

Exploring Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants' pedagogical growth in United States universities



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This research addresses the scarcity of studies examining how participants in higher education exchange programmes, specifically the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) programme, use situated learning experiences to develop professional knowledge. To fill this gap, the study examined how FLTAs construct and reconstruct teaching knowledge during their fellowship. Grounded in situated learning theory and experiential learning, the phenomenological design aligns with interpretive and qualitative traditions. The 2017–2018 cohort, comprising six FLTAs, participated in focused group discussions. Data analysis, utilising grounded theory approach, revealed that FLTAs constructed knowledge through structured programmes and personal-social experiences, employing introspective, retrospective, and prospective reflection practices. Additionally, participants emphasised the impact of accommodating and adapting beliefs, values, and dilemmas in challenging assumptions about higher education teaching and learning. This study contributes to a novel understanding of how planned activities and authentic experiences form the basis for professional knowledge construction across continents.

Transdisciplinary contribution: The transdisciplinary nature of this study allows for a holistic exploration of the process of teaching knowledge construction. By integrating insights from teacher knowledge construction, cognitive psychology, higher education teaching, inter-cultural practices and continuous professional development, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of how Fulbright FLTAs construct their professional knowledge during their fellowship. The study highlights the complexity of knowledge development, considering the cognitive processes involved, and addresses the context of higher education teaching and inter-cultural experiences. By emphasising the importance of continuous learning and growth, this research contributes to the field of teachers' knowledge development.

Keywords: Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant; higher education teaching; knowledge construction; phenomenological design; exchange programmes; situated learning.

Introduction

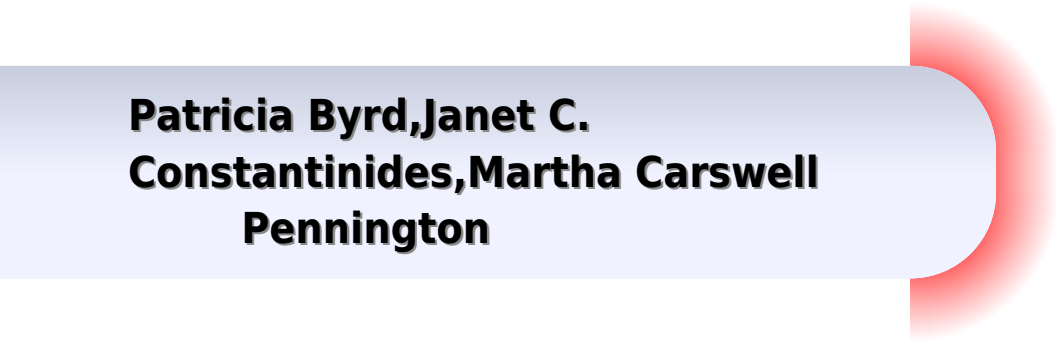
To understand how professional knowledge is constructed as situated experiences, this transdisciplinary study explores the way in which Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (FLTAs) shape their professional knowledge during their fellowship at different universities in the United States. The purpose of the FLTA programme is to provide participants with an:

... [O]pportunity to refine their teaching skills, increase their English language proficiency and extend their knowledge of the society and culture of the United States, while being teaching assistants for their native language to U.S. [United States] students and strengthening foreign language instruction at U.S. colleges and universities. (p. 1)¹

As one of the 2017–2018 FLTAs and as a university lecturer in South Africa, I immediately recognised the programme's effectiveness as a tool for professional development at the time of my application. Through this study, I explored my co-FLTAs' narratives of how they viewed their own professional development during their residency at United States (US) universities alongside my own reflection as the main research instrument. Specifically, in this article, I explored the teaching knowledge gained by five FLTAs about higher education teaching and learning contextualised to international spaces during a 9-month residency at American universities under the Fulbright programme.² That is, through the experiences of FLTAs, I explored the way their

The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual

**Patricia Byrd, Janet C.
Constantinides, Martha Carswell
Pennington**



The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual:

Manual for Foreign Teaching Assistants Gary Althen, 1981
Baker, Brenda Williams, York University (Toronto, Ont.), 1983
Byrd, Janet C. Constantinides, Martha Carswell Pennington, 1989-01-01
Manual for Foreign Teaching Assistants Janette M.
The Foreign Teaching Assistant's Manual Patricia
The International Teaching Assistant, 1990

Routledge Library Editions: Higher Education Various, 2021-03-29 The volumes in this set originally published between 1964 and 2002 draw together research by leading academics in the area of higher education and provide a rigorous examination of related key issues The volume examines the concepts of learning teaching student experience and administration in relation to the higher education through the areas of business sociology education reforms government educational policy business and religion whilst also exploring the general principles and practices of higher education in various countries This set will be of particular interest to students and practitioners of education politics and sociology

Resources in Education, 2000
Teaching Assistants Handbook 1986/1987, 1986
Talking and Testing Richard Young, Agnes Weiyun He, 1998-07-15 This book brings together a collection of current research on the assessment of oral proficiency in a second language Fourteen chapters focus on the use of the language proficiency interview or LPI to assess oral proficiency The volume addresses the central issue of validity in proficiency assessment the ways in which the language proficiency interview is accomplished through discourse Contributors draw on a variety of discourse perspectives including the ethnography of speaking conversation analysis language socialization theory sociolinguistic variation theory human interaction research and systemic functional linguistics And for the first time LPIs conducted in German Korean and Spanish are examined as well as interviews in English This book sheds light on such important issues as how speaking ability can be defined independently of an LPI that is designed to assess it and the extent to which an LPI is an authentic representation of ordinary conversation in the target language It will be of considerable interest to language testers discourse analysts second language acquisition researchers foreign language specialists and anyone concerned with proficiency issues in language teaching and testing
Handbook of Intercultural Training Dan Landis, Richard W. Brislin, 2013-10-22 Handbook of Intercultural Training Volume III Area Studies in Intercultural Training deals with information about the countries in which people will be living and working where trainers want new and better country specific information that can be incorporated into their programs This volume contains two parts wherein the first part deals with training in educational institutions where existing programs are examined An intercultural competence in bilingual teacher training programs is presented and the intercultural communications skills imparted to trainers teachers are examined Also addressed are methods to facilitate education on cross cultural matters to college level students To put cross cultural relations in perspective the topic of American and foreign students in the United States in a university context is discussed and its implications for theory future research and applied intercultural programming are further examined Part II is concerned with area studies and covers Sub

Sahara Africa Islamic countries such as Iran Americans in Australia Oceania India Japan Canada and the American retiree abroad The inclusion of this section shows the types of content that can be included in the preparation of training programs Trainers and cross cultural workers foreign workers diplomats foreign students immigrants and even transients working and living in a different culture will find this volume a wealthy source of information Foreign Teaching Assistants in U.S. Universities Kathleen M. Bailey, Frank Pialorsi, Jean Zukowski/Faust, 1984

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Table of Contents The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual

1. Understanding the eBook The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
 - The Rise of Digital Reading The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
 - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
 - Exploring Different Genres
 - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
 - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
 - Popular eBook Platforms
 - Features to Look for in an The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
 - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
 - Personalized Recommendations
 - The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual User Reviews and Ratings
 - The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual and Bestseller Lists

5. Accessing The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual Free and Paid eBooks
 - The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual Public Domain eBooks
 - The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual eBook Subscription Services
 - The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual Budget-Friendly Options
6. Navigating The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual eBook Formats
 - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
 - The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual Compatibility with Devices
 - The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
 - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
 - Highlighting and Note-Taking The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
 - Interactive Elements The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
8. Staying Engaged with The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
 - Joining Online Reading Communities
 - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
 - Following Authors and Publishers The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
 - Benefits of a Digital Library
 - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
 - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
 - Minimizing Distractions
 - Managing Screen Time
11. Cultivating a Reading Routine The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
 - Setting Reading Goals The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
 - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
12. Sourcing Reliable Information of The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
 - Fact-Checking eBook Content of The Foreign Teaching Assistants Manual
 - Distinguishing Credible Sources
13. Promoting Lifelong Learning

- Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
- Exploring Educational eBooks

14. Embracing eBook Trends

- Integration of Multimedia Elements
- Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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