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The ESL Teacher and Culture in the Classroom: Further Understandings and Adaptations

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The ESL Teacher and Culture in the Classroom: Further Understandings and Adaptations

by

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Abstract

When it comes to teaching and interacting with students, having experience and knowledge about different cultures and cultural backgrounds can help teachers navigate through cultural hurdles in their classroom. To seek insight on how teachers' knowledge of their students' cultures impacts their teaching and classroom adaptation, this study used surveys, and one-on-one interviews similar to a previous study done by Lindquist (2016). This study had twelve participants, all of which are in or were in an M.A. TESL program and taught as a graduate assistant in the Intensive English Center (IEC), in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program or helped students with their writing as part of their graduate assistantship (GA). The participants had either previously taken the optional, for-credit ESL and Culture course, or were currently enrolled, or did not take the course. The participants have various cultural backgrounds, and previous teaching experience. An analysis of the surveys and interviews revealed common themes such as beliefs about culture and teaching ESL students, pedagogical challenges, and teachers' beliefs on students adapting to U.S. culture. Similar to Lindquist's (2016) study, the participants that had taken the ESL and Culture course used generalizations less, and were more confident in their teaching strategies. Those that did not take the course used more generalizations, and scored themselves lower on the self-assessment of cultural knowledge.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction and Background

Expectations in the classroom will vary from culture to culture. Therefore, the approaches used by teachers will differ. As a teacher, it is crucial that we understand how our own culture and students' culture impacts the classroom.

Language teachers and researchers have become increasingly aware that a second or foreign language can rarely be taught or successfully learned without considering the culture of the students (Hinkel, 1999). How students and teachers interact and understand one another is very dynamic and complex. Factors such as: personality; prior knowledge; prior experience; attitude; cultural expectations; and cultural awareness are related to the classroom environment and teaching effectiveness on the students (Lindquist, 2016). Cultural awareness can only aid the learning of a second language (Hinkel, 1999).

With the rise of intercultural learning environments, whether it be in the multicultural U.S., other diverse classrooms in other countries, or classrooms where students are relatively homogeneous but the teacher is from a different culture, the study of various teaching and learning styles has become urgent in order for ethical and meaningful instruction to take place in the classroom (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004). Understanding cultural differences is crucial due to the increase of multicultural communities, schools, and organizations (Lindquist, 2016). "The ESL experience is not only about a linguistic divide, but equally and more importantly, a cultural divide" (Rowsell, Sztainbok, & Blaney, 2007, p. 142).

As a student in the M.A. TESL program, teaching as a graduate assistant in the EAP (English for Academic Purposes) program, I found myself in a classroom with students of

various cultural backgrounds and little knowledge of those specific cultures. The ESL students that attend the University come from all different parts of the word, all with different cultural and educational backgrounds.

I often noticed cultural differences, but had difficulty working through them. I expressed my concern to my fellow M.A. TESL colleagues, and many of them had similar obstacles. This motivated me to take the optional ESL and Culture course offered at the University in the M.A. TESL program. After taking the class, I found it easier to navigate through cultural bumps in my ESL classroom. Using Lindquist's (2016) study as inspiration for this study, I looked into how teachers adapt and cope with different cultures in their classroom, and how culture impacts their teaching.

Rationale

Studies that have been done in the topic of ESL classrooms and students with diverse backgrounds usually focus on the students, their identity and cultural variety in the curriculum (Lindquist, 2016). Few studies have focused how cultural training for ESL teachers impact their teaching practices. Using Lindquist's study as the basis for my research project, I intend to extend the research and look further into what ways cultural adaptations are used in ESL classrooms.

Research Questions

Through this study, similar to Lindquist (2016), I intend to uncover specific instances and interactions from my participants to show if and how teachers make adaptations in the classroom based on their cultural knowledge and background. My research questions are based on the

questions that Lindquist (2016) posed in her study. The following questions will be considered during the research process:

1. In what ways do novice ESL teachers make adaption or adjustments based on their knowledge and awareness of cultures of their students?

2. Are there differences in adjustments that were made between teachers who have taken a for-credit ESL and Culture course through the M.A. TESL program and those who have not?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this literature review, I will discuss previous research that has been done in the areas of cultural knowledge and development for ESL teachers, identity in the ESL classroom, and culture in pedagogy to better explain how ESL teachers can address cultural differences and use cultural knowledge in their classrooms.

With classrooms becoming more and more diverse, it is no surprise that many studies and texts focus on culture in the ESL (English as a Second Language) classroom. Studies have shown that using and considering culture when designing curriculum and activities in an ESL classroom can help promote students' understanding of the target language (Hinkel, 1999; Porter-Samuels, 2013; Rowsell et al., 2007).

In an ESL classroom, cultural difference and expectation can be a barrier to learning, engagement and communication (Lindquist, 2016). In order for teachers to be effective in the ESL classroom, teachers need to understand the barriers that may arise, and learn how to dismantle those barriers. Rowsell et al. (2007) state that there is a need to place more of an understanding on how to bridge cultural practices in classrooms, both in the teacher education programs as well as in the curriculum (Rowsell et al., 2007). Rubenstein states, it is vital that when we learn about different teaching approaches that "our own orientation and value system be suspended (at least temporarily), so each educational system can be understood in terms of the sociopolitical culture in which it is embedded" (Rubenstein, 2006, p. 433).

Culture

The definition for the term culture has been highly debated among researchers and linguists. The term *culture* described by Patridge (2012):

> Comes from classical Latin, or even earlier and focus on cultivation or nurturing, but the term is often used to refer to a nation-based or geographically-located group, reducing the complex nature of culture to a set of simple explanations and generalizations. (p. 3)

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) stated:

> Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditions (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action. (p. 181)

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) suggested that this definition be to enlarged and to include the interrelations of cultural forms and individual variability. "As products of action and conditioning elements of further action, these patterns are not fixed", nor static, "and must be learned revised, renegotiated and tested by individuals and groups over time" (Partridge, 2012, p. 4).

Ting-Toomey (1999) builds onto the definition of culture as "a complex frame of reference that consists of patterns of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, symbols, and meanings that are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of a community" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 10). Culture then, can be thought of as a pattern of behavior and beliefs that serve as a guide for groups of people, and culture is a way of understanding the world around us so we can navigate through it (Partridge, 2012). Rosaldo (1984) states that culture is "far more than a mere catalogue of ritual and beliefs" (p. 140).

Patridge (2012) did a study on intercultural competence acquisition among TESL students. Patridge (2012) used the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), which is an empirical measurement based on Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural

Sensitivity. Partridge compared TESL students who had not taken a culture-based course and students who had taken a culture-based course such as English 463/563 (or 673) (Patridge, 2012). Patridge found that taking a culture course increased students' intercultural competence. The students that took a culture course indicated an increase in competence in comprehending and accommodating complex cultural differences, and recognizing patterns of cultural differences in their own and other cultures (Patridge, 2012).

Baker (2012) did a study on cultural awareness (CA) and intercultural awareness (ICA) in English language teaching (ELT). Baker defined CA as "a conscious understanding of the role culture plays in language learning and communication" (Baker, 2012, p. 65).

Baker (2012) defined ICA as:

> Intercultural awareness is a conscious understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices, and frames of understanding can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in real time communication. (p. 66)

Baker's study concluded that an awareness of multicultural settings of ELT is vital for any attempt to teach language and communication (Baker, 2012).

Erickson (1997) discussed the distinction between visible and invisible aspects of culture, and how it has been used to understand what role culture plays in the classroom. Erickson explained visible culture as the easily identifiable because they are more explicit. This would include the way a person dresses, foods, as well as housing and geographic factors (Erickson, 1997). The invisible aspects refer to things that are more difficult to recognize such indiscernible to natives of the culture, such as values, beliefs, as well as perspectives on time such as being late, and what topics are appropriate and inappropriate in conversations with people (Erickson, 1997).

Teacher Development

Researchers state that being able to navigate through cultural situations and have cultural knowledge is vital for all teachers, especially ESL and EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Hinkel 1999; Lindquist, 2016; Liyanage & Bartlett, 2008). In order for one to be able to have cultural knowledge and to learn how to navigate through cultural situations, a person needs to have experience with diverse backgrounds and receive training or cultural education through a university or community program (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Shuman & Shulman, 2008). Gollnick and Chinn (1990) suggest that teachers need to learn about cultural groups other than their own. This can be done through direct interaction with people who have different cultures, and learning how to navigate through those differences.

Bollin (2007) analyzed how service-learning experience for teachers influenced their future teaching experiences. Bollin found that service learning can help prepare students that are planning to each in an ESL context to better understand their future students (Bollin, 20017). Bollin (2007) states that it is critical for diverse pedagogy for teachers to able to consider issues from multiple perspectives, and this type of experience can help break down biases, prejudices and overgeneralizations that future teachers may have towards different cultures (Bollin, 2007). We have a cultural lens for our own culture, and cultures we have experience with. In order to better understand other people's cultures, it is important for teachers to view other cultures through its cultural lens rather than through one's own cultural lens.

While experiences can help teachers learn about different cultures, it is important to avoid overgeneralizations of a culture. Lanteigne (2007) observed teachers in the U.S. and in the

Middle East (Lanteigne, 2007). In her study, Lanteigne focuses on ESL and Culture, and how

generalizations can be made about students from teaching experiences (Lanteigne, 2007).

Lanteigne (2007) points out that the students of a particular culture could be an exception of their

cultural norms, meaning they violate some social norms rather than follow them. It is necessary

for teachers to learn how to distinguish between what may be culturally acceptable behavior and

what is seen as unacceptable. Lanteigne suggests that teachers who are working in a new,

different culture pay attention to others' cues, such as people's reactions, and everyday behavior

(Lanteigne, 2007). This can help teachers understand what is considered socially acceptable, and

help teachers navigate through cultural situations that may arise.

In Lindquist's (2016) study, she analyzed stories from participants that have taken the

ESL and Culture course and those that have not taken the course. In her study, she found that the

participants that did not take the ESL and Culture class, and had less than 1 year of teaching

experience verbalized differences that they noticed in the classroom and made more

generalizations about their students' characteristics based on the student's nationality. The

participants that took the ESL and Culture course were more confident in their roles of an ESL

teacher (Lindquist, 2016). Lindquist claims that the combination of taking the ESL and Culture

course as well as having more than one year of teaching experience is related to greater

confidence in their ESL classrooms, perceiving themselves with higher levels of cultural

knowledge, and less likely to apply over generalizations to their students based on their

nationality (Lindquist, 2016).

Culture in Pedagogy

   In an ESL or EFL context, teachers often have to balance two or more pedagogies, cultural norms, and expectations (Lindquist, 2016). Novice teachers may have various factors that affect how they see themselves, and their educational and cultural experiences as well as expectations. Porter-Samuels (2013) states that teachers must make links to students' "socio-cultural contexts and that they must value and be seen to value the cultural backgrounds of learners" (Porter-Samuel, 2013).

   Liyanage and Bartlett (2008) considered the different types of teaching methods and practices. In their study, they found that ESL/EFL teachers' teaching methods might not be applicable in all cultures (Liyanage & Bartlett, 2008). Therefore, teachers should consider cultural gaps when implementing their teaching methods. In order for a teacher to be able to consider cultural gaps, and attempt to fix them, teachers need to first be aware of the cultural differences.

   Crabtree and Sapp (2004) examined and analyzed pedagogy in an EFL classroom. This study focuses on the development of culturally flexible pedagogy that is appropriate in cross-cultural learning environments (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004). They discussed how teachers that have different cultural backgrounds than their students could cause conflicts in the classroom. Teachers whose pedagogy is deeply rooted in their cultural beliefs and values can create and produce negative attitudes and learning outcomes. In Crabtree and Sapp (2004) study, they observed an EFL classroom in Brazil that was taught by an American professor. In the study, the first few days were frustrating for both the American professor and the Brazilian students because cultural and pedagogical harmony were lacking. There was lack of motivation from

students, and lack of understanding from both the teacher and the students because of

misunderstandings in normal interactions such as: lack of approachableness, the perceived

insensitivity of the professor, and physical closeness (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004). The researchers

suggest that there is "the need for intercultural training for visiting instructors prior to departure"

(Crabtree & Sapp, 2004, p. 120). Spitzberg (1997) also suggests that training should cover

culturally specific knowledge, culture-general principles; motivation for adapting; and specific

operational skills.

Genc and Bada (2005) did a study on culture in language learning and teaching. Genc and

Bada focused on the benefits of learning about culture in an ESL classroom. The findings in the

study suggest that a culture class is beneficial in terms of "raising cultural awareness, changing

attitudes towards native and target societies, and contribution to the teaching profession" (Genc

& Bada, 2005, p. 81).

Gil addresses theoretical issues by discussing different ways the relationship of language

and culture and been used and practiced in foreign or ESL pedagogies (Gil & Luis, 2016). Gil

stated that the "most important implication" (Gil & Luis, 2016, p. 32) is that handling culture,

language, and navigating interculturally is difficult for most teachers. Gil and Luis (2016) states

that is it difficult for new teachers or those learning to teach to take theory and turn it into

practice. Gil and Luis (2016) also state that in order for teachers to know how to actually perform

in the classroom, they must have interactions with multicultural students (Gil & Luis, 2016).

Rowsell et al. (2007) examine and explore ways of using culture and cultural practices in

ESL teaching. The study claims "culture should not be viewed as a 'discrete' or 'bounded' entity

and that teacher education programmes need to do a better job of bridging the divide between

theory and practice" (Rowsell et al., 2007, p. 140). The study states that interactions between

students and teachers are never neutral (Rowsell et al., 2007). This is why it is important for

teachers to be aware and understand how to accommodate their classrooms to ESL students, and

their culture. In a multicultural classroom, it is essential to understand the ESL learner, but it is

also just as important to comprehend and understand how to educate teachers to teach ESL

students (Rowsell et al., 2007).

Identity

Identity is an important aspect for all people; identity can be dynamic and can change

with time and experiences. ESL teachers face various factors that affect their identity, such as

their educational and cultural experiences (Lindquist, 2016). Musanti and Pence's (2010) study

focused on teacher development, how teachers construct knowledge, and navigate through

different identities. Musanti and Pence (2010) conclude from their study, "that teacher identity

and knowledge are intricately interwoven" (Musanti & Pence, 2010, p. 87). Teachers' decision-

making and actions are affected by their knowledge about themselves, experiences, and their

interpretations of who they are as teachers and their experiences as learners (Mustanti & Pence,

2010). Musanti and Pence state that as more professional programs emerge, more research is

needed to explore how these interactions impact teachers and the way they construct knowledge

(Musanti & Pence, 2010).

Jurkunas (2015) study analyzed novice ESL teachers in a community college, and how

aspects of a person's personality contributes to their identity in the ESL classroom. Jurkunas

states that the dynamic aspect of teacher's identity is developed by social factors, and

experiences in culture. Identity is dynamic, and exists "on a continuum of growth" (Junkunas, 2015, p. 226) and can be challenging for novice teachers.

Chapter 3: Methodology

I conducted a qualitative study to find out how teachers interact with cultures and make adaptations in the classroom. This study was inspired from Amy Lindquist's (2016) study. I used similar methods as Lindquist's (2016) study, but adapted the survey. The 12 participants first completed a background and cultural self-assessment survey, and then semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were conducted and audio recorded.

Participants

Participants were 12 graduate assistant teachers from an English problem that have taught or are currently teaching in the IEC or EAP courses. My participants were currently or previously enrolled in the MA TESL program at a university in the Midwestern United States. I selected participants similar to Lindquist's (2016) study, and used convenience sampling. I worked to find a group of teachers that represent the teacher population in the two programs with at least 1 year of experience as a graduate assistant teacher of international ESL students in a Master's in TESL program. All participants have had many interactions with students from various countries that are at the university. Some of the participants may have had previous teaching experience or study abroad.

Of the participants, five have taken an optional for-credit ESL and Culture course in their program of study for the M.A. TESL and four who did not take the course. Three participants were currently enrolled in the ESL and Culture course. The ESL and Culture course purpose is to prepare ESL teachers to teach in multicultural classrooms. The course covers two areas, cultural translations for ESL teachers, and cultural learning activities for ESL teachers and ESL students.

Description of Data Collection Instruments

I used the background survey (Appendix A) that Lindquist (2016) used in her study, but added the question of the participant's home country. Similar to Lindquist (2016) background survey, I asked participants how many semesters have been completed as a graduate student in the TESL program at the University, if they have teaching experience, how many years of teaching experience, if they have lived in a different country, their L2 language background; and to rate themselves on how they perceive themselves as being familiar with their ESL student's cultures. The additional question I will ask participants will be to identify their cultural background/home country. The survey was given first, and then I asked questions about their background and a self-assessment of cultural knowledge (see Appendix A).

As Lindquist (2016) did in her study, I conducted one-on-one, cross-sectional qualitative interviews with participants to gather data using guiding questions (Appendix B).

Procedures

The researcher, met with each of the participants for one-on-one interviews in the spring 2018 semester. The participants filled out the self-assessment background survey first. I then conducted the interviews.

I used the interview questions in the order that they are listed (see Appendix B), which is what Lindquist (2016) did in her study. I asked follow-up questions when it was needed. For the interview, I used open-ended, non-leading questions that Lindquist (2016) used for her study. The questions allowed the participants to talk about their experiences. I interviewed the participants in the familiar environment of their choosing. I made sure to ensure privacy, so they

did not need to worry about students hearing the interview. The interviews were recorded by computer, which was password protected.

The purpose of the interview was to elicit descriptions and narrative stories that demonstrate an adjustment or reaction that was made while teaching, based on or relating to their knowledge of the students cultures, as well as changes they have made in the management of the classroom or curriculum choices based on their cultural knowledge. I used the same arrangement of questions, so that the questions began with little to no focus on culture. The questions then led into questions that have a focus more specifically and explicitly on culture.

I provided enough time for the participants to reflect and think about their answers. The information that was received from their answers helped create a starting point for discussion. Based on the answers given by the participants, I asked follow-up questions for participants to expand on an idea. The questions focused on bringing up stories and accounts of their experiences in the classroom and with their students. When the participants shared their experiences, or answered my questions, I did not give authentic responses for each answer. This helped prevent the participants from answering things in a way that they thought I expected.

After the interview, I followed up with the participants by e-mail to ask about any reflections. Just like in Lindquist's (2016) study, I asked participants if they thought more about the answers they gave, or if they had any related thoughts. The follow-up was done to collect any further answers or thoughts that the participants may have but was not prepared to give or did not think about at the time of the interview. To protect the participants' identity, I used codes such as "P1-Y" for participant one, and "P2-Y" for participant two, for all of the participants. I used codes instead of pseudonyms because it helps prevent bias when analyzing the data. In order for

the reader to know who has taken the course, those enrolled, and those that have not taken the

course, I used abbreviations. For example, those that have taken the course, "-Y" will follow the

participant number. Those that have not taken the course "-N" is used, and those that were

currently enrolled "-E" is used.

Data Analysis

I analyzed my data using a similar method as Lindquist (2016). I used Creswell's (2012)

suggestions for qualitative data analysis, and started by organizing and transcribing the data. I

decided to do a qualitative study because it allows the researcher to gather information through

stories, and can help prevent participants answering questions with answers that they believe the

researcher is looking for. I collected the surveys and kept them in a folder until I started to

analyze my data. I organized and stored all of the audio recordings in one folder on my

computer, and I transcribed them for analysis. To transcribe, I listened to the interview, and

manually transcribed them with text. I listened to the recordings three times to ensure I did not

miss any text. After I transcribed each interview, I made notes for themes or categories, similar

to what Lindquist (2016) did. I then conducted an iterative process of reading, coding the data,

and finding themes. When I analyzed the data, I looked for patterns in the interview responses

between those who have taken the ESL and Culture course, those who were currently enrolled

and those who have not taken the course.

Chapter 4: Discussion

As previously discussed, the participants were all Master's students in a MA TESL program, and all of the participants were teaching or have taught in the university's IEC or EAP program or worked with students in the writing center. The participants had varied previous experiences; the most experience was four and a half years, while some participants did not have any teaching experience prior to being a GA in the MA TESL program.

The information about each participant's teaching and language experience can be seen in Table 1, which can be found below. The information in the table is from the background survey that was completed before the interviews. I used the abbreviation "CE" for those participants that were currently enrolled in the ESL and Culture course. The information has been simplified to maintain participant anonymity. Ten participants had experience teaching in countries other than the United States. One participant had teaching experience only in the United States, while five participants did not have any previous teaching experience before teaching as a graduate student in the MA TESL program. Those that did not have any previous teaching experience, three of the participants have studied or lived in another country. Eight participants, who were P1-Y, P2-Y, P4-Y, P5-Y, P7-E, P8-N, P9-N, and P12-N, did not study ESL as an undergraduate. English was not the native language for five of the participants. Three participants did not speak any other languages besides English; two of those participants have studied or lived in another country. Five of the participants have taken ESL and Culture, three participants were currently enrolled in the course, and four participants have not taken the ESL and Culture course.

Table 1

Participant Responses to Survey

	P1-Y	P2-Y	P3-E	P4-Y	P5-Y	P6-E	P7-E	P8-N	P9-N	P10-Y	P11-N	P12-N
International Student	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Previously taught ESL/EFL. If yes, for how long.	1 year	2 years	1 year	No	No	No	8 weeks	3 years	No	2 years	4.5 years	5 years
Speaks other languages (other than English)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Taken the ESL and Culture Course	Yes	Yes	CE	Yes	Yes	CE	CE	No	No	Yes	No	No
Familiarity with the cultures of the students in their ESL course (Likert Scale: 1=Unfamiliar-7=Very familiar)	4	6	3	4	7	4	4	5	3	3	6	1

Themes

To help organize and understand what adaptations that the teacher participants make when it comes to cultural knowledge, I will present the findings of my research and data analysis similar to Lindquist (2016), and use themes. I was able to find three main themes, with some sub-themes. The first is beliefs about culture and teaching ESL students. For the second theme, l will discuss pedagogical challenges, such as feedback, failed activities, group work, and expectations of the students. The last theme is teachers' beliefs on students adapting to U.S. culture. I will also discuss comparisons between those participants who had taken the ESL and Culture course, those that were currently enrolled, and those that have not taken the ESL and Culture course.

Beliefs about culture and teaching ESL students. At the beginning of the interview, I asked the participants the reasons for wanting to become an ESL teacher. Eight participants described their love of teaching and helping others. Three participants described that they wanted to work in a setting that involves language and different cultures. One of the participants, P7-E, stated that the reasoning for being in the MA TESL program was out of convenience because it was the one of the few Master's programs that did not require a lot of prerequisites.

In the survey, ten participants stated that they have worked aboard. Four of those participants described their previous teaching experience with homogeneous groups; three of those participants shared how it was a new experience to teach students with different cultural backgrounds because their previous experience was in their home country. P11-N, who did not take ESL and Culture explained:

> The biggest difference between teaching here and teaching back home was that back home, the students had the same background as me, so it was easier to know what they were thinking, or needing. When I walked into my classroom, I knew what to expect from my students and my students knew what to expect from me.

This explanation is evidence that international students who are teaching in the U.S. need the ESL and Culture course, and that the course is important for international students who are now teaching students from a wide variety of cultures. Another Participant, P12-N, taught homogenous groups in their home country, also stated that it is different teaching those with different backgrounds. Although, he did not state that culture was the reasoning. P12-N stated:

> I feel more comfortable teaching those not from the same culture, the culture does not matter, it is people that I can communicate with, in another language that is not English. Because if one-way is closed, then I can use other ways. If they do not know English, I can use the other language. Knowledge about other cultures, food, and dealing with other people is not prevalent.

P12-N, who did not take the ESL and Culture course, talked about how he noticed some differences between teaching back home to a homogenous group and in classrooms that have more diverse groups of students. Although P12-N stated that "I think being multilingual is more important than being multicultural or having cultural exposure". A participant that had previous experience teaching abroad, P1-Y stated:

> My first teaching experience was in a very conservative country, and has very high expectations for the students, so the way classrooms are very strict. Students will go to school all day, and then a second school, and then weekends they go to English school, my first teaching experience had really high expectations of the students so I feel like teaching in the U.S. with international students I have had to lower my expectations, and change the way I manage my classroom. When the classroom is made up of people who have similar backgrounds and culture, it involves a different type of classroom management.

P12-N mentioned that even though he taught a homogeneous group that was different from her own culture, coming to the United States and teaching students with different cultural backgrounds was also a different experience for him.

When I asked to describe the courses they have taught and their students, 11 of the participants used nationality of the students, the level of the course, and the level of proficiency. Of those 11 participants, eight had experience teaching abroad. Four of those participants did not take ESL and Culture. The only participant that did not mention nationality was P7,-E who only used the proficiency level and ages of the students to describe them and also did not have experience teaching abroad. When it came to generalizations, P1-Y, P7-E, P8-N, P9-N, and P11-N made generalizations of their students. P8-N, P9-N, and P11-N did not take the ESL and Culture course. P11-N stated:

Chinese do not criticize anyone, like their teachers, and the government, they do not like to talk about politics and like to play it safe. My Nepali students were outspoken and opinionated compared to the Chinese. They are polar opposites from the Chinese, so sometimes it was hard to balance the two differences.

P11-N, also stated "Most of my students were from China, and tend to be passive, never volunteer to give answers and never raise their hands." P8-N, and P9-N, also did not take the ESL and Culture course, and used many generalizations as well when referring and talking about their students. P7-E, P8-N, P9-N, and P11-N also compared their own culture to their students' culture. P8-N, P9-N, P11-N did not take the ESL and Culture course, while P7-E is currently enrolled. P7-E stated, "It is interesting how cultures can be so different from mine. A lot of Asians are quiet and do not like to be called on, unlike Americans who are more outspoken and like to talk". P9-N also used comparisons between her own culture and her students' cultures, and used generalizations. P9-N stated that she had a lot of Chinese students, and "because Chinese are not used to giving opinions in class assignments, which is something very common here in America". When she would ask for the students to discuss, P9-N stated, "the Chinese students would just sit there and listen". P8-N mentioned that many of her Chinese students would not give their opinions in assignments, and mentioned that it was hard for her, because "in American culture, a lot of times, we give our opinions in reflection papers".

When analyzing the difference between participants who had taken ESL and Culture, those who had not, and those that were currently enrolled, all of the participants that did not take ESL and Culture used nationality to describe their students. Those that have previously taken the ESL and Culture and those that were currently enrolled described their students using nationality as well as age and proficiency level, and used generalization less or did not use them. Three of

the participants that did not take ESL and Culture made generalizations of their students, as well as compared their own culture to their students' culture.

In the interview, I asked the participants what culture means to them. Many of the participants commented that culture is hard to define because it has many different components, is complex, and can change over time. P10-Y described culture as:

> Culture…is an all-encompassing term, it covers traditions, cultural norms, morals, values, It covers so many things…how we see things and act….culture is the fabric of our being.

All of the responses had similar components, participants using language, morals and values, behavior, beliefs, traditions.

During the interview, participants shared their perceptions of culture or their students and if they have changed over time. All of the participants admitted to having perceptions of their students and their culture. Of those participants, seven participants: P1-Y, P2-Y, P4-Y, P5-Y, P6-E, P7-E, and P10-Y stated that their perceptions have changed over time and with experiences. P1-Y, P2-Y, P4-Y, P5, and P10-Y have taken the ESL and Culture course. P7-E is currently enrolled, and P6-E has not taken the ESL and Culture course. P4-Y stated that in the beginning of teaching he did have some perceptions of his students but changed with time and experience. P4-Y gave the example that there was a student in his class that kept making noises out of frustration, and originally P4-Y thought the student was just trying to be difficult and did not like the activity. Over time, P4-Y realized that the student was having trouble understanding what was being said due to auditory problems, and that it was not a cultural misunderstanding. P6-E talked about how she first thought a student was not interested in class, and that he seemed lazy and did not like to do homework, but that perception changed when she saw he had a high score

on his testing, and on the important projects he did really well. P5-Y made the comment of, "the perception changes because the students change, or maybe because I change as a teacher too".

Participant P2-Y state that they had perceptions of some cultures or groups, but did not have perceptions for cultures that he did not have any experiences with.

Five participants, all of which have taken ESL and Culture or were currently enrolled made statements about how even though there are cultural norms, each person can follow their culture differently. P3-E stated that she had perceptions but that they were not accurate. P3-E stated:

> The perceptions I have of my students' cultures may not accurately reflect their home cultures because I am not fully aware of all of their cultural aspects. Everyone is different, even if they are from the same culture.

One of the participants, P9-N, who did not take the ESL and Culture course, stated that some perceptions changed, while others did not. P9-N stated:

> I felt like I knew about how Chinese classrooms are different than in the U.S. and that in China, students do not raise their hands, give opinions, ask questions in front of others, and do not like to be at the center of attention. This perception has not changed, and I do not think it will. Almost all of my Chinese students still struggle with giving opinions in their assignments and hate speaking in front of everyone.

Analyzing this data shows that those who have taken ESL and Culture and those currently enrolled tend to change their perceptions with time and experience. For those that did not take ESL and Culture, three of those participants admitted to having perceptions but that those perceptions have not changed.

All of the participants indicated that it is important to know their students. During the interview, I asked the participants how they would define knowing their students and why it is important to know them. Eight participants used the terms culture, proficiency level, personality,

language background, and learning styles when describing what it means to know your student. P1-Y explained that it is important for teachers to know their students: culturally, by level, background language, and their personality.P1-Y explained that it is important for teachers to know their students: culturally, by level, background language, and their personality. P10-Y and P12-N mentioned that it is important to know the students, and knowing them means to know their level, language background, and background knowledge. P12-N did mention that it is important for teachers to know their students because it can help teachers understand the students' behavior and knowing what to expect from them. P12-N did not mention culture when talking about knowing his students.

The eight participants that used the terms culture, proficiency level, personality, language background, and learning styles when describing what it means to know your student, eight of them has either taken ESL and Culture or is currently enrolled. The participants that did not take ESL and Culture defined knowing as knowing the proficiency level, students' learning styles, and background knowledge, but did not mention culture. One of the participants that did not take ESL and Culture stated that understanding the students' language is more important than understanding their cultures and cultural backgrounds.

Knowing how to understand your students is important, but also understanding why supports the importance of teachers knowing their students. Common reasons were: student goals; being able to adjust to the students' needs and learning styles; understanding the students' experience; and interests. P2-Y and P4-Y stated that knowing a student's personality, their learning styles, and proficiency level could help a teacher adjust the teaching style to help the

students and the classroom. P4-Y and P5-Y stated that knowing students and their interests helps the teacher find lessons that are relevant and interesting for the students.

P1-Y talked about how it is important to know what the students are going through, because what the students experience outside of the class can impact how they will learn and do in class. P10-Y shared a story about how one of her students was robbed. When the student showed up to class, she seemed withdrawn and tired. P5-Y stated that she asked to speak to the student in the hallway; the student then explained what happened. P5-Y stated that if she would not have tried to connect with her student and did not know about her current situation, she would not have been able to support and understand her student. P5-Y explained that some of his Asian students usually do not like to talk, and do not like to answer questions in front of the class because of saving face and fearing they will give a wrong answer. P4-Y stated it is important to understand that some students may be comfortable with one thing, while other students are not comfortable with that. P6-E stated that it is important, because different students will have different expectations and preferences in the way they learn. P6 stated that she treats her students from Pakistan differently than those from China. P6-E used the example of physical space and eye contact. P6-E explained that when it comes to Pakistani male students, she uses less direct eye contact, and allows for more physical space. The participants that have taken ESL and Culture or currently enrolled said that if they would not have understood their students' cultures or been aware, it could have put them at risk of embarrassing themselves or the students. P5-Y talked about how in the classroom, he does not force his students to stand up and share their assignments, but allows it to be optional. The participants that took ESL and Culture and those that were currently enrolled shared stories of where they tried to understand and adapt to their

students' differences. The participants that did not take the ESL and Culture course did not share

stories of when or if they tried to understand and adapt to their students' differences. A brief

overview of the data collected from the participants for the theme culture and ESL students can

be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Participant Responses to Culture and ESL Students

Beliefs about Culture and ESL Students												
	P1-Y	P2-Y	P3-E	P4-Y	P5-Y	P6-E	P7-E	P8-N	P9-N	P10-Y	P11-N	P12-N
Described students by nationality	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Described students by proficiency level	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Described students by age							X					
Made generalizations about students	X						X	X	X		X	
Compared own culture to students' culture							X	X	X		X	
Have perceptions about their students and their culture	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Perceptions changed	X	X		X	X	X	X			X		
Perceptions did not change									X		X	X
Described what it means to know student: Culture	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		
Described what it means to know student: Proficiency Level	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Described what it means to know student: Language background	X									X		X
Described what it means to know student: Background Knowledge	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Described what it means to know student: Learning Style	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Described what it means to know student: Personality	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		

Pedagogical challenges. When analyzing the data, a few themes related to pedagogy stood out. The participants all shared stories about their challenges with: feedback, group work, failed activities, as well as expectations of student behaviors.

Feedback. All of the participants stated that they have changed the way they give feedback to their students. Most of the participants said that overtime and getting to know their students better they realized they needed to change the way they give feedback. All of the participants said that they thought this was due to more of a difference in personalities rather than culture. P3-E explained that some students can take feedback well, and some cannot. P3-E explained that it is important for teachers to find wording that delivers the message, but does not demotivate the student. P3-E went on and explained that some students do not take feedback well, and so straightforward feedback on what they need to do next time, may be interpreted as harsh.

Failed activities. Many of the participants shared experiences of when an activity did not go well. The reasons for the failed lessons that were reported by the participants were: background knowledge; proficiency level; and lack of interest or bored with the topic. Six of the participants said that lack of background knowledge was the reason that an activity did not go well. P4-Y explained that when he gave directions for a summarizing activity, the students did not understand it. P4-Y then assessed the students and found out a lot of the students did not have much background knowledge in summarizing and paraphrasing. He then was able to create an activity that helped the students better understand how to summarize. P6-E also stated that it was lack of background knowledge in the activity she planned. P6-E had intended for the students to use AWL words that were on the board in conversation. Instead, the students created

isolated sentences rather than a conversation. P6-E stated, "it as an activity that could have worked, but they needed more background knowledge of it". Six participants stated that they felt it was the level of proficiency and lack of background knowledge that caused the activity to not go well. Of those six participants, all four of the participants that did not take the ESL and Culture course stated that level of proficiency and lack of background knowledge to be the reason for activities to not go well. Three participants said it was because the students were not interested in the lesson or that the topic may have been boring, such as grammar. There was not a clear pattern between those who have taken the ESL and Culture course and those that did not. Although, as stated before, all of the participants that did not take the ESL and Culture course stated that lack of proficiency, lack of background knowledge or misunderstanding from the listener caused activities to not go well.

Group work. In the classroom, many participants talked about challenges when pairing or putting students into groups. The participants that took ESL and Culture seemed to understand how different cultures interact and feel about how groups are created. P6 shared a story when it came to pairing students in her classroom. P6-E explained that she has a female Saudi student, and when she was creating pairs, she originally paired the female Saudi student with a male. P6-E changed who she would be paired with, and at the end of the class, spoke with her alone, and asked her if she was paired with a male student, if she would feel uncomfortable. The student said she would not feel uncomfortable, and that it would be different, but she did not mind. After that P6-E stated that she would sometimes then pair her with males.

P10-Y stated that when it came to discussion and answering questions, she noticed a lot of her Chinese students did not seem to raise their hand or share their opinions a lot. P10-Y

stated that she would try to reword her questions, and would not push them to answer, but instead would try to have everyone answer on their own as a group to take off the pressure. P10-Y also explained that when students would come to class, they would often sit with their classmates that are from the same culture. P10-Y wanted her students to get comfortable with one another, and would have the students sit by someone different each day, and then rotate it, so that the different cultures of the classroom were able to have the chance to work together. Another tactic a participant used, was avoiding using the number four when putting students into groups. P11-N stated that he would skip the number four because many of his students are Chinese, and view the number 4 as an unlucky or undesirable number. One participant that did not take ESL and Culture shared stories about having a difficult time getting students to work well in pairs and in groups. P9-N shared the story of her students that were in groups seemed to either talk too much or not enough. P9-N stated that she would try to encourage and get those that would not talk by reminding them that their grade is also based on participation. Two participants that did not take ESL and Culture, P9-N and P11-N, voiced that they were frustrated when some students would not participate, even after being reminded many times. Overall, those that took the ESL and Culture course voiced little frustration when it came to group work.

Expectations of students. When analyzing the data, many participants shared stories about expectations of the students during class. The common perceived problems were homework due dates, talking in class, and being on time. P1-Y explained that syllabuses helped a lot, because they help the student know what is expected of them. P1-Y explained that in her classroom, she had students with various cultural backgrounds, and many times students would come to her and want to turn in homework late, even though she stated before that late

assignments would not be expected. P1-Y stated, "they would look at me like I was being mean, but then I would tell them I cannot do it and it is not fair to the others that have handed their work in on time. That has been a big problem with all cultures, to get them to understand due dates."

Another problem some participants talked about was students talking during class. P3-E explained that there was a student that was very talkative, and would try to tell his peers to talk or answer. P3-E did not use cultural or nationality descriptors, but that it was a personality issue. P9-N and P8-N also shared similar stories, and stated that students' talking was a constant problem. P11-N described a story of where a student would continuously make jokes, and at first his peers would laugh along with him. As the semester progressed, the student was still making jokes, and would often interrupt the other students. P11-N stated, "at the beginning, I even laughed at his jokes, but then as time went on I realized that the other students were not liking it, and I was enabling his behavior." Another problem that happened in P11-N's classroom was attendance. P11-N explained that he had quite a few Japanese students, and they were not coming to class. When P11-N asked the students about their absences, they stated that they were sick. The teacher explained to the students that students need to let the teacher know. P11-N explained that in Japan, some schools do not require attendance.

All of the participants that shared stories of student expectations said that if they would have made it very clear to the students of what is expected of them and their behavior, that they probably would have avoided many of those situations. One participant, P9-N, stated that at times she questioned if her students did not respect her, therefore, they would always talk out of turn. There were no differences between those who have taken the ESL and Culture class, those

currently enrolled, and those that did not take the ESL and Culture course. An overview of the

data collected from the participants for the pedagogical challenges can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3

Participant Responses to Pedagogical Challenges

Pedagogical Challenges												
	P1-Y	P2-Y	P3-E	P4-Y	P5-Y	P6-E	P7-E	P8-N	P9-N	P10-Y	P11-N	P12-N
Changed how gave feedback	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Activity failed due to background knowledge				X		X			X	X	X	X
Activity failed due to proficiency level			X					X	X	X	X	X
Activity failed due to lack of understanding	X			X								
Aware of how different cultures do group work differently	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Adaptable with group work and group dynamics	X	X		X	X	X	X			X		
Did not understand differences of group work in other cultures									X		X	

Teacher's beliefs on students adapting to U.S. academic culture. During the

interview, seven participants shared that they felt it was important that teachers support students

when they are adapting to U.S. culture. Of those participants, five had previously taken ESL and

Culture, one was currently enrolled, and one participant had not taken the ESL and Culture

course. P1-Y stated that it is important for teachers to try to accommodate to the students'

cultures, but also supporting the student to adapt to American culture. When P1-Y discussed a

problem of her students understanding the rules of handing in late homework, she stated, "I have

to be sensitive to them adjusting to the culture here, but at the same time training them to

understand it." P2-Y shared that it is important to be sensitive to the students' cultures and tried

to be flexible and understanding. P2-Y stated:

> At the same time, it is important for students to know that they are here in the U.S.,
> so the students also need to have an open mind and be aware of how things are done
> here in the U.S.

All of the participants that have taken ESL and Culture and one participant that is currently

enrolled, stated that it is important for teachers to find a balance of understanding of other

cultures and being flexible, but also teaching the student what is expected of them while they are

here. Only one participant that did not take ESL and Culture expressed the importance of

students understanding what is expected of them, and finding a balance between the student's

home culture and the U.S. culture. Table 4 below, is an overview of the data collected from the

participants for teacher's beliefs on students adapting to the U.S. culture.

Table 4

Participant Responses to Teacher's Beliefs on Students Adapting to U.S. Culture

Teacher's Beliefs on Students Adapting to U.S. Culture												
	P1-Y	P2-Y	P3-E	P4-Y	P5-Y	P6-E	P7-E	P8-N	P9-N	P10-Y	P11-N	P12-N
Important to find a balance between home culture and U.S.	X	X		X	X		X			X		
Important for teachers to help students adapt	X	X		X	X		X			X	X	
Not important for teachers to help students adapt									X			

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this study, as stated before five participants have taken an optional for-credit ESL and Culture, three participants were currently enrolled, and four participants did not take the course. The researcher was not able to find half the amount of participants that had not taken the ESL and Culture course. The results show that those that have taken the ESL and Culture course used generalizations less, felt more confident teaching in diverse classrooms, and felt more confident with student teacher interactions. The participants that have previously taken ESL and Culture and those that were currently enrolled also had more perceptions that changed over time and with experience. The participants that have previously taken ESL and Culture and those that were currently enrolled used different teaching methods and were more flexible when understanding their international students' needs. Such as, saving face, being aware of physical space, adjusting lesson plans, and understanding of cultural differences and expectations in the classroom. The participants that have previously taken the course, and those that were currently enrolled seemed to understand how different cultures interact and feel differently about group work better than those that did not take the course. Those that have taken the course or were currently enrolled stated that it is important for teachers to help students adapt to U.S. culture, but to find a balance so that the students' cultures still feel validated.

Three of the four participants that did not take ESL and Culture stated that they had perceptions, but that some of those perceptions have not changed. Although, it is interesting that the participants that did not take the ESL and Culture course, two of those participants rated themselves a 5 and 6 when it came to how familiar they thought they were of their students' cultures. Those participants that rated themselves higher on the scale were the participants that

used generalizations more when talking about their students, and stated that they have perceptions, but those perceptions did not change much over time. While the other two participants that did not take ESL and Culture, rated themselves at a 1 and 3, also used generalization, they did admit to having perceptions. Overall, those that did not take the ESL and Culture course did not talk about how culture is important when it comes to knowing the students, expressed more frustration when trying to handle classroom problems, used more generalization and used more comparisons from their own culture to their students' culture when talking about differences.

Comparing my findings to Lindquist's (2016) study we had both similar and different findings. Unlike Lindquist's (2016) study, not all of my participants acknowledge the importance of understanding their students' cultures. In Lindquist's (2016) study, she stated that all but two of her participants did not focus on nationality and culture when describing students. Both of those participants did not take the ESL and Culture course (Lindquist, 2016, p. 28). In my current study, eleven of the twelve participants used nationality when describing their students. The only participant that did not use nationality is currently enrolled in the ESL and Culture course. Another difference in participants was that Lindquist's (2016) study had only two international student participants. The current study that I did, had four international students. My findings help support the finding that international teachers would benefit from the ESL and Culture course.

Lindquist's (2016) study found that those who have taken the ESL and Culture course scored themselves higher on the self-assessment of cultural knowledge. In my current study, those that have taken the ESL and Culture course and those that were currently enrolled had a

mixture of ratings. The highest scores were from those that have taken the ESL and Culture course, similar to Lindquist's (2016) study. Another similar finding was that those who have taken the ESL and Culture course made fewer generalizations about their students.

This study gives evidence those international students that are teaching in the U.S. needs the ESL and Culture course, and that the course is important for international students who are now teaching students from a wide variety of cultures. It also gives evidence that teachers need to be aware of both the linguistic and the cultural differences. With the increase of intercultural diversity the ESL and Culture course will be beneficial for all teachers.

Limitations

In this study, there are some limitations in the methodology and possibly the results. Similar to Lindquist's (2016) study, interviews were with participants who teach and studied at a specific institution, so the results may not be generalizable in different locations, and with different groups of students.

The results of this study are reflective of a small group of teachers. The participants are graduate student teachers enrolled in the M.A. TESL program, or were previously enrolled and taught at a midwestern university. All of the teachers have taken similar introductory courses and have similar teaching opportunities. Ten of the participants have experience teaching in one of two ESL programs, either IEC or EAP. Three of those participants have had previous teaching experience, and have a graduate assistantship (GA) helping students with their writing. The experiences and perceptions may be unique to this demographic, and because the students of the participants are different from the previous study.

The data collected is dependent on the participants' memory and perceptions from the memories. Participants may not have recalled specific situations when asked a certain question. Also, the participants may have overlooked a specific experience, and did not share it with the researcher. Since the participants shared narratives, their stories have biased perspectives based on their own thoughts, background, reaction, and comfort level with each situation. Similar to Lindquist's (2016) study, my analysis of the data may be biased based on my own knowledge and experiences in the classroom.

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Appendix A: Background Survey

Identification code/pseudonym: _____

Cultural Background/Home country: _____

How many semesters have you completed as a graduate student in the TESL Program at St. Cloud State University? (Circle the closest whole number)

         0   1   2   3   4 5+

Do you or have you taught in the IEC or EAP? (circle one if applicable)

If you have taught in the IEC or EAP, have you taught: EAP 150 or IEC cultural orientation? (Circle one if applicable).

If you have taught IEC or EAP

Did you study teaching ESL as an undergraduate degree?   Yes / No

Have you previously worked as an ESL or EFL instructor?   Yes / No

If yes, where? And for how many years?

Have you studied or lived in another country before?   Yes / No

If so, in which country/countries, for which purpose, and for how long?

Do you speak any other languages?   Yes / No.

If so, which language(s) and how long have you been studying the language(s)?

Do you ever speak to your ESL students in a language other than English?   Yes/No

If yes, do you do it in class, outside of class, or both?

Have you taken the ESL and Culture course English 463/563 or 673?   Yes / No

Rate yourself: How familiar are you with the cultures of the students in the ESL classes that you have taught at SCSU?

     1 = not very familiar   8 = very familiar

         1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Why do you want to be an ESL teacher?

2. Tell me about the courses you teach (have taught) and the students that take your classes.

3. Tell me about how you choose the class activities for your class.

4. Describe a time when a lesson or activity didn't go well.

5. Is it important to you that you know your students? What do you mean by know? As you got to know your students, what perceptions do you have of them?

6. Was there ever a time in class when you were going to say something, but stopped for some reason? Why do you think you stopped?

7. Why is it important to you that you know your students? As you got to know your students, what perceptions do you have of them?

8. Describe a time that you had to change the way you gave directions. Follow up: Why do you think you had to change how/the way you gave directions?

9. As you got to know your students, can you share a story or example that you changed the way you gave feedback? Why do you think you did/didn't?

10. Describe a problem you have had to deal with in your class (es). Are there recurring problems? What do you think causes them? How did you deal with them or adapt to them? Do you think it worked? Why?

11. What does culture mean to you? Do you think your understanding of culture has changed? Why do you think so?

12. Are you aware of your own culture when you are teaching ESL students? (Rowsell, 2007) Do you think you think about certain aspects of your own culture when working with students from other cultures? As you get to know your students, which aspects of your own culture do you notice when working with certain cultures?

13. During your time teaching at St. Cloud State University, what was/has been the most striking thing about working with international students?

14. Do you think your perception of your students' cultures is reflective of their home culture? What do you think are some reasons or instances that make you think that (or not think that)?

15. Give an example of something that you learned about your students' cultures. Tell the story about you learning it. Explain how this knowledge/experience has impacted your teaching afterwards.