me asking whether the students in the focus group remembered whether they responded to MZ's question.

All of the students I spoke with about this segment reported that they remained silent or falsely claimed to have understood when MZ prompted them for questions. They justified their response in various ways. Sympathy for MZ, as nonnative English speaker, was one motivation. Isabel (I6) mentioned that she did not want to cause MZ to "struggle" in explaining the concepts to her (Excerpt 6.3, lines 1048-1051). She apparently imagined MZ struggling specifically with English, since she alludes to her earlier comments in the discussion when she reported not wanting to "put more strain on her" by forcing MZ to "find different words" to explain herself

```
916  IR: so are you confident?
917  I6: yea:::h ((rising and falling tone)) [@@@]
918  J6:                                      [no.]
919  IR: are you saying no?
920  J6: no. (.)  [um]
921  I6:         @@[@@]
922  IR: any idea as to why not?
923  J6: um i felt like that one was a little hard to
924      understand.
925  IR: mkay.
926  J6: um (.) yeah. uh i can say that i didn't know the
927      dif- the difference between resolution, and um (.)
928      i already forget the other word.
929  H6: magnification.
930  J6: magnification.
931  H6: @@@
932  J6: i didn't really understand the difference between
933      those, um (.)
934  IR: on the day of this lab?
935  J6: i- it's definitely on the day of the lab.
936  IR: [uh huh.]
937  J6: [uh] (.) y'know i still struggle with it. @
938  IR: okay.
939  J6: um (.) it's probably one of those things that i
940      definitely had to look in the book for afterwards.
941  IR: [mhm.]
942  J6:   [i] didn't ask a question afterwards. EVEN if
943      she said, do you have any questions?
944  IR: uh huh.
945  J6: i felt a little bad, uh having her talk all the
946      way through that, and then me,
947  ??: @hm.
948  J6: like, WHAT? can you explain all that again?
949  IR: [okay.]
950  J6: [kind] of thing. so, (.)
951  IR: okay.
952  J6: uh (.) yeah. uh a couple, like, mispronunciations
953      that kind of threw me off a little bit, in that,
954  IR: mhm.
955  J6: um i mean i- i understood her for the most part,
956      but um (.) [like i said]
957  IR:           [((inaudible))] aperture?
958  J6: that, um oil, (.) um when she said you could use
959      oil to uh make the resolution better, or you can
960      see the actual thing on the slide better.
```

Excerpt 6.2. Students from MZ's class discuss not understanding her discussion of resolution.

```
1014    IR:  ((...)) did you remember whether you said
1015         anything? [or]
1016    H6:            [i] said yes, i think?
1017    IR:  [you said yes? ((inaudible))]
1018    I6:  [i didn't say anything,] cuz i didn't understand.
1019    IR:  did you say YES, because, YES?
1020    H6:  @@@@
1021    IR:  or yes, because you wanted her to go on? @@@
1022    H6:  probly both,
1023    ??:  [@@]
1024    IR:  [@@]
1025    H6:  [it's like,] to a certain - like if if i'm not
1026         gonna get it from her, i'm not gonna get it.
1027    I6:  [mhm.]
1028    IR:  [okay.]
1029    H6:  [and so] i just need to read it @myself. @
1030    IR:                                          [okay.]
1031    H6:                                          [and i]
1032         just want her to move on and let us do it, like
1033         honestly, ((quietly)) we like to leave early. and
1034         that doesn't really happen.
1035    MU:  @@@@@@@@
1036    IR:  so you you're saying that you like to leave early,
1037         so you would prefer, that she NOT repeat things?
1038    H6:  yeah, and like, cuz like in chemistry labs, we get
1039         to do lecture first, and then you do the lab on
1040         your own, and you leave. whenever you want.
1041    IR:  [uh huh.]
1042    H6:  [or whenever] you're finished. but like, this is
1043         kinda like you're babied @through @the lab.
1044    IR:  uh huh.
1045    H6:  and i don't really like that. but it's personal. @
1046    IR:  okay.
1047    I6:  i didn't ask her to review though just cuz, if i
1048         didn't get it, i don't want her, like i said
1049         before, i don't want her to struggle,
1050    IR:  mhm.
1051    I6:  to make me understand, so i'll just do it on my
1052         own. @
```

Excerpt 6.3. Students from MZ's class discuss how they responded when faced with nonunderstanding of MZ's explanation of resolution.

(to see these remarks inside of a fuller context, see Excerpt 6.7 below). While such explanations appear to show sensitivity toward MZ, they also portray her as communicatively incompetent to some degree.

Another justification for not seeking additional explanation was a sense that such attempts might be socially inappropriate. John (J6), for example, suggests that he did not feel comfortable asking a question like "can you explain all that again?" after MZ's lengthy explanation (Excerpt 6.2, lines 945-948). This non-specific repetition request may have indeed been face-threatening (I discuss MZ's reaction to a student's repetition request below) and may have also proven ineffective, but, crucially, it was also not the only option available. For example, if John struggled to understand MZ's pronunciation of the word "oil", as he reports (line 958), when prompted for questions, he could have asked something like, "Could you explain again how we can make the resolution better?" This, of course, assumes that he understood enough to formulate such a question, although he does report having understood this excerpt "for the most part" (line 955). In John's case, the representation of repair work as socially inappropriate relies on an artificially narrow set of available repair strategies.

An additional reason students cited as justification for not seeking additional explanation was a sense that such attempts at repair were futile or would be less effective than other means of resolving their uncertainty, such as reading on their own. Hannah, for example, suggests that, when she encounters communication difficulties with MZ, she does not feel that they can be resolved through interaction but must instead be resolved through other means (Excerpt 6.3, lines 1025-1032). As with Isabel's sympathetic response above, this justification also seems to be predicated on negative assumptions about MZ's communicative competence.

One final motivation the students reported for not seeking additional clarification was a desire to finish the class as quickly as possible. Hannah states that she and her peers would prefer to leave the class early rather than ask for additional instruction on concepts they have not fully

understood (Excerpt 6.3, lines 1031-1043). Such comments suggest that students' avoidance of repair work may be connected to other issues such as a lack of interest in the subject matter.

In the next section, I consider a similar scenario of students not understanding PS's lecture and explore how the students in that class perceived the situation.

6.3.2   *Scenario 2: PS discussing hypertonic and hypotonic solutions*

The segment of a lecture presented in Excerpt 6.4, in which PS explains the difference between hypertonic and hypotonic solutions, provides another example of possible student nonunderstanding. I initially chose to look more closely at this incident, because it involved a rare example of student orientation to the ITA's language during whole class instruction, specifically a correction of her use of the word "shrivel" which was inappropriate for the context, since it communicates the opposite of what she intended (Excerpt 6.4, lines 32-35). However, while I suspected that students might have reacted quite negatively to PS's mistake, I ended up finding that, far from being focused on this local lexical mix-up, they reported more global issues understanding the segment.

The students' difficulties understanding PS's explanations from Excerpt 6.4 arise despite a number of strategies PS uses to make herself understood. Throughout her discussion, she points to notes and diagrams that she put up on the whiteboard prior to beginning the lecture, and she also adds to the diagrams throughout the talk as she reaches relevant points in her discussion. For example, as she introduces the concept of a hypertonic solution (lines 1-4), PS draws dots outside of the cell on the diagram of a cell in a hypertonic solution to illustrate and emphasize the higher presence of solute in the liquid around the cell. PS also elicits the students' involvement by asking them to predict how immersion in the solution will affect the cell (lines 9-11; 25-31).

```
 1   PS:  for the HYPERtonic solution, ((drawing dots on diagram))
 2        because the solute concentration is higher here,
 3        (.) in compar- i- if you compare it with the
 4        inside, (.) so that means, when solute
 5        concentration is HIGHER, ((pointing to notes on board))
 6        that means there is LESS space for water. right?
 7        that we learned from osmosis? ((pointing to hypertonic
 8        diagram)) so, if you discuss about HERE, HIGHER
 9        solute concentration, LESS water. what will be the
10        effect?
11   S?:  shrink.
12   PS:  the water? (.)
13   S?:  ((inaudible))
14   PS:  less water is outside. right? that means, because
15        of osmosis, water will come out from the cell,
16        because water is higher inside. so if water comes
17        out from the cell, ultimate effect is, CELL WILL
18        SHRINK. is that clear? (.) any confusion? no. very
19        good. in HYPOtonic solution, the solute
20        concentration is, ((drawing dots on diagram)) LESS
21        outside. comparing with, inside. if solute is hi-
22        uh LESS outside, that means, water will be higher
23        comparing with the (.) cell, right?
24   S?:  yeah.
25   PS:  what does that mean if water is higher here,
26        comparing with cell? the net movement of water
27        will go?
28   S?:  into the cell.
29   PS:  into the cell. and, the cell will (.)
30   S?:  squash.
31   PS:  shrivel. is that clear?
32   S6:  shrivel means the same thing as ((inaudible))
33        swell.
34   S?:  swell.
35   PS:  swell. sorry. my bad. ((corrects notes written on board --
36        erases the word "shrivell" [sic] and replaces with "swell")) (.) MY
37        bad. (.) is that clear?
```

Excerpt 6.4. PS explains hypertonic and hypotonic solutions during an introductory lecture, using diagrams she draws on the board and a set of notes she wrote on the board.

Despite her attempts to convey the information to the students, all three students in one focus group reported difficulty understanding the video segment that I played for them. The difficulties they reported pertained specifically to their perception that PS spoke too quickly, particularly as a nonnative English speaker, whose 'flawed' language required more time for

them to process. Excerpt 6.5 contains part of this discussion, in which Naveen, Parth, and Rebecca describe how they require more time than is allotted to understand and respond to PS's explanations.

That the students might require more time to process new information or to respond when asked if they have questions, especially when trying to understand a person who speaks differently than they do, is not unexpected. Indeed, PS herself seemed to feel a slower pace or more wait time would have been beneficial. After playing the video recording of this segment for PS during her interview, I asked her whether she felt she had given students sufficient time to respond to her comprehension checks (for my part, I felt that I would likely have waited longer for student questions to emerge). In response, she suggested that she often struggled to keep her lectures within the expected time limit of fifteen minutes set forth by her supervisors, which may compel her to move too quickly at times.

```
755  P9:  she talks fairly fast, or she explains fairly
756       fast, an- because of her slightly broken english.
757  IR:  [mhm.]
758  P9:  [uh like] if you saw like, none of the students
759       initially responded, because everyone's still
760       trying to process what she just said, and process
761       th- the actual material on the board,
762  IR:  mhm.
763  P9:  and so, she (.) doesn't have time to wait.
764       obviously. cause we have a schedule. but - and
765       then, the students can't necessarily respond
766       immediately,
767  IR:  [mhm.]
768  P9:  [it takes] time to think through it. and then, (.)
769       yeah, like back to my previous comment earlier
770       about um (.) slightly broken english, she didn't
771       say uh anybody confusion?
772  IR:  [mhm.]
773  P9:  [so it] wasn't a full sentence, like is anyone
774       CONFUSED?
775  IR:  [mhm.]
776  P9:  it it was just anybody confusion, it's (.)
777       shortened.
778  IR:  [mhm.]
779  P9:  i mean people obviously understood what it MEANT,
780  IR:  mhm.                 [mhm.]
781  P9:  but it wasn't [((inaudible))]
782  N9:               [and then she didn't] leave much of
783       a time period between anybody (.) have any
784       confusion? and then, she's like, no, okay.
785  P9:  [@@@]
786  IR:  [uh huh.]
787  R9:  yeah.
788  N9:  so she went, anybody confusion? nah, okay.
789  P9:  she probably saw our blank faces and like, okay.
790  R9:  she took that as understanding, but it was all
791       like, [what just happened?]
792  N9:        [we're still]
793  P9:            [@@@]
794  IR:  [uh huh.]
795  N9:  [we're still] figuring out five sentences ago.
```

Excerpt 6.5. PS's students discuss her speaking too quickly during the lecture.
However, while the students note a potential shortcoming in PS's instruction in this

particular moment, in pointing out the need for a slower pace or greater wait time, they also

exaggerate or focus unnecessarily on alleged 'flaws' in her language. For example, in Excerpt

6.5, Parth describes PS's English as "slightly broken" (line 770), referencing an earlier part of

the discussion in which he and Naveen had discussed how such language required greater effort to be understood. In criticizing PS's language, however, Parth has apparently incorrectly remembered or misheard, claiming that she says "anybody confusion?", when the video recording captures PS asking the students "any confusion?" (Excerpt 6.5, line 18). PS's question does not deviate from the linguistic norms of native English speakers, even if it elides certain syntactic elements that are included in Parth's counterexample "is anyone confused?" (lines 773-774).

Similarly, earlier in the discussion of this segment, Naveen pointed out that PS used rising intonation, stating that "normally when you conclude a sentence you start dropping your voice". Naveen claimed that PS's use of rising intonation "causes [students] to fade out". Naveen is correct that PS ended several of her utterances in the segment with rising intonation (e.g., Excerpt 6.4, line 6-7, 26-27), but her use of it outside of utterances that are clearly yes-no questions (which prototypically require rising intonation) appears to be intended as a way of inviting students to check their own comprehension, a usage that once again conforms to norms of native English. For example, in lines 6-7, PS uses rising intonation to remind students of their previous learning. In lines 26-27, she uses rising intonation to elicit an inference from the students, inviting them to complete her statement.

While the students may encounter genuine difficulties understanding PS's lecture, difficulties that could be rooted in part in linguistic differences between themselves and their instructor, in trying to pinpoint a cause for their difficulties, the students exaggerate the degree to which PS's language does not conform to native English norms, potentially undermining her credibility as an instructor or attempting to shift the burden of communicating across linguistic difference on to PS.

6.3.3 Scenario 3: A student requests repetition from MZ

```
 1   MZ: ((...)) i want you to remember, for the gram
 2       POSITIVE bacteria, it has a THICK peptidoglycan,
 3       and gram negative bacteria, it has a THIN
 4       peptidoglycan layer. and also a outer membrane.
 5       (.) ((S5 has hand raised)) yes.
 6   S5: can you say that again?
 7   MZ: uh i will show next picture, ((switches PPT slide)) you
 8       will see it. so, on the left side, is a scheme for
 9       gram positive bacteria, so if you see the cell
10       wall, here, ((pointing at image on slide)) em (.) here is
11       the peptidoglycan, and it's very THICK, for the
12       gram negative bacteria, it has very THIN layer of
13       the brown one, and outside there is a outer
14       membrane. (.) ((switches slide)) and you will see
15       different way to draw them. and there is the gram
16       positive bacteria, with the THICK (.)
17       peptidoglycan. and gram negative bacteria. with a
18       thin layer of that. (.) ((switches slide)) same thing.
19       here (.) it's showing a thick (.) wall for gram
20       positive, and a thin wall for gram negative. (.)
21       ((switches slide)) same thing here. the green color
22       shows the peptidoglycan. and (.) so for the gram
23       positive, it has a very THICK one, and gram
24       negative it has a THIN layer. a thin layer of the
25       peptidoglycan. and also a outer membrane.
```

Excerpt 6.6. A student requests that MZ repeat part of her lecture.

During my observations, I noted very few instances where students asked one of the ITAs to repeat something they said during whole-class instruction or to make any type of repair during this time. The reason for this can be explored by considering a scenario in which a student did request repetition. Excerpt 6.6 presents a segment of one of MZ's lectures in which, after MZ provides an explanation of the structural differences between Gram-negative and Gram-positive bacteria (lines 1-5), a student (S5) makes a non-specific request for MZ to repeat herself (line 6). Prior to the start of the excerpt, MZ had already talked extensively about these differences. Indeed, the main point she mentions in lines 1-5 is a repetition of information presented earlier (not shown in the excerpt). MZ responds to the request by assuring the student that subsequent

PowerPoint slides will make the point clear (lines 7-8) and proceeds to reiterate the point in numerous ways drawing on different visual representations of different cell structures (lines 8-25).

Various aspects of this lecture segment suggest why students might avoid repetition requests during lectures. In Excerpt 6.7, two student participants discuss some of these aspects after viewing a video recording of Excerpt 6.6. First, as Hannah points out (lines 607-612), and as is clear from Excerpt 6.6, repetition requests may often be rendered unnecessary, since repetition was a common part of MZ's instructional discourse (and likely of most instructional discourse). During her interview, MZ reported that she intended the repetition to "hammer one thing in their brain", suggesting that this particular point was an important one that she wanted the students to remember, and that she used both verbal and visual repetition to accomplish this. Thus, MZ's incorporation of repetition serves the purpose of highlighting important information and adding redundancy to her discourse that potentially facilitates the students' comprehension of it.

Another reason for students' avoidance of repetition requests is their reported desire to avoid embarrassing MZ, which I discussed already above. In Excerpt 6.7, Isabel and Hannah discuss the sympathy they feel for MZ when she struggles to find a word (lines 625-631). Their laughter and Isabel's exclamation of "ah" (line 630) suggest a sympathy grounded in some degree of condescension, since they apparently find MZ's struggles in spontaneous communication regrettable or pitiable, the kinds of difficulties they do not seem to believe an instructor should or normally would face.

```
598   IR:  um (.) i was just wondering, uh do you (.) have
599        you ever (.) asked MZ, can you say that again? s-
600        i think that's what the student says, can you say
601        that again?
602   I6:  mhm.
603   IR:  um ((reading transcript)) yeah. can you say that
604        again? have you ever asked her to do that?
605   H6:  no.
606   IR:  yeah?
607   H6:  i feel like she repeats herself a lot.
608   IR:  mhm.
609   H6:  because, she knows that we probably don't
610        understand the first time.
611   IR:  mhm.
612   H6:  so, i don't really feel the need to.
613   IR:  okay. (.) other [responses?]
614   I6:                  [yeah.]  if i - sometimes i
615        misunderstand things, but, i TRY not to ask her,
616        cuz i feel like it might just (.) like, she might
617        try to find different words, and stuff, and that
618        might put more strain or something on her,
619        thinking about it, so i just try to look it up in
620        the book, instead of (.) to ask.
621   IR:  okay.
622   H6:  yeah. i don't like making her [nervous,]
623   I6:                                [@yea::h.] @@
624        [@@@ @yea:h]
625   H6:  [i i feel so bad when she] when she can't think of
626        [the word,]
627   I6:  [@me @too] @@@
628   H6:  i just wanna @help @her. [@@]
629   I6:                           [you see] her just
630        standing there and thinking, i'm like, [@a::h. @@]
631   H6:                                          [@@@@]
632   IR:                                          [uh huh.]
```

Excerpt 6.7. MZ's students discuss their dispreference for making repetition requests.

One final reason that students might avoid repetition requests during lectures is a sense of how they can be interpreted by the instructor. Non-specific requests like that in Excerpt 6.6 are difficult to respond to as they do not specify a particular target for repair. Thus, they may be viewed as uncooperative. Alternatively, the unhelpfulness of the request may be viewed as a sign that the student was not listening, since they might otherwise be expected to understand at least enough to provide some indication of what they have not understood. Indeed, this appeared to be

how MZ interpreted S5's request in Excerpt 6.6. During our interview, she stated "I think she [S5] didn't listen to me when I first say it."

6.3.4 Scenario 4: MZ's difficulties with whole-class activities

Although the lecture phases of the lab classes were usually monologic, featuring the ITA speaking for extended periods of time, only seeking minimal contributions from students, in some cases, the ITAs used techniques that invited more participation, although even this participation was limited to brief utterances. In one such situation, MZ asked students to stand, and told them that they would have to provide an answer to a review question in order to be allowed to sit down. In Excerpt 6.8, MZ begins the activity by asking students to provide examples of ways in which microorganisms can be beneficial to humans. Understanding and responding to the students' answers proves challenging for MZ. The third response comes from Hannah, who is seated on the far side of the room (line 15-16). MZ does not immediately understand and has to ask for repair (line 18), but appears to understand after Hannah repeats part of her answer (lines 20-22). MZ reported in her interview that she did not understand in part because Hannah speaks quickly. MZ also asks S5, who provides the fifth response, to explain more about her answer, probiotics (line 28), ultimately rejecting the response (lines 34-35). MZ told me in her interview that she was unfamiliar with probiotics, and, after I explained what they are, she stated that this would, in fact, have been a satisfactory answer. Finally, for the sixth answer (lines 38-42), MZ reported in her interview that she found it difficult to respond because the answer is only partially correct. It accurately names some dairy products as being formed through processes that involve bacteria, but then inaccurately (according to MZ) lists milk in the response (lines 38-42).

```
1   MZ:  okay, last week, we have learned the m-
2        /mɑikɹobiz/ ((intends to say "microbes")). and we
3        know the microogranisms could be beneficial, or
4        harmful. and i told you, to look up for three
5        examples, like how the microorganism can
6        beneficial to human beings. so, now, it's our
7        chance to answer my question, whoev- whoever can
8        answer just one example will be fine.
9   S?:  ((inaudible))
10  MZ:  okay. wow. ((inaudible)) first.
11  S1:  um e coli, it helps with digestion.
12  MZ:  okay. you can sit down. so, uh ((looking to S in back))
13       she took yours? @@ uh who, anymore answer? hannah.
14  H6:  um the the bacteria that helps regulate female uh
15       yeast and lady parts.
16  S2:  @@
17  MZ:  ((walks toward H6)) em em sorry?
18  SS:  @@@@
19  H6:  in uh female genitalia.
20  SS:  @@@@
21  MZ:  oh. (.) okay. ((smiling and nodding)) so what else?
22  SS:  @@@@
23  MZ:  ((student name omitted - S4))?
24  S4:  yeast. it's good for bread and beer.
25  MZ:  mhm. good. ((points to S5))
26  S5:  probiotics.
27  MZ:  probiotics, can you explain more about it?
28  S5:  um (.) it helps in digestion, (.) too?
29  MZ:  uh what are they made from? or,
30  S5:  uh
31  MZ:  where are they come from?
32  S5:  bacteria? @@@                              [@@@]
33  MZ:  (.) ((rocking back and forth and shaking her head)) [mm,] that
34       doesn't count.
35  S5:  e coli.
36  MZ:  she already said said it. okay.
37  S7:  lactic acid. bacteria is used in fermented milk
38       products, (.)
39  MZ:  so what's
40  S7:  to make yogurt, (.) milk, and all that. cheese.
41       blue cheese.
42  MZ:  ((nodding)) okay.
```

Excerpt 6.8. Students participate in review activity in MZ's class.

The way this activity unfolded suggests that whole-class interaction is, as MZ put it in her

interview, "risky" for her and perhaps other ITAs. Students' answers can be unexpected (as the

reference to female genitalia appears to have been, as evidenced by the laughter it elicited),

unfamiliar (in this case, probiotics), difficult to hear from across a large room with a lot of

ambient noise, quickly uttered, or half correct (as in the case of the response listing dairy

products). ITAs may be forced to engage in quite a bit of repair work in order to understand

students' contributions, a fact which either students or ITAs may interpret through deficit

ideologies as an indication of linguistic inadequacy. Hoping to save face, ITAs may be tempted

to provide authoritative answers without fully understanding students' contributions. For

example, although MZ's decision to reject "probiotics" as an appropriate answer avoided any

need for further potentially face-threatening repair, it may have provided inaccurate information

to students or caused them to question her understanding of the material.

6.4 Negotiating meaning and interactive phases of laboratory instruction

6.4.1   Scenario 5: Student-initiated repair of MZ's pronunciation

```
1   MZ: remember, the (.) plant cell has vac- wacu-
2   SS: vacuoles.
3   MZ: vacuoles. @@@ sorry about that pronunciation.
4   SS: @@@
5   MZ: so the vacuoles will stay in the center. so the
6       set of chloroplast will AROUND it.
7   S?: oh okay.
8   S?: okay.
```

Excerpt 6.9. MZ is corrected and apologizes for her pronunciation.

Much of the time in lab classes is devoted to completing lab activities, and, during these

times, students often interact individually or in small groups with TAs. I observed that the

dialogic nature of these phases of the lesson elicited more overt repair work than what is found in

the lecture phases. In a few cases, students engaged in other-initiated repair work or correcting of

the ITA. In one case that I observed, MZ was moving around the lab stopping at each group to

provide them further instruction on how to record their findings from a lab activity, in which

they were drawing pictures of plant cells they observed under the microscope. A student in one

group asked MZ a question. As shown in Excerpt 6.9, as MZ provides an explanation, she

struggles with the word "vacuoles" (line 1). Some of the students assist her in pronouncing the

word (line 2), and after repeating the word herself, she apologizes for her pronunciation (line 3).

```
875   IR: ((...)) MZ at one point, struggles to pronounce
876       the word VACUOLES.
877   H6: mhm.
878   IR: um what did you guys think about that moment?
879   H6: there's a lot of vowels, @in @the @w- [in the
880       word,]
881   I6:                                      [@@@@]
882   IR: [@@@]
883   H6: [so i] didn't feel like it was bad, that she
884       didn't know how to say it.
885   I6:                         [yea:h]
886   IR:                         [uh huh.] [uh huh.]
887   H6:                                   [so we] just
888       helped her. @@
889   IR: [okay.]
890   I6: [i knew] what she meant.
891   H6: yeah.
892   IR: [uh huh. uh huh.]
893   J6:    [tha- tha-]   that's what matters definitely.
```

Excerpt 6.10. MZ's students discuss her apology (part 1).

When I played a video of this excerpt for four students (in two separate interview

sessions), none appeared to believe that incidents like this constituted a serious problem,

although they did appear to believe that they were stressful for MZ. Excerpt 6.10 and Excerpt

6.11 present part of the discussion of this segment from a focus group with three students. The

students in the focus group, including two who were part of the group that MZ is addressing in

Excerpt 6.9, present MZ's initial difficulties in pronouncing the word as unproblematic. In

Excerpt 6.10, they offer reasons for why the pronunciation of the word might be difficult (lines

```
894   IR:  mhm. mhm. (.) kay. and then she she actually
895        APOLOGIZES [for it.] sort of. [((inaudible))]
896   H6:            [yea:h.]              [i i just feel] so
897        [BAD. for] @her. @@@
898   I6:  [i @KNO:::W]         i just wanna like, it's okay.
899        @like, [@@@]
900   H6:         [i know.] it's like, i actu- i DON'T CARE.
901        as long as you're actually like TRYING to help us.
902   I6:  and she really DOES try.
903   H6:  [yeah.]
904   IR:  [uh huh.] (.) okay (.) so so when she apologized,
905        it made you feel (.) like, [bad for her?]
906   I6:                            [@@@ a::h @@@]
907   H6:                            [((inaudible))] yeah.
908        @@
909   IR:  okay. @
910   H6:  like a lot of - i've never had a bad experience
911        with teachers,
912   IR:  [mhm.]
913   H6:  [not] being able to communicate well, yet. i know
914        that i will. but, [like,]
915   IR:                    [mhm.]
916   H6:  i've heard about other people,
917   IR:  mhm.
918   H6:  and it seems that other professors don't care,
919   IR:  [mhm.]
920   H6:  [that] they have an accent, and they you know,
921        don't try to help the students understand their
922        accent. they just talk. but SHE tries to talk
923        slow,
924   IR:  mhm.
925   H6:  and explain what she means every word,
926   IR:  [mhm.]
927   H6:  [herself] if she needs to, and she actually cares.
928        @@[@@]
929   I6:    [yeah.]
930   J6:    [yeah.]
```

Excerpt 6.11. MZ's students discuss her apology (part 2).

879-880) and state that any difficulty she might have is unimportant since they could understand

her (lines 890-893). Later, in Excerpt 6.11, they mention that they appreciate what they perceive

in MZ as a commitment to caring and trying to help them understand what she is saying, which

is contrasted with other nonnative instructors' apparent lack of these qualities (lines 900-903;

918-927).

However, the students' placing higher priority on the instructors' caring disposition does not necessarily placate all of the anxieties that are apparently fueling MZ's apology and embarrassment in this situation. Indeed, in a meeting we had the day after this event, I asked MZ why she had apologized. MZ reported that she felt that the students expect her to know how to pronounce words like "vacuole". When she is unable, she reported feeling that students believe that she's not prepared to teach. She also told me a story of a similar incident from a previous class, in which after saying the word "sterile" more than once, one student pronounced it himself aloud for the class, and the other students, who had apparently been unable to understand the word prior to that moment, vocalized their recognition of the word. MZ recounted that she had conflicting feelings about the incident and the student's actions. On the one hand, she felt he had helped her communicate and had successfully gotten other students to understand where she had been previously unable. On the other hand, she felt that he had pointed out her mistake in front of the whole class.

MZ's responses suggest that she has a great deal of anxiety about language and communication, even in instances where students report that communication difficulties are not problematic. However, her anxieties may be fueled by a sense of condescension behind students' apparent tolerance. While they are willing to forgive her language, they do not necessarily view it as legitimate. Furthermore, the students' comments about other instructors who they view as unconcerned about their linguistic 'flaws' suggest that their forgiveness of her language may be connected specifically to their perception that she is appropriately apologetic about it.

6.4.2   *Scenario 6: PS's misunderstanding of a student's question*

In some cases, as they were interacting with students individually or in small groups, I observed that ITAs appeared to misunderstand students' questions and to offer responses that did

not appear to me to address the question. Indeed, as I reported in the previous chapter, this was a

common complaint among students. In these cases, the misunderstanding was apparent to the

question asker (and perhaps other listeners, such as myself), but not to the ITA. Hence, whether

or not repair was pursued was left up to the students, and I observed that they did not always

choose to persevere in trying to get the ITA to answer their questions.

```
 1    PS: you okay?
 2    N9: so (.) i was just confused, like, (.) the manual
 3        on how it was describing
 4    PS:                          just follow whatever we
 5        learned last class.
 6    N9: yeah.
 7    PS: right?
 8    N9: yeah. so, ((inaudible)) the procedure for the four
 9        percent, it started talking about DILUTING IT, i
10        was like, why you would start diluting it to get
11        the four percent?
12    PS: just do a dilution formula. that's it.
13    N9: yeah. the c one, v one.
14    PS: uh huh. c f v f. yeah. very good. ((stands up, preparing
15        to leave)) and it will tell you, how much you have to
16        take, from the concentrated stock solution, and
17        then you have to add, (.)
18    N9: water.
19    PS: water. very good. ((moves on to other Ss))
```

Excerpt 6.12. PS helps a student with a calculation but misunderstands his question.

One example of this is evident in Excerpt 6.12, which show PS interacting with Naveen.

At the time of these events, students in PS's laboratory class were working in groups and

individually on solving mathematical problems related to the creation of saline solutions. The

problems, which PS had written on the board, asked students to calculate the amount of salt

needed to create some amount of solution at a particular concentration. For example, the first

problem was "How to make 10 mL of 4% NaCl solution (use 50 ml falcon tubes)". In the

previous lab session, the class had been introduced to these solution-making formulas. PS

instructed the students to perform the calculations and informed them that she would be coming

around to ensure that they had the correct measurements, at which time the students would be asked to make the solutions for use in the day's laboratory activities.

As the students worked, PS walked around the room answering questions and checking to make sure that students were progressing through the problems. Excerpt 6.12 presents one of these interactions. In it, PS checks in with Naveen, who is apparently struggling with the first problem even though several minutes have passed since PS asked students to begin working on these calculations. Naveen mentions that he is confused by the procedures in the lab manual (lines 2-3), which present step-by-step explanations and solutions for a nearly identical set of example problems. Before Naveen has finished explaining his confusion, PS instructs him to rely on what they learned in class last time (lines 3-4). Naveen is apparently not fully satisfied with this and continues to explain his confusion claiming incorrectly that the manual procedures instruct the student to start by diluting, which he naturally finds confusing since a dilution implies the presence of a pre-existing solution (lines 8-11). PS responds to Naveen by instructing him in how to perform the calculations for carrying out a dilution (line 12), despite the fact that Naveen's question is premised on the fact that dilution is the wrong method for his calculations. Nonetheless, when prompted to use the dilution formula, he does not persist in explaining his confusion (line 13). PS continues to guide him through the use of the dilution formula (lines 14-16) and then attempts to check his comprehension by prompting him to fill in the appropriate substance that is added to the stock solution in the creation of a dilution (lines 16-17). Naveen provides the appropriate answer, "water", after which PS provides him with positive feedback and then moves on (lines 18-19).

As I later determined, Naveen's confusion appeared to be about the lab manual's explanation of creating the 4% NaCl solution, which are presented in a one and a half page

section in the manual labelled "Procedure: The 4% NaCl Solution". The procedures for calculating the amount of salt needed for the 4% solution the students have been asked to make are presented briefly at the beginning of this section, including the formula needed to complete the problem that Naveen is working on. However, the rest of the section (more than a full page) describes how to dilute the pre-existing 4% solution down to a lower concentration. Naveen appears to be confused because, when PS arrives to check in on his progress, he is looking at this latter part of the section (the second page) and not the earlier part where the information relevant to him is presented. The confusion that Naveen is experiencing in Excerpt 6.12 is due to his misreading of the lab manual (or non-comprehensive reading of it), making his question potentially difficult to understand since the interlocutors presumably have a drastically different understanding of the lab manual and its contents.

After watching a video of this excerpt during her interview, PS still reported that Naveen was asking about the dilution formula. She was partially correct when she reported to me that his confusion had to do with his difficulties understanding the lengthy and potentially confusing procedures. She reported that she wanted to encourage him to forget about the lab manual's explanation and simply draw on his knowledge from the previous lab. PS's discussion of the situation in the interview suggests that she felt that it was resolved satisfactorily. However, Naveen offered a different perspective. After viewing a video of Excerpt 6.12 in a focus group he participated in, Naveen reported that PS "didn't answer" and even "avoided" his question, which made him "a little frustrated", although he reported that he "got over it".

Although students commonly complain that ITAs fail to understand their questions and attribute this to ITAs' alleged linguistic deficiencies (as reported in the last chapter), in this case, the apparent misunderstanding can be explained via factors other than the ITA's 'nonnativeness',

specifically that Naveen's question begins from a faulty premise. Naveen, however, appears to attribute the failure to communicate, in this case, primarily to PS based on the fact that she "avoided" his question, a characterization that is not entirely different from PS's own representation of her actions, which she reported were intended to get him to rely on what she believed he had learned in the previous class rather than the lengthy and potentially confusing explanation in the lab manual. Thus, on the one hand, PS might have taken a more direct approach to Naveen's confusion by seeking out its source in the lab manual, an approach that might have left him more satisfied. On the other hand, although he at first perseveres (lines 8-11), Naveen eventually resorts to feigning satisfaction with PS's responses, abandoning any possibility of repair. In this way, both PS and Naveen contribute to the non-success of communication.

6.4.3   *Scenario 7: Difficulties using the micropipette and PS's 'irritation'*

Observing PS's classes and speaking with her students, I noted one particular mutual, perhaps culturally-driven, miscommunication that appeared to recur between her and some of the students, namely that these students interpreted PS as "irritated" and attacking or blaming them when mistakes or unanticipated outcomes in their laboratory exercises arose, while PS reported no such irritation or intention to blame students for minor problems in lab procedures. An example of an interaction in which students' perceived PS to be irritated is presented in Excerpt 6.13.

```
 1   PS:  no. (.) ((approaches S8)) you need to like, GO, all
 2        the way, down, and then very slowly, (.) you
 3        cannot uh (.) lift your (.) tips, (.) yeah. (.) eh
 4        (.) are you going ALL the way down? because,
 5   S8:  yeah.
 6   PS:  no. first resistance.
 7   S8:  wha- th- yeah, you did the first one.
 8   PS:  then why it's this? because, ((takes the micropipette from
 9        S8 and demonstrates its use)) okay, let me take one more
10        time. (.) okay. (.) first resistance,
11   S8:  yeah. (.) maybe it's like coming out at the end, i
12        don- maybe like when i l- i'm [like]
13   PS:                                    [so]
14   S8:  pulling it up at the very end, and that's when it
15        gets the air [bubble.]
16   PS:               [so you] have to be very, very
17        [SLOW.]
18   S8:  [yeah.] ((takes micropipette from PS and begins trying to use it
19        again))
20   PS:  so first, (.) push it down, first resistance. yes.
21        go. all the way, down. very slowly release it. (.)
22   S8:  like it gets stuck, or like, (.) i guess that's
23        okay.
24   PS:  [it's okay,] right? ((nods))
25   S8:  [((inaudible))]    yeah, it'll like, stop, i
26        guess?
27   PS:  mhm. ((walks away))
```

Excerpt 6.13. PS demonstrates the use of the micropipette and helps S8 use it.

Shortly before the beginning of Excerpt 6.13, PS observed that S8 was having difficulties with drawing the proper volume of liquid into the micropipette without creating air bubbles. PS took the micropipette and checked to ensure that the device was operating properly, was set to the correct volume, and that there was sufficient liquid in the container that they were extracting from. After determining that a slight adjustment was necessary on the device, PS returned it to S8. Excerpt 6.13 begins as S8 again tries to use the micropipette to extract the liquid. PS notices that S8 is once again struggling and provides her verbal feedback and guidance (lines 7-14) but then moves to taking the instrument from S8 and showing her its operation again (lines 14-23).

She then gives the device back to S8 and talks her through the process of extracting the liquid on

her own, which she apparently does successfully this time (lines 25-32).

```
879   R9:  she kept trying to get it [without] the bubble in
880        it,
881   IR:  mhm.
882   R9:  and um (.) PS was acting more like another
883        STUDENT,
884   IR:  [mhm.]
885   R9:  [that was] like, also frustrated,
886   IR:  mhm.
887   R9:  than um (.)
888   N9:  than the actual instructor.
889   IR:                [mhm.]                        [mhm.]
890   R9:  yeah, than an [actual] instructor. and just [like]
891        telling her in a ((slows speech)) CALM, (.)
892        authoritative way.
893   IR:  mhm.
894   R9:  y'know, she was like, ALSO getting frustrated and
895        like,
896   IR:  [ mhm.]
897   R9:  [TAKING] IT from her is NOT helping her learn.
898   IR:  mhm.
899   R9:  you know?
900   IR:  mhm.
901   R9:  um if y- because i think she was getting
902        frustrated with NOT being able to explain it to
903        her.
904   IR:  mhm.                                    [mhm.]
905   R9:  and then she just was like, whatever. [i'll] do
906        it.
907   IR:  mhm.
908   R9:  but that's not really um (.) that shouldn't have
909        been the end result, right? S8 should have been
910        able to do it by herself.
911   IR:  mhm.
912   R9:  from her teaching. i feel.
```

***Excerpt 6.14. PS's students discuss their impressions of the help she gave S8 with the
micropipette.***

After showing them a video of this excerpt, I elicited students' reactions to this incident.

In particular, one student, Rebecca, was part of the same lab group as S8 and was present for the

interaction between PS and S8. Excerpt 6.14 presents part of Rebecca's initial reaction to the

recording. Rebecca, with some help from Naveen, characterizes PS as "frustrated", not behaving

like an instructor but rather like another student (lines 882-890). Rebecca also criticizes the

effectiveness of PS's instructional choices, claiming that PS taking the micropipette and

demonstrating its use is not a helpful means of teaching S8 how to use the instrument (line 897).

In the end, Rebecca curiously characterizes the events as ending with PS simply extracting the

liquid herself without S8's direct involvement (lines 905-910), although the recording clearly

shows that the interaction ends with S8 taking back the micropipette from PS and successfully

using it herself while PS watches (see Excerpt 6.13, lines 18-27).

```
1008   IR: ((...)) how do you think SHE felt about this
1009       interaction? i guess. [is what i wanna ask.]
1010   PS:                         [i guess she was] sh- she
1011       was good. [i mean]
1012   IR:           [she's good?]
1013   PS: yeah. she was THANKFUL that she finally (.)
1014   IR: uh huh.
1015   PS: yeah.
1016   IR: [uh huh.]
1017   PS:   [sort] that out.
1018   IR: okay.
1019   PS: and usually, what i do, i i don't want to step in
1020       (.)
1021   IR: [uh huh.]                      [right.]
1022   PS: [at the] very moment. i (.) [want to] stay behind.
1023       direct them.
1024   IR: [uh huh.]
1025   PS: if i feel they're NOT (.) like, (.) they cannot
1026       follow what i'm saying, THEN, i will intervene.
1027       otherwise i'll like, do it. do that way. do that
1028       way.
1029   IR: [mhm.]
1030   PS: [if i] feel that's good, i will not intervene.
1031   IR: mhm.
1032   PS: i want them to do it by themself.
```

Excerpt 6.15. PS describes her perceptions of the interaction between herself and S8 about the micropipette.

PS characterized the events very differently, during her interview, as shown in Excerpt

6.15. PS reports that S8 felt "good" about and was "thankful" for the assistance she had offered

(lines 1010-1017). She also discusses her pedagogical decision-making process, reporting that

she tends not to "intervene", instead preferring to observe and direct students as they work in the lab (lines 1019-1032), in sharp contrast to how Rebecca characterized her instructional approach.

Clearly, PS saw the interaction in Excerpt 6.13 very differently than Rebecca. On the one hand, there are aspects of PS's discourse in Excerpt 6.13 that might explain Rebecca's perceptions, especially the direct, negative feedback in lines 1-6. On the other hand, part of Rebecca's characterization appears difficult to reconcile with the recording, suggesting that her criticisms of PS's instructional strategy should be regarded suspiciously. However, even if Rebecca has inaccurately portrayed the situation, it is worth asking what has compelled her to do so and whether perceptions such as hers have any effect on PS and other ITAs. I continue to explore such questions by examining another similar incident.

6.4.4   Scenario 8: Gram-staining difficulties and PS's perceived lack of understanding

The type of mutual misunderstanding that I observed in the previous section, in which PS is interpreted as being frustrated or irritated with the students appeared to occur in another episode that I spoke with participants about. This interaction is depicted in Excerpt 6.16 and Excerpt 6.17.

Excerpt 6.16 begins shortly after Naveen invites PS to look at his group's microscope to check on their progress. While examining their slide in the microscope, PS asks which Petri dish the bacteria sample on the slide was taken from (lines 1-4). She is surprised when Naveen responds that it was taken from an EMB (eosin methylene blue) dish, since only Gram-negative bacteria grow in this medium, and the sample on the slide they have produced is purple, which is indicative of Gram-positive bacteria, rather than red, which would be indicative of Gram-negative bacteria (lines 5-7; 13-16). PS appears puzzled by the result. At one point, she holds the

slide up to the light and asks "how come?" (line 19). She also asks the students several questions

apparently trying to determine whether a misstep in the procedure they used to create the slide

```
 1   PS:  you done? (.) forty? (.) ((she looks into microscope)) hm
 2        (.) it's from where?
 3   N9:  ((inaudible))
 4   PS:  which plate you (.)
 5   N9:  this is the e m b.
 6   PS:  WHAT? (.) what? seriously? this is e m b? you're
 7        sure?
 8   S3:  ((nods))
 9   PS:  did you add safranin?
10   S3:  ((nods))
11   PS:  ((makes a skeptical or confused face))
12   S3:  yeah two drops.
13   PS:  huh? (.) ((looks back into microscope)) it should not be
14        like THIS. (.) ((looks back at N9)) because it's gram
15        negative right? so it should give you, red color.
16        it's purple. how much crystal violet you add?
17   SS:  two drops.
18   PS:  ((takes slide off microscope and looks at it, under the light)) (.)
19        ((still looking at slide with puzzled look)) how come? (.) ((to S3,
20        who has been preparing another slide)) you're doing the
21        second one?
22   S3:  i'm doing l b ((inaudible)).
23   PS:  ((looks at slide again)) (.) i don't see any RED, it's ALL
24        PURPLE. (.) you're sure you added TWO drops only?
25   S3:  ((nods))
26   PS:  because sometimes, when you added like A LOT, it
27        can give you false positive result.
28   S3:  we added two drops. yeah.
29   PS:  of crystal violet?
30   S3:  ((nods))
31   N9:  yes. (.) we added one, we thought that wasn't
32        enough, so we added two drops.
33   PS:  and then you added mordant?
34   S3:  yes.
35   N9:  yeah.
36   PS:  in between every step, did you wash?
37   N9:  yes.
38   S3:  yes.
39   PS:  with water?
40   N9:  yeah.
41   S3:  ((nods))
```

Excerpt 6.16. PS investigates the incorrect result that one lab group has produced during Gram-staining (part 1).

```
42   PS: and then you added decolorizer?
43   S3: ((nods))
44   PS: how much decolorizer you add?
45   S3: [one drop.]
46   N9: [one drop.] for ten seconds.
47   PS: and, it's written in the lab manual? one drop for
48       ten seconds?
49   N9: oh wait, that's what the t a said, ((referring to
50       the apprentice)) she said for ten seconds.
51   S3: yeah.
52   N9: that's what she would do, since it would penetrate
53       through the gram positive as well.
54   PS: it's not mentioned in the lab manual?
55       ((M8, N9, and PS look at the lab manual on the bench))
56   N9: the decolorizer is (.)
57   S3: it didn't say any specific time.
58   PS: ((looks at lab manual, then looks at slide held up to light, then puts on
59       microscope)) (.) okay, do the second one, and then,
60       let's see.
```

Excerpt 6.17. PS investigates the incorrect result that one lab group has produced during Gram-staining (part 2).

might explain the unexpected result. For example, she asks whether they added the red dye (i.e., safranin, line 9) and how much of the purple dye they added (i.e., crystal violet, line 16).

PS walks the students through the Gram staining procedures, asking probing questions, until they get to the decolorizer stage, in which ethyl alcohol is used to break down the cell wall of Gram-negative bacteria, allowing the purple dye to be washed away (later to be replaced by the red dye). When PS asks them how much decolorizer they added (Excerpt 6.17, line 44), Naveen responds that they applied a single drop for ten seconds (line 46). PS questions this amount, asking whether the students have followed the procedures in their manual (lines 47-48), and Naveen and S3 report that they were told to do this by Mary, the apprentice assisting PS (lines 49-53). PS continues to question this, and she and two of the students look at the instructions in the manual. Although, as S3 points out (lines 54-57) no specific time is given, the manual describes the decolorizing stage in the following manner: "Apply the alcohol decolorizer

```
519  IR:  ((...)) is there anything that you (.) uh that you
520       wish s- uh PS would do (.) differently?
521  N9:  ((quietly)) differently.
522  R9:  (.) i feel like she should leave more room for
523       people who (.) don't understand her. to like have
524       a minute.
525  IR:  mhm.
526  R9:  y'know? to like understand her, to not get mad, or
527       not (.) not mad.
528  P9:  [@]
529  IR:  [mhm.]
530  R9:  IRRITATED,
531  IR:  [@@]
532  R9:  [or annoyed]. or higher pitch. or whatever you
533       wanna call it.
534  IR:  uh huh.
535  R9:  uh (.) when (.) a communication error happens.
536  IR:  uh huh.
537  R9:  because um if we're willing to u- like to take
538       time to understand her,
539  IR:  uh huh.
540  R9:  then she has to leave time for us to understand
541       her.
542  IR:  okay.
543  N9:  [yeah.]
544  R9:  [y'know?] it has to be on BOTH ends. we have to
545       work together. to like understand that it's not a
546       hundred percent.
547  IR:  uh huh. uh huh.
548  R9:  so (.)
549  N9:  yeah. be more understanding, like if we make a
550       mistake,
551  IR:  uh huh.
552  N9:  or if something doesn't work right, instead of
553       like, (.) what she said like, (.) irritated.
554  IR:  mhm.
555  N9:  be more understanding, and (.) like work with us,
556  IR:  mhm.
557  N9:  instead of making us (.) feel like we made a big
558       mistake,
559  IR:  mhm.
560  N9:  compared to like (.) not leaving the decolorizer
561       on there for more than ten seconds.
```

Excerpt 6.18. PS's students discuss their perception that she is not understanding when difficulties arise in the lab.

dropwise over the sink until no more dye appears to be running off of the slide", which clearly contradicts the recommendations Mary gave to the students (which I overheard and alluded to in my field notes).

When I spoke with students about their experiences in the class, Naveen brought this incident up before he knew I would be showing them a video of the interaction. Excerpt 6.18 illustrates two students' perceptions that PS regularly became irritated with them and needed to be more patient and understanding when difficulties occurred in the lab; some of these are tied directly to communication between themselves and PS (e.g., line 535) while others are not explicitly tied to communication. In the discussion, Naveen references his group's interaction with PS as an example of a situation where PS needs to "be more understanding" (lines 549-561).

Later, in the focus group discussion, I played the video recording of Excerpt 6.16 and Excerpt 6.17 for the students. Excerpt 6.19 presents part of the discussion that immediately followed the viewing of the video. In it, Naveen describes being frustrated about the situation immediately after the video has finished playing (lines 994-1010). Rebecca and Naveen present a number of criticisms of PS in the ensuing discussion. Naveen claims that PS was not prepared, since, according to him, she did not know the exact procedures (lines 999-1001). This claim is difficult to reconcile next to PS's careful walk-through of the procedure with the students in Excerpt 6.16 and Excerpt 6.17, in which she asks specific questions about their procedures and eventually notes a discrepancy in what they report they have done.

```
994   N9: that's where frustration kicked in. @@
995   IR: frustration about what?
996   N9: the procedure and the other t a. ((referring to
997       the apprentice, Mary))
998   IR: mhm.
999   N9: cuz - AND the fact that, PS WAS kind of
1000      unprepared. like, as in she didn't KNOW (.)
1001      EXACTLY what e- (.) uh the procedure was,
1002  IR: mhm.
1003  N9: so, (.) yeah. and then the the fact that the other
1004      t a ((referring to the apprentice, Mary)) said,
1005      just put it on there for another ten seconds,
1006  IR: mhm.
1007  N9: and, she contradicts it, and, causes another what?
1008      ten minutes of procedure,
1009  IR: mhm.
1010  N9: to be re-done.
1011  IR: mhm.
1012  R9: and she doesn't take ANY of the (.) blame for it.
1013      she just was like, how come? why you do that?
1014  IR: mhm.
1015  N9: @@@
1016  R9: but, like, i- if you listened to what he answered,
1017      like, you KNOW why he did that.
1018  IR: mhm. [mhm.]
1019  R9:      [and] it's not his fault that he did that.
1020  IR: [mhm.]
1021  R9: [and] you should call mary over,
1022  IR: [mhm.]
1023  R9: [and] i thought mary was great. but i- you should
1024      call mary over, and you should be like,
1025  IR: mhm.
1026  R9: why did you tell them this?
```

Excerpt 6.19. After viewing recording of PS working with students to unravel unexpected Gram-staining result, students in the focus group respond.

Rebecca criticizes PS's response, suggesting that, rather than taking some of the blame

for the difficulty the students encountered, as Rebecca implies she should have done, PS asked

apparently accusatory questions, which Rebecca attempts to mimic (lines 1012-1013). The

recording reveals that Rebecca's questions are quite different from those that PS asks. PS never

asks "why you do that?", although the syntactic structure is similar to another one of her

questions, "how much crystal violet you add?" (Excerpt 6.16, line 16), suggesting that Rebecca

is mocking PS's language. PS does say "how come?", but this is uttered while she is looking at

the slide in the overhead light (line 19), suggesting that she is merely pondering the puzzling

result, not questioning the students directly, and, in Excerpt 6.16, none of the students seem to

orient to the utterance as a question directed at them. I argue that Rebecca has two purposes for

ventriloquizing PS in this instance: highlighting the apparent accusatory nature of PS's questions

and pointing to examples of the 'flaws' in PS's language that she in particular has claimed are

the very cause of many of the difficulties students face in the lab (see Excerpt 6.18, lines 526-

546), even though, in this case, it is difficult to find any reason why PS's language would be

blamed for the confusion, since it is Mary's recommendations that the students are following.

```
1201   IR: ((...)) i got the sense that, perhaps, they were
1202       frustrated, with this conversation, (.) um (.) do
1203       you did you get that sense as well?
1204   PS: yea::h, like, a little bit. that,
1205   IR: [uh huh.]
1206   PS: [why it's] why it's happening to us?
1207   IR: right.
1208   PS: i i didn't feel that they were upset at ME,
1209   IR: uh huh.
1210   PS: but, i felt that (.) because i remember, during
1211       the spectroscopy also, they were telling me, why
1212       it's US? why it's us? the machine is not doing
1213       justice.
1214   IR: uh huh. uh huh.      [@@@]
1215   PS:                 so [i guess] it's the @same @thing.
1216       @@
1217   IR: @ ((angrily)) machines. [@@@@]
1218   PS:               [@yeah. @@] yeah.
1219   IR: um
1220   PS: because th- th- that's THAT'S like the mystery to
1221       me, i KNOW this group is a very good group,
1222   IR: mhm.
1223   PS: and ALL the group got it, but, they did NOT, THAT
1224       was a frustration. like, (.) obviously for THEM
1225       too.
1226   IR: mhm.
1227   PS: so, yeah.
```

Excerpt 6.20. PS discusses students' frustration with their difficulties doing the Gram-staining and other lab procedures.

These perceptions of the interaction are strikingly different than what I heard when I spoke with PS about the situation. She characterized Naveen and his lab group as "a good group", reporting that they listen to her and follow procedures carefully even though they have had a tendency to encounter problems, which she attributed to factors beyond their control (e.g., the misfortune of being assigned faulty lab equipment). She did not express any deep concern that the students had not gotten the proper color to show on their slide, since, having ascertained that the problem was merely that they had not used a sufficient amount of decolorizer, she was confident that they could do the Gram-staining procedure correctly. I also asked PS about the possibility that the students were frustrated by the interaction, as shown in Excerpt 6.20. PS reports that she felt the students were frustrated about the difficulties they encountered during this and other lab activities (lines 1204-1206; 1210-1215; 1223-1225), but she states that their frustration was not directed at her (line 1208).

As we talked about this more, PS later commented that, as she viewed the video recordings of her interacting with the students, she felt that her approach was "very rough and tough" and suggested that she needed to laugh more. During the interview, I replayed the recording of her initial response to the students when she uncovered the unexpected result, "what? what? seriously?" (Excerpt 6.16, line 6), and asked whether she felt, as I did, that the students might have felt attacked in that moment. In response, she stated "Now, I can see probably, but it was not my intention".

In general, there appeared to be disagreement or miscommunication between the students and PS about her intentions or her tone during interactions that involved difficulties in communication or in carrying out procedures relevant to their lab activities, such as not being proficient with instruments or getting an unexpected result. While PS presents herself as

attempting to help students diagnose and work through these difficulties, the students orient to the question of who is to blame for these difficulties.

Feeling compelled to defend themselves, the students attempt to show that PS shares at least some of the blame for the difficulties. Of course, PS, like any instructor, is not blameless for the occasional problems that occur in the lab, and it is not difficult, with the benefit of hindsight, to point to actions she might have taken to avoid some of the difficulties. For example, PS's explanation of the Gram staining procedures during the introductory lecture could have more clearly discussed how much and for how long decolorizer would need to be applied in exact specifications of time and volume (although the procedures in the lab manual are already reasonably specific), and she could have instructed her apprentice, Mary, in what the appropriate amount was.

However, in seeking to place some of the blame on PS, the students do not stop at ad hoc suggestions such as these. Among the sources of problems that they point to, the most salient is PS's language. In particular, they feel that her language is an ever-present source of communication difficulty, even though they report that they are able, with some effort, to understand her. Some students thus feel resentment toward the blame they perceive that PS places on them, particularly when, in their view, they are cooperating and tolerating her linguistic faults. Rebecca expresses this view succinctly in Excerpt 6.18 when she states "if we're willing to like to take time to understand her, then she has to leave time for us to understand her" (lines 537-541). Their frustration with the perceived blame that PS assigns them seems to compel these students to blame difficulties on alleged shortcomings in PS's language that are mostly dubious even when PS's language is (unfairly) judged against reified norms of native English.

6.5 Discussion

My observations of ITAs teaching BIO 201 lab classes suggest some potential implications about the nature of difficulties in ITA-student communication and perceptions of ITAs' Englishes. How these difficulties are understood and dealt with have material and other consequences for ITAs, so a thorough understanding of them is important for those who work with ITAs: their supervisors, ITA trainers, and others.

First, difficulties in ITA-student communication are often understood by students, ITAs, and even researchers as a function of deficiencies in ITAs' Englishes. However, my observations suggest that these difficulties consist of a confluence of factors that can make the process of communicating across linguistic difference in the lab quite difficult for ITAs and students. For example, students commonly complain that ITAs lack the language proficiency to understand their questions. My observations suggest that ITAs' difficulties with students' questions are not merely attributable to a lack of language proficiency. Students' questions and contributions can often be poorly phrased, unclear, non-specific, half-true, or based on incorrect assumptions, because of the fact that they are, by virtue of being students, in the process of learning to control disciplinary knowledge and discourse. While they cannot fairly be blamed for this fact, it does mean that students and instructors, regardless of language background, have to engage in negotiating meaning, but, for ITAs, this process can be fraught with difficulty and threats to their face. Sometimes, ITAs may feel threatened by the difficulties they experience understanding students, feeling that the need to ask for repair reveals flaws in their communicative competence. In other cases, students may decline to engage in negotiation of meaning, instead preferring to remain silent or not to be persistent in attempts to make themselves understood to an ITA. As I

have discussed in this chapter, a number of motivations appear to underlie this including the perception that an ITA lacks the communicative competence to help them understand.

Language and linguistic difference are also clearly implicated in ITAs' attempts to construct an authoritative but likeable teacher identity in the classroom. For MZ, establishing an authoritative identity was a constant struggle as she often talked with me about how she felt that her students did not respect her or acted as though they did not have to listen to her or follow her instructions. For her, potential 'flaws' in her English were a salient and ever-present threat to her quest to construct an identity as a confident and knowledgeable, yet friendly and likeable, instructor. Her students' perceptions of her showed that they apparently liked and appreciated her as an instructor, but their perceptions of communication difficulties suggested that they viewed MZ with a certain amount of condescension or pity undermining MZ's desire to be seen as an expert in Biology and a competent teacher.

Discussions with PS and her students revealed that language and linguistic difference also pose difficulties for PS as she attempts to construct an authoritative and likeable teacher identity but that her challenges played out differently than MZ's. It is possible that linguistic differences (or differences in conversational style) are at the heart of the apparent miscommunication between PS and her students.

Interestingly, some of the students I spoke with had South Asian heritage similar to PS's (e.g., Parth was the child of Indian immigrants; see Table 6.1). Early in our discussion, Parth suggested that, despite appearing so to students because of their cultural backgrounds, PS was not genuinely irritated but was merely expressing herself in a manner typical of South Asians, a suggestion that Naveen (also of Indian heritage) initially agreed with but later seemed to dismiss. Thus, in spite of the early suggestion of cultural differences, for some of the students,

particularly Naveen and Rebecca, the way PS interacted with them and other students suggested that she was irritated with them when things did not go completely smoothly in the lab. They perceived her as attacking them, and so they launched their own counter-attacks, becoming quite critical of PS's language, which thanks to dominant language ideologies represents rather low hanging fruit for criticism. The 'flaws' they identified in her language were often unfair both in that they implied that any deviation from native English norms was somehow culpable for communication difficulty, and in that, even accepting such a standard for the sake of argument, they often distorted PS's actual language use or misrepresented native English use in order to judge her language as lacking. Hence, students' complaints about PS's language appeared to be motivated by other sources of dissatisfaction but potentially had the ability to undermine her credibility as an instructor by suggesting that she was less communicatively competent than she is.

MZ appeared to successfully be seen as likeable by her students, in part because of what they perceived as the appropriately apologetic demeanor of a nonnative English speaker. Her students seemed to be mostly unconcerned with her language, made excuses for it, and even attempted to shield her from the anxiety that she apparently felt as a result of communication difficulties. MZ's anxiety about language which was apparent especially in cases where she experienced pronunciation difficulties thus appeared to confirm for students that MZ was appropriately cognizant of her linguistic inadequacies. It also, however, seemed to elicit in them a sort of condescension toward her, suggesting it undermined her attempts to construct an authoritative teacher identity.

In contrast, PS's students viewed her as occasionally unlikable, in part because of what they perceived as an unwillingness to acknowledge the 'flaws' of her language. Indeed, in her

interviews and discussions with me, PS seemed to have far less anxiety about her language than MZ. Despite PS's apparent feeling that her English was not a real cause for concern, PS's students were hyper-critical of her language, at times seeming to mock it and even to manufacture examples of its deficiencies.

Differing perceptions of these two ITAs appear to be partially based on how they orient to their own language as nonnative English speakers and specifically whether they perform in a manner that communicates an appropriate (for the students) amount of regret for their linguistic 'inadequacies'. In this regard, many ITAs (and perhaps nonnative English-speaking instructors more generally) appear to be in a double bind that offers two unsatisfactory options. On the one hand, they can orient to communication difficulties in a way that suggests they are anxious and apologetic about their language, in a sense performing awareness that they are linguistically 'flawed'. By choosing to do so, they may elicit feelings of sympathy from students which might translate into students liking but not necessarily fully respecting them as authority figures.

On the other hand, international instructors can choose to appear relatively less concerned about their language and the potential communication difficulties that might arise, in a sense making the difficulties that arise from communication across linguistic difference appear 'normal'. By choosing to do so, they may avoid being seen as less authoritative, but they may also elicit feelings of resentment about their alleged lack of concern for students' difficulties in understanding.

7   CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I review the findings of my study, discuss implications for HEI policy related to ITA-student communication, and suggest paths for future research. I first discuss my

reframing of 'the ITA problem'. I then summarize findings, discuss implications, and discuss the need for future research related to the two sides of the communicative equation in this situation: ITAs and students.

7.1 Rethinking 'the ITA problem'

As I argued in Chapter 2, 'the ITA problem' has commonly been understood by policymakers and even applied linguists as chiefly an issue of ITAs' linguistic 'deficiencies'. Even when policymakers and researchers have acknowledged the contributions students make to 'the problem', for example through their prejudices toward nonnative speech (Kang & Rubin, 2009; Rubin, 1992), they have often framed students' responses as merely incidental to the core issue, as understandable if inexcusable responses to a difficult situation (e.g., Bailey, 1984a; Plakans, 1997), or as impractical to address (e.g., Kaplan, 1989).

A recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Patel, 2016, April 24) illustrates how this approach has played out in policies at several HEIs. The article contains quotes from educators working with ITAs at a few institutions: Cornell University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Ohio University, and the University of Illinois. The article describes "the language problem" as "a particularly stubborn one" that institutions continue to try to address today and suggests a few "creative ways" that HEIs use to address the problem.

These solutions are mostly aimed at improving ITAs' competencies and include commonly used simulation tests to assess ITA's spoken classroom language, a mobile app designed to provide ITAs with pronunciation practice, a curriculum influenced by drama, and the suggestion that ITA curricula focus on "cultural skills". The remaining solution that the article discusses is addressing students' attitudes toward ITAs' speech. The article provides a summary of Rubin's work on how nonlinguistic factors (i.e., instructors' apparent race) influence students'

perceptions of their language and then quotes Dawn Bikowski, director of Ohio University's English Language Improvement Program, saying

> We don't want to give the message that only the international teaching assistant needs to change… As listeners, we bear responsibility to have a willingness to work harder, within reason, to understand an individual who speaks in a way we're not accustomed, instead of assuming you can't learning anything from that person.

> To this end, Bikowski reports that she and her program recruit undergraduate students to rate ITA oral proficiency tests and to reflect on how this process has affected them. Bikowski also reports visiting classes "to encourage patience and empathy for international teaching assistants".

> While Bikowski's efforts and the *Chronicle* author's inclusion of this element in the article are both commendable, the article nonetheless illustrates the imbalance that the typical approach creates in terms of pedagogical and research focus as well as, notably, institutional resource allocation. While these institutions spend a great deal of resources developing assessments and resources for ITAs, the examples of concrete efforts made to address students' attitudes and contributions to communicating across linguistic difference are sparse at best amounting to the inclusion of a small number of undergraduate students in the testing process (notice that this particular effort made to address students' roles still positions them as arbiters of their instructors' language) and occasional visits to classrooms by those working with ITAs to encourage "patience and empathy" from students. If HEIs are serious about integrating international instructors and international graduate students and fostering global citizenship, international cooperation, or other competencies among their stakeholders, then I believe that

there is a need for a shift in how we understand the difficulties encountered in ITA-student communication.

In Chapter 2, I argued that the problems of ITA-student communication ought to be seen as a failure to communicate across linguistic difference or a failure to develop and promote the orientations and competencies necessary to do so successfully. In the chapters that followed, I showed how this failure arises. Crucially, I argued that this failure does not arise from linguistic difference itself but rather from ITAs' and students' responses to and perceptions of linguistic difference and the communication difficulty that is a natural, generally manageable aspect of linguistically diverse settings.

In Chapter 5, I showed that students preferring an Avoidance orientation to their ITAs responded to communication difficulty in ways that did not resolve such difficulties through interaction with their instructors. For example, some students reported that they routinely chose not to ask their ITAs questions when they did not understand (and I also examined this more closely in Chapter 6) or reported that they preferred not to register for classes taught by international instructors or ITAs. Students offered a number of justifications for their Avoidance orientations. For example, they reported that certain instructional contexts (e.g., large lectures) did not promote Collaboration. Furthermore, many students expressed negative assumptions about their ITAs' communicative competence which led them to see communicating across linguistic difference with their ITAs as an ineffective or inefficient means of fulfilling educational tasks and goals. Finally, these students' comments also suggested that they did not view the cultivation of "global competency" as an important aspect of their experience at SWU or did not see interacting with ITAs as an opportunity for developing such competencies. Students' Avoidance orientations clearly represent challenges to HEIs' missions of integrating

ITAs and developing "global competency" since students' tendencies not to interact with them represent a subversion of the expectation that the presence of international instructors and students will result in contact between stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, contact which is expected to bring about increased understanding, tolerance, and cooperation (Dippold, 2015).

Furthermore, in Chapter 6, I argued that how ITAs and students responded to and perceived linguistic diversity and communication difficulty represented serious threats to ITAs' ability to successfully integrate into the HEI, since it created difficulty for them in establishing themselves as respected and liked instructors. In particular, I argued that in trying to address communication difficulty and their own Englishes within the classroom ITAs appeared to have two fairly unsatisfactory choices available to them. On the one hand, ITAs can perform an identity as nonnative English user who is 'appropriately' apologetic about their language. I observed that for MZ such an identity made her likeable to her students but invited condescension from them, suggesting that it undermined her authority as an instructor. On the other hand, ITAs can simply treat linguistic difference and their own Englishes as normal. I observed that PS's students perceived her as unconcerned with what they imagined were her linguistic 'shortcomings', and, in conjunction with other forms of apparent miscommunication, they occasionally viewed her as uncaring and unlikable. These ITAs' double bind suggests that the ways their Englishes are perceived and responded to are a structural barrier to integration into the HEI.

Reframing these problems as failures to integrate ITAs and failures to be accepting of and actively protect linguistic diversity at HEIs is important because it invites different priorities and solutions both in terms of the preparation of ITAs for their roles as instructors as well as promoting competencies and orientations related to communicating across linguistic difference

not only for ITAs but also for students. In the following sections, I consider implications and future directions for ITA-student communication by discussing first those pertaining to ITAs and then those pertaining to their student interlocutors.

7.2 ITA preparation

The past several decades of research on ITAs have contributed to assessments that move HEIs closer to ensuring that students and ITAs arrive in the classroom with some degree of shared linguistic knowledge. This research has also helped develop programs to prepare ITAs to become instructors by teaching them about their students' cultural expectations as well as helping them to adapt their language to be more intelligible for students. In Chapter 4, I presented evidence that such forms of preparation provide excellent support for and are greatly appreciated by some ITAs at SWU, and the same is likely true for ITAs at other institutions. Nonetheless, there are areas where this preparation could be strengthened both in terms of institutional policy and in terms of how ITA training proceeds.

At SWU, there are aspects of institutional or departmental policy that lead to missed opportunities for ITAs to gain meaningful experience communicating with students across linguistic difference and being socialized into instructional contexts and practices at the institution. Perhaps the most striking example of this is the Computer Science department's policy of using graduate students as instructional aides who are never expected to enter the classroom but rather spend their time simply grading assignments. The experience of one Computer Science ITA who did attend the class she was assisting with and was actively mentored by the instructor of record suggests the potential benefits of giving instructional aides a more active role in the courses that they assist with. In general, institutional policy should seek to give TAs opportunities to engage in instructional interaction with students, to observe classroom

communication, and to be mentored by other instructors (especially those within their disciplines) as much as possible.

Support services for ITAs, especially courses designed for them specifically, are also in some need of expanding their focus to assist ITAs in preparing to communicate across linguistic difference. In addition to the suggestions I made in Chapter 4 about the need to reframe the discourse around these courses such that they acknowledge the added value the courses add to ITAs' preparation (rather than simply appearing to be remedial), I believe there are areas where the approach such courses take could productively frame ITA-student interaction as communication across linguistic difference and help ITAs participate and promote cooperative dialogue in their classrooms.

In particular, I believe that ITAs can be better prepared to deal with some of the aspects of classroom communication that compel students to engage in Avoidance, especially how the instructional context is structured and how they approach face threats inherent in conversational repair work. In Chapter 5, I showed how SWU students saw some instructional contexts as an obstacle to engaging in Collaboration with their international instructors, particularly large lectures although also forms of whole-class instruction in smaller classes like lab classes. This was also apparent in Chapter 6 when students interacted more and dealt more actively with communication difficulty when they were working one-on-one with their instructors. I believe this suggests that ITA preparation should exert less effort toward preparing ITAs to engage in monologic forms of instruction that are used commonly at US HEIs and should instead exert more effort toward reshaping their own instructional settings to promote dialogic forms of pedagogy. I believe this could be relevant to the forms of preparation targeted specifically at ITAs, usually offered through ESL programs, as well as preparation delivered within academic

departments. As I discussed in Chapter 4, the lab in which MZ was employed and trained placed quite a bit of emphasis on preparing TAs to lead students through introductory materials, and I observed this being done almost exclusively through lectures. A shift in how ITAs are prepared is in line with calls for more active forms of participation in higher education regardless of the background of the instructor (e.g., Thompson & Kleine, 2015), and may be particularly beneficial to ITAs who will be able to recruit students to engage in Collaboration more readily and be better perceived by their students in settings where they work with smaller groups of students in a dialogic fashion.

As an example of the type of reshaping of the curriculum and setting that I have in mind, I consider one of the lessons that the ITAs in the Biology lab I observed (see Chapter 6) taught. The lesson is about blood typing, and I observed MZ teaching it. At the beginning of the class session, MZ spent about thirty minutes presenting information about blood types to the students, using a PowerPoint and writing on the board. The information she discussed is also presented in the section of the lab manual that the students were supposed to have read; in addition, the students that I spoke with reported that they had previously learned this information elsewhere. MZ elicited some student participation by asking them to use certain pieces of information, like a person's blood type, to deduce other information, the possible genotypes the person has (e.g., if Type A, then AA or AO).

MZ's presentation of this information was, I believe, reasonably clear. She presented a clean and clear PowerPoint that illustrated what she was saying nicely. When sufficiently goaded to do so, the students seemed able to respond to her questions correctly, and when I played clips from the lesson to some of the students later in the semester they seemed satisfied that they could understand it, in part because the material was very familiar. Furthermore, based on my

observations of weekly lab meetings and the TA demonstrations delivered during these, I believe

that MZ's approach was in line with the type of teaching prevalent among the TAs in the lab.

Nonetheless, my field notes make it clear that, during the lesson, there were moments of

difficulty related to students' participation. Several students were not paying attention, instead

engaging in side conversations while MZ was speaking. MZ struggled to elicit student

participation throughout the lecture. At one point she asked a question for which she expected a

choral response, but very few students responded. As a result, she said to the class "everyone, I

want your answer", which did succeed in getting more students to respond.

When she did manage to elicit a response from a student, MZ sometimes found it difficult

to understand or hear them, which forced her to ask them to repeat themselves on a few

occasions. Her difficulties were exacerbated by the ambient noise in the room and the fact that

the students did not always speak loudly enough. At one point, MZ mistakenly said that people

with Type AB blood are called universal donors. One student did attempt to draw attention to

this, but MZ did not seem to hear her. The student did not persist; none of the other students

raised the issue. MZ later correctly called people with Type AB blood universal recipients, never

realizing she had misspoken earlier.

In general, I had the sense that the lesson had been delivered adequately (despite the

minor mistake MZ made), but that the experience was not terribly comfortable for the ITA or the

students. The students seemed unengaged, and the ITA seemed uncomfortable with the

difficulties she encountered when trying to understand the students. Once they were allowed to

begin working on their lab activity, however, most of the students became more engaged. They

actively worked through the procedures, and many of them interacted with MZ, asking her

questions about procedures and trying to understand the theoretical concepts that were central to the lab.

I believe that MZ's introductory lecture could potentially have been better approached not as a lecture but instead as a group activity that invited students to review the material they were supposed to have read in their lab manual before coming to class. For example, at the end of her lecture, MZ asked students to predict the blood types that a hypothetical couple's children could have based on their genotypes. These questions could easily be adapted as an activity that the students complete in discussion with their lab groups. For example, the students could be asked to list the possible blood types of the children of a father with AO genotype and a mother with BO genotype and to discuss how they know. MZ could walk around the room aiding students in completing such an activity and engaging in discussions about the material as she did during the lab activities, and certain groups could be put in charge of reporting out to the whole class what they had determined when the activity was over. This would also help MZ check in with each of these groups so that she would already know what they are going to say, and would not need to struggle to hear or understand students in a noisy room. She could then engage in any necessary conversational repair and provide any necessary feedback in a setting that did not center her in the classroom.

I believe these rather slight modifications would be a more engaging way of introducing the material for the students, and I also think that it would be more comfortable for MZ. Importantly, it would give her a great deal more feedback from the students, which she seemed to be eagerly attempting to elicit during the lesson with only limited success. Such an approach warrants further research to determine whether it is indeed effective in increasing students' active participation and minimizing face threats for ITAs, as well as whether it poses other

problems for the ITAs. For example, does such an instructional style create greater need for explicit classroom management that could also prove troublesome for ITAs?

It would also be fruitful for those engaged in the preparation of ITAs to experiment with and report on ways of helping ITAs to approach their teaching in a dialogic fashion. In particular, it would be easy enough to suggest to MZ that she could use a group activity for this one lesson, but the ultimate aim of such preparation should be to instill in ITAs an alternative pedagogical approach from which they can undertake all of their lesson planning. The teacher education literature would surely be of some use in this case, and further research could explore how ITA courses could effectively prepare ITAs to approach their instruction in a more dialogic fashion.

Another priority for an approach to ITA preparation that prioritizes communication across linguistic difference and developing "global competency" for HEI stakeholders would be to prepare ITAs to more actively attempt to socialize students into positive attitudes toward linguistic diversity and productive, respectful means of dealing with communication difficulty when it arises. The accent disclaimers many ITAs report using and which I discussed in Chapter 5 (brief acknowledgments of their nonnativeness issused at the beginning of the semester usually as a way of inviting students to speak up when they do not understand at any point in the ensuing semester) are a productive place to begin the discussion on this topic. I argued in Chapter 5 that, while I think the intention of being open about linguistic difference and encouraging students to engage in conversational repair is a commendable one, accent disclaimers have two important flaws. First, I have serious doubts that they have any substantial effect on addressing students' very real concerns about the potentially face threatening nature of Collaboration. A single mention of linguistic difference at the beginning of the semester is, I think, unlikely to get the message across, and students sometimes reported this themselves during focus groups. Second,

in issuing such accent disclaimers, many ITAs frame their own Englishes in a deficit manner, helping to perpetuate deficit perspectives on nonnative language and also potentially undermining calls for native English speaking students to accept responsibility for ensuring communicative success.

What I believe is needed is a more substantive and sustained discussion between ITAs and students on their shared responsibility for ensuring that communication is successful. In place of an accent disclaimer at the beginning of the semester, ITAs might be encouraged to rely on the type of negotiation of classroom procedure that Shaw (1994) suggests. He recommends that ITAs begin their courses by having a discussion between instructor and students about how they, as a class, should deal with communication difficulties, questions, and other interactional phenomena. I suspect that a single conversation is unlikely to completely assuage students' discomfort with threatening their instructors' face, so I believe that this will likely have to be brought up again throughout the semester.

How exactly ITAs might go about leading such discussions productively and in a way that does not represent their Englishes in a deficit manner is a topic that is still in need of being addressed in research. Furthermore, future research exploring how an ITA preparation program might effectively prepare ITAs to undertake such a conversation would also be important. Most of these topics, I believe, are fertile ground for forms of action research undertaken by those directly involved in ITA preparation.

7.3 Addressing students' competencies and orientations

The little attention that has been paid to how students might better communicate with their ITAs both at SWU and at other US HEIs represents a major missed opportunity for HEIs to carry out the mission of internationalizing their curricula and fostering international cooperation

and "global competency" among their stakeholders. As I suggested in Chapter 5, SWU students appear divided in terms of how they orient to communication with international instructors. Some students expressed commitments to Collaboration, stating that they usually cleared up communication difficulties by interacting with their instructors and were generally willing to put in effort to understand them. Other students, however, favored Avoidance, seeing communicating across linguistic difference as too face-threatening, inefficient, or uncomfortable to make any serious commitment to.

In Chapter 5, I argued that one of the major differences between these groups of students was the degree to which they appeared to echo the same discourses about the need for international cooperation that HEIs espouse in their strategic plans. Students who favored Collaboration saw a need to learn to function productively and respectfully in linguistically diverse spaces, and they believed their interactions with international instructors represented an opportunity to develop and practice these skills. It seems then that HEIs need to explore ways to get other students to buy into commitments to the internationalization of the curriculum. Future research could explore how HEIs might go about promoting such commitments among their students.

My findings from Chapters 5 and 6 also revealed that students are not always fully prepared to communicate across linguistic difference. In particular, some have clearly negative attitudes toward their instructors' Englishes. In particular, a few expressed resistance to even taking courses from international instructors. Some students appear to lack a sense of the range of strategies that might be available to them to help facilitate mutual understanding in these contexts. Such students represented the range of possible types of conversational repair as artificially narrow, restricted to only things like asking the instructor to repeat an entire stretch of

talk. This artificially narrow range of possible strategies was part of a larger attempt by students to portray communication across linguistic difference with their instructors as hopeless.

A few recent studies have already shown the potential for programs grounded in social psychological theories of attitude change to help improve students' negative perceptions of their ITAs and communication with them (Kang, Rubin, & Lindemann, 2015; Manohar & Appiah, 2015; Staples, Kang, & Wittner, 2014). Work exploring how such programs might be more widely implemented is still needed. Furthermore, there is still a need to examine how students might develop interactive strategies for communicating across linguistic difference productively and respectfully (Subtirelu & Lindemann, 2014, online access).

One possible space for the implementation of programs designed to begin substantive conversations about linguistic diversity and the need for communication across linguistic difference may be the first year composition classroom, since most university students have to take such courses and there is often some degree of flexibility concerning the content that can be covered in the course (see Matsuda & Silva, 1999 for a related approach to composition instruction). Other spaces could include programs offered during orientation. Again, this is an area where action research would be particularly enlightening, particularly if researchers are able to show how they used existing infrastructure within an HEI to create space for efforts to help cultivate more positive attitudes and more productive and respectful strategies for dealing with communication difficulty among students.

7.4 Final thoughts

Any study that utilizes case study methods will inevitably be asked to engage with questions of generalizability, whether what has been observed and documented in great detail can be taken to be representative of other ostensibly similar cases. My study undoubtedly raises

these very questions. Is SWU like other US HEIs? To what extent does its uniqueness impact upon our ability to draw more general conclusions based on an analysis of SWU? While there are many factors that could be discussed, and I have already mentioned SWU's lack of a central administrative unit for enforcing policies related to ITAs which likely makes many of the policy issues discussed in Chapter 4 difficult to apply to many HEIs, I will limit my discussion to one particular aspect of SWU that appears to differ especially from institutions that have been traditionally discussed in the applied linguistics literature on ITAs.

As can be seen from the demographics of the students in Chapters 5 and 6, SWU is substantially more racially and linguistically diverse than other predominantly White institutions that have featured in discussions of ITAs, such as Oklahoma State University (Halleck & Moder, 1995) or Iowa State University (Plakans, 1997). Certainly, this is likely to make some degree of difference in the views of students about their ITAs. Its impact is directly visible in Chapter 6 when PS, a South Asian TA, finds herself instructing some students with South Asian heritage (three of whom participated in my study), some of whom understand her language and identity through their own experiences with South Asian culture. I heard similar comments from a student with East Asian heritage who was taking MZ's class. More generally, it is possible that SWU students are more experienced in communicating across linguistic difference and, because of the experiences many have with linguistic discrimination targeted toward themselves, their family members, or others they know (as the students often shared in focus groups), they may be more cognizant of negative attitudes toward ITAs' language and more sympathetic toward ITAs.

While this remains a possibility that could be fruitfully tested via a comparative study of multiple HEIs, I would caution that there is clearly no deterministic effect of multilingual background or minority status on attitudes toward ITAs. Some of the most ardent defenders and

some of the most vocal critics of ITAs were students with multilingual backgrounds, including

students of color. I listened to students whose parents had immigrated to the US use their

parents' experiences not only to make pleas for tolerance toward ITAs and their language but

also to legitimize deficit views of ITAs' Englishes. Even though some of its stakeholders seemed

to feel that its diversity protected it from issues like linguistic discrimination, SWU is certainly

not immune from many of the same challenges that other HEIs have reported with respect to

students' responses to ITAs.

Nonetheless, SWU is unlike many of the universities that have been discussed with

respect to ITAs, but this is not because SWU is somehow an outlier amongst US HEIs. There are

numerous HEIs in the United States where ITAs are employed to teach a racially and

linguistically diverse undergraduate student body, for example, in the various campuses of the

University of California system (e.g., Menard-Warwick, 2014). Such contexts may be in some

ways more sympathetic to ITAs, but they also potentially pose specific challenges for ITAs.

Some of the ITAs I spoke with, for example, reported that they were unclear about their students'

linguistic and racial identities, how to talk about diversity and social identity, and what effects

their students' positionalities might have on how they communicate or how they engage in

learning. Future research might consider how ITAs understand the racial and linguistic diversity

of their students and what kind of preparation might help them to respond productively and

respectfully to it.

Undoubtedly, there remain other ways in which SWU is different from other HEIs in the

US and elsewhere. I hope to have provided a rich enough description of SWU, the policies in

operation in some of its departments, the ITAs that are employed there, and the students taking

their classes to allow readers to draw their own conclusions about the applicability of my work to

their own contexts (Smart, 2008). The question of how best to go about integrating ITAs and other international instructors into the internationalizing HEI is one that will undoubtedly require an approach specific to each institution. However, I hope to have identified a few aspects of the situation that cut across different HEIs. Of particular note, there is an urgent need to address students' competencies and orientations. In order to take seriously their stated commitments to improving the "global competency" of all stakeholders, HEIs will need to address the ways students orient to and carry out communication with those whom they have daily access to by virtue of attending an internationalizing university, their instructors.

Finally, I have restricted myself in this project to a particular aspect of international inclusion within higher education, specifically regarding ITAs and their communication with students. ITA-student communication is certainly an important challenge for institutions of higher education as they move toward international inclusion, but I believe it is important for further inquiry into other challenges that linguistic diversity poses for (international) inclusion. For example, many US-born or native English-speaking instructors require greater preparation for instructing international students. They need greater understanding of the linguistic and cultural diversity that exists within their classrooms, and they need strategies for making instruction accessible to everyone. Addressing all of these issues is important for ensuring that diversity is respected on campus and all stakeholders are genuinely being prepared to engage in global communities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview protocol for administrators

1. Why does your department hire international teaching assistants?

   a. What roles do they play?

   b. About how many of your department's TAs are international students?

   c. Are there positive aspects of hiring ITAs?

2. Can you describe to me how you understand the steps and assessments an individual who has not yet been accepted to the university or your department must go through to become an ITA?

3. Are you, in any way, involved in the determination of whether ITAs are eligible to teach or are allowed to continue to teach at Shrinking World University?

   a. What do you look for as indicators of a successful potential ITA?

   b. What criteria do you apply?

   c. Do you believe that the procedures for determining ITA eligibility are adequate?

4. Are you, in any way, involved in ensuring that ITAs develop as instructors?

   a. What things do you attempt to help ITAs improve on?

   b. What support do you provide ITAs?

   c. Do you believe that the support for ITAs available at the university is adequate?

5. In your opinion, are the procedures for screening, assessing, and supporting ITAs at Shrinking World University adequate? Why or why not?

6. Have you received or been aware of any student complaints about ITAs at Shrinking World University?

   a. What do you think causes these complaints?

    b.   Do you believe these complaints to be legitimate?

7. In your experience, do ITAs generally have the English proficiency necessary to be effective instructors at Shrinking World University?

    a.   In your experience, what factors are related to strong English proficiency for individual ITAs?

    b.   In your experience, what factors are related to weak English proficiency for individual ITAs?

    c.   Do you believe that there are systemic problems with ITAs serving as instructors at Shrinking World University? If so, what is the nature of these problems?

Appendix B: Interview protocol for international teaching assistants

1. Tell me how you came to be a student at Shrinking World University.

2. Tell me about learning English.

3. What requirements did you have to satisfy in order to become a TA?

    a. Do you think these requirements are adequate?

    b. Did you feel prepared to become a TA?

4. What kind of help or support have you received to help you prepare for your TA duties?

    a. Do you believe that you have received enough support?

    b. Are there additional forms of support that you would like?

5. Can you describe your experience as an instructor at Shrinking World University?

    a. What courses have you been (or are you) involved with and when?

    b. What duties have you had as a TA?

6. How would you evaluate your experience as an instructor at Shrinking World University?

    a. Have you had any successes in the classroom?

    b. Have you experienced any difficulties in the classroom?

7. What kinds of things do you do to help your students learn?

8. How do you believe that your students view you?

    a. Have you received any specific praise or complaints?

    b. How do you feel they react to you when you're up in front of the classroom?

    c. Would you mind sharing with me how they have evaluated you on their end-of-semester evaluations?

9. Do you believe that there are problems related to language in your classroom?

    a. Do students experience difficulties when trying to understand you?

b.   Do you experience difficulties when trying to understand students?

10. What do you do to try to cope with communication difficulties?

a.   Do you have any specific strategies for determining if students understand?

b.   Do you do anything specific to prevent communication difficulties?

Appendix C: Protocol for student focus groups

1. What classes have you taken with an instructor who was a nonnative speaker of English?

    a. What were these classes?

    b. Where were the instructors from?

2. How would you describe the experience of having a nonnative speaker of English as your instructor?

    a. What were the positive or negative aspects?

    b. In your opinion, how do nonnative English speakers compare to native English speakers as instructors?

    c. Would you avoid taking classes from nonnative English speakers?

3. Did you or any of your fellow students experience difficulties in communicating with your instructors who were nonnative English speakers?

    a. Can you give some examples and describe them?

    b. What do you think caused these difficulties?

    c. What did the instructor do to address the difficulties?

    d. What did you or your classmates do to address the difficulties?

4. In your opinion, what can be done about communication difficulties between students and their instructors?

    a. What can instructors do better?

    b. What can students do better?

    c. What can the university do better?

Appendix D: Transcription conventions

Symbol	Explanation
@	Laughter
(.)	Untimed pause
CAPS	Emphasis, contrastive stress
(( ))	Transcriber comment or description
[ ]	Overlapping speech
//	Phonetic transcription using IPA
:	Lengthened vowel (or other sound)
-	False start
?	Question contour
,	Slightly rising intonation, continuation
.	Falling intonation indicating end of idea unit

Appendix E: Questionnaire for students participating in focus groups

Age: _____ **Place of birth:** _____

Class standing:

      Freshman   Sophomore   Junior   Senior   Other: _____

Major(s): _____

Minor(s): _____ **Current GPA:** _____

Gender: _____ **Ethnicity:** _____

Nationality (i.e., country of citizenship): _____

Language(s) you speak, please indicate proficiency from 1 (beginner) to 5 (expert), (e.g.,

English - 5, Spanish - 2): _____

Language(s) your parents speak/spoke at home: _____

Have you **lived or travelled outside of the United States?**   Yes   No

If yes, please give locations and lengths of time (e.g., "Mexico City, Mexico – 1 year"):

_____

_____

Please describe any relationships you have with nonnative speakers of English (for example, family members, friends, coworkers). State how frequently you interact with each person.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix F: Protocol for student playback sessions

1. How do you feel about your Biology 201 lab?

   a. Are you satisfied with what you are learning?

   b. Is it engaging?

   c. Does the class sufficiently challenge you?

   d. Are you experiencing any problems with the class?

2. How do you feel about communication in the class?

   a. Are you satisfied with the instructor's communication skills?

   b. Is there anything the instructor could do to make communication better?

   c. Have you done anything to help yourself better understand?

   d. Do you think you or your classmates could do anything to help communication in the classroom?

3. I'm going to play short excerpts from class. I'd like to hear your reactions to it when it's finished, or if you'd like I can stop the video in the middle.

   a. Do you remember this? Do you remember what you were thinking at the time?

   b. Do you remember if you understood what was happening?

   c. If you thought it was difficult to understand, what did you do in response?

   d. What do you think the instructor could have done to help you understand better?

   e. What could you or your classmates have done to better understand?

   f. Does this remind you of any other events in class?

Appendix G: Protocol for ITA playback sessions

1. How do you feel about your lab class?

    a. Are you satisfied with your teaching?

    b. Are you satisfied with the students' learning?

    c. Do you think the students are challenged and engaged?

    d. Are you experiencing any problems with the class?

2. How do you feel about communication in the class?

    a. Are you satisfied with your own communication skills?

    b. Is there anything you could do to make communication better?

    c. What are students doing to help ensure communication is successful?

    d. Are you satisfied with the students' efforts to communicate with you?

    e. Is there anything you think they could do to help make communication better?

3. I'm going to play a short excerpt from class. I'd like to hear your reaction to it when it's finished.

    a. Do you remember this? Do you remember what you were thinking at the time?

    b. Did any students tell you later that they didn't understand this information?

    c. Do you think students found it difficult to understand? If so, why do you think students might have found it difficult?

    d. What could you have done to make it easier for the students to understand?

    e. What could the students have done to make communication better?