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ITA language proficiency testing : recommended replacement for the SPEAK test

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ABSTRACT

ITA LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TESTING: RECOMMENDED REPLACEMENT FOR THE SPEAK[®] TEST

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Oral language tests have been used since the 1950s to assess the proficiency of spoken language. In the 1980s and 1990s, the need for oral proficiency testing increased as states began to mandate that universities within their jurisdictions test the English proficiency of instructors due to growing concerns over international teaching assistants' (ITAs) comprehensibility. Many universities turned to the Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit[®] (SPEAK test), a language proficiency test created and distributed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), as means to test ITA proficiency in English. ETS's discontinuance of the SPEAK test in 2010 has forced, and is forcing, many universities to look for new ways to assess ITA proficiency. This research identifies replacement opportunities for the SPEAK test by exploring the major theories impacting oral proficiency tests and studying the assessment tools being used at 17 Midwestern universities as a means for evaluating ITA spoken language ability. The types of tests being used, the nature of the questions asked, and the processes used to place ITAs are assessed. The paper provides a recommendation for establishing an ITA spoken language proficiency process that includes two forms of oral language assessment (a teaching demonstration and either a language test or oral interview), a tiered ITA placement system, and required or recommended English as a Second Language (ESL) coursework. Recommendations are also provided for developing an ITA

proficiency assessment from former SPEAK tests. The suggested ITA process provides a means to assess, develop, and validate ITAs' communicative competence in authentic ITA language situations.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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ITA LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TESTING: RECOMMENDED
REPLACEMENT FOR THE SPEAK TEST

BY

ANNE M. STOUGHTON
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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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I would like to thank my committee members, Doris Macdonald, Glat Aygen, and Betty Birner, for their insight and patience while working with me during this process.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, John Underwood

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, language tests have been used since the 1950s to assess oral proficiency in a foreign language. Originating in the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State, the first oral language tests were developed as structured interviews administered to foreign service personnel to test their proficiency in the language of their assignment (Barnwell, 1996). Other oral language tests, such as the Test of Spoken English® (TSE) and the Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit® (SPEAK test), were developed in the 1970s to provide an alternative to the Foreign Service Institute's Oral Interview (Barnwell, 1996).

In the 1980s and 1990s, interest in oral language testing intensified at U.S. universities as these institutions came under scrutiny for their use of international teaching assistants (ITAs) who were often considered by students to be incomprehensible and unintelligible (Brown, Fishman, and Jones, 1990). Driven by increasing demand for undergraduate instruction in the fields of science, mathematics, and engineering, many U.S. universities turned to international graduate students to meet instructional demands (Aslan, 2016; Finder, 2005; Hoekje & Linnell, 1994). While knowledgeable in content areas, these graduate students often lacked sufficient proficiency in spoken English to teach undergraduate courses (Aslan, 2016). To address this problem, several states issued statutes or mandates requiring universities to demonstrate the English proficiency of persons providing classroom instruction (Brown et al., 1990; Finder, 2005; Oppenheimer, 1998). Many universities used the Educational Testing Service's (ETS) oral speech assessment, the

SPEAK test, to assess this proficiency (Yale University, 2018; Hoekje & Linnell, 1994). While the SPEAK test was shown to be an effective predictor of ITA English proficiency, issues arose in 2010 as ETS discontinued their support of the SPEAK test (Clark & Swinton, 1980; ETS, 2009). Universities which continued to administer the SPEAK test, and which still may administer the test, have been forced to use old, outdated and possibly insecure¹ SPEAK tests to assess ITA proficiency (ETS, 2009).

Several universities have already moved away from SPEAK tests by developing their own language proficiency tests. These tests frequently target language situations specific to academic settings, such as asking examinees to demonstrate knowledge of field-specific language or asking ITA candidates to make classroom-like presentations in English. It has been argued that these types of tests provide more authentic language situations, and thereby better assessment of academic-specific language proficiency, than those provided through the SPEAK and other standardized oral language tests (Hoekje & Linnell, 1994).

As the SPEAK test reaches nearly a decade of being unsupported by ETS, it is necessary to review viable options for replacing or modifying the SPEAK test. This thesis provides such a review and offers recommendations for ITA proficiency testing. Within this thesis, the major theories surrounding oral language assessments are explored and analyses of oral language proficiency assessments are conducted. The questions addressed in this paper are as follows:

¹ Due to ETS's discontinuation of the SPEAK test, no new tests have been issued since 2010. As a result, the tests administered by universities and other institutions may be insecure as international students sitting for the SPEAK test may know the specific questions asked on the test due to previous experience with the test or due to conversations with other students who have taken the test.

- What are the major theories impacting oral proficiency tests and ITA assessment?
- What impact do legislative requirements for ITA proficiency in spoken English have on language testing at universities?
- How are various universities assessing ITA proficiency in English, and what impact does this knowledge have on the recommendation of an oral proficiency assessment?
- What attributes of the SPEAK test, if any, should be present in an oral proficiency assessment?

This research discusses the concepts of communicative competence and authentic language situations which provide a theoretical framework for oral language proficiency testing. It reviews and analyzes the oral language proficiency assessments being used at Midwestern universities to determine which assessments present solid replacement opportunities for the SPEAK test. It examines the SPEAK test, variations of the test, and other language tests to identify the features of the SPEAK test which remain relevant to oral proficiency assessment and which should be maintained in future testing instruments. The findings of this paper provide a structure for ITA oral proficiency testing which enables universities to attract international graduate students through assistantships, to provide a means to develop less proficient ITAs' English skills, and to validate that ITAs are communicatively competent to serve as classroom instructors.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language testing in the United States can be traced back to the late 1800s when Harvard College administered tests to incoming students to assess their knowledge of the French language (Barnwell, 1996). This early examination tested entrants' ability to translate texts and conjugate verbs in French, though entrants demonstrating a speaking proficiency in the language were allowed to pass the examination despite deficiencies in the tested areas. Language testing from the 1800s through the 1930s continued to focus on "reading" tasks, such as assessing examinees' translation capabilities and grammatical knowledge in foreign languages, which aligned with the foreign language instruction at the time (Barnwell, 1996).

In the 1940s, the onset of World War II pressured the U.S. Army to develop a military force proficient in foreign language communication. To meet this need, the U.S. Army established the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) which was assigned the task of training over 140,000 military personnel in an array of foreign languages (Barnwell, 1996). The ASTP training concentrated primarily on building communicative, or oral, language skills. However, the tests used to assess trainees' development continued to focus on reading skills such as translation, conjugation, and grammar, creating a discrepancy between the skills taught and the skills tested (Barnwell, 1996). It was not until the late 1950s that a standardized oral language test was created.

The earliest oral language tests assessed examinees' abilities to translate pre-recorded passages or to converse in a given language (Barnwell, 1996). In the 1940s, Kaulfers (1944)

suggested that these oral tests should be expanded to include a measurement of language learners' "readiness to perform in a life situation" which included the ability to ask for directions, order food, or respond to basic questions in a foreign setting (Barnwell, 1996, p. 83). During the same period, Agard and Dunkel (1948) began working on an assessment to measure an examinee's communicative intelligibility which was defined as the ability to communicate a message, to enter into discourse about a specific topic, and to engage in conversation (Barnwell, 1996). This focus on communicative intelligibility and life situation communication, as well as the use of scoring scales to measure performance, set the stage for modern oral language tests.

Drawing from the oral language research of the 1940s, the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State developed a test to assess foreign service officers' proficiency in the language of their assignment (Barnwell, 1996). This test, known as the Foreign Service Institute Oral Interview, was constructed to elicit natural conversation from examinees. The interview was administered by native speakers of the language being tested, and results were rated on a scale from 0 to 5 based on accent, comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar (Barnwell, 1996).

A form of this oral interview is still in use today. It is administered by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and is called the Oral Proficiency Interview® (OPI) (Barnwell, 1996). According to ACTFL (2012), the OPI is "a valid and reliable testing method that measures how well a person speaks a language. It uses a standardized procedure for the global assessment of functional speaking ability, i.e., it measures language production holistically by determining patterns of strengths and weaknesses" (p. 4). Clark and Swinton (1979) support the reliability of the OPI and find that the test demonstrates both face and content validity. That is, based on their research, Clark and Swinton have found that examiners and examinees

consider the OPI to be, at face value, a test of oral language proficiency (face validity). In addition, their research asserts that the content items assessed by OPI are valid indicators of real-life communication skills (content validity).

Other researchers, however, question the validity of the OPI. Van Lier (1989), for example, questions the authenticity of the test due to the asymmetrical nature of the interview and the goal of the interview to obtain ratable speech samples (Johnson, 2000). He claims that the interviewer's focus on eliciting specific content results in communication that is not representative of a true conversation. In addition, Van Lier argues that the dynamics between the interviewer and the interviewee are dissimilar to the "mutual contingency and equal distributions of rights and duties" in everyday conversation (Van Lier, 1989, p. 500; Johnson, 2000). The effectiveness of the OPI to evaluate the speaking proficiencies of ITAs has also been questioned. Bailey (1982) and Clark and Swinton (1980) have found only modest to low correlations between OPI scores and student ratings of ITA performance, suggesting that the OPI is not a reliable predictor of ITA language proficiency and comprehensibility (Hoekje & Williams, 1992). These researchers, however, caution that these correlations may not be dependable as ITA performance can be impacted by factors other than language proficiency such as the ITA's teaching capabilities (Hoekje & Williams, 1992).

While the OPI has been widely used in the U.S. Department of State, it has not been considered a viable option in other situations. Specifically, in the 1970s, ETS found that it was not able to effectively administer the OPI to non-native speakers who were seeking admission to U.S. universities due to the large number of worldwide centers that were needed to administer the test and the varying degrees of employees' English proficiencies at the centers. This presented the need

for a second standardized oral language test, the Test of Spoken English[®] (TSE). The TSE was developed to accompany the Test of English as a Foreign Language[®] (TOEFL), another ETS-administered test which assessed non-native speaker proficiencies in English listening, reading, and writing skills (Clark & Swinton, 1979).

ETS considered several factors in the development of the TSE. First, the test was developed to assess an examinee's speaking proficiency and communicative ability in real-life speaking situations (Clark & Swinton, 1979). In addition, the TSE assessed generalized, or everyday, speaking proficiency. Language specific to academic disciplines, work settings, and other situations was not to be considered (Clark & Swinton, 1979). TSE questions, therefore, were designed to elicit general, everyday speech samples demonstrating examinees' abilities in English pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and comprehensibility (Clark & Swinton, 1980). ETS also developed TSE questions to test language errors occurring across a wide spectrum of languages. This permitted the test to be native-language neutral, flushing out errors across a multitude of languages (Clark & Swinton, 1979). Due to the large number of worldwide centers which employed workers with varying levels of English proficiency, the TSE questions needed to be arranged in a format that could be easily and consistently administered by all centers. To allow for this, ETS created printed booklets and tape recorded messages which presented the test's questions and other stimuli to examinees (Clark & Swinton, 1979).

Originally, the TSE included seven sections, each requiring examinees to perform a different speaking activity (Sarwark, Smith, MacCallum, and Cascallar, 1995). These sections were designed to elicit speech samples to assess examinees' pronunciation, grammatical correctness and speech clarity, linguistic quality, and adequacy of communication (Clark &

Swinton, 1980; Gokcora, 1992; Sarwark et al., 1995). All questions were asked via taped messages, and responses were recorded via tape recorder. These responses were assigned scores of 0.0 to 3.0 for pronunciation, grammar, and fluency, and a score of 000 to 300 for comprehensibility (Clark & Swinton, 1980; Sarwark et al., 1995). Research on the TSE found the instrument to be a valid and reliable indicator of an examinee's speech capabilities (Clark & Swinton, 1980; Sarwark et al., 1995).

Issues with TSE availability, costs, and score turnaround time made the TSE less than ideal for some institutions such as universities. As a result, ETS created the SPEAK test as an alternative to the TSE. The SPEAK test was a retired version of the TSE test which was administered and scored by personnel within institutions based on ETS-provided scoring criteria (Sarwark et al., 1995).

As discussed in the introduction, the need for oral language assessments like the SPEAK test has become more pronounced since the 1980s. Universities have realized an increase in the demand for instruction in the fields of science, mathematics, and engineering; an increase in the supply of qualified foreign graduate applicants; and a decrease in the number of U.S. graduate applicants (Aslan, 2016; Finder, 2005; Hoekje & Linnell, 1994; Plakans, 1997). This has resulted in a number of U.S. universities offering international applicants teaching assistantships as a means to attract these students to their schools and as a means to meet the instructional needs of science, mathematics and related courses (Aslan, 2016; Finder, 2005; Hoekje & Linnell, 1994). Many ITAs have come under attack for lacking proficiency in spoken English, with students complaining that the ITAs are incomprehensible, unintelligible, and lack fluency (Brown et al., 1990). In the 1990s, a study of undergraduate students at three large universities revealed that nearly 50% of student

participants expressed negative attitudes towards ITA teaching performance and effectiveness (Oppenheimer, 1998). As a result of these issues with ITAs, over 30 states have passed legislation or mandates requiring universities to demonstrate ITA language proficiency (Brown et al., 1990; Finder, 2005; Oppenheimer, 1998).

Some universities have elected to use workshops or specialized training programs to meet state-mandated English proficiency requirements (Gorsuch, Stevens, and Brouillette, 2003). The University of Washington, for example, requires all ITAs to participate in the university's ITA Program and to attend teaching assistant training (University of Washington, 2018). Other universities, such as the University of Iowa and The Ohio State University require ITAs who do not meet minimum oral proficiency requirements to take courses to further develop their English and to learn classroom skills (University of Iowa ESL Programs Office, n.d.; The Ohio State University, 2018). These ITA courses and training programs are usually intense programs, requiring four or more hours of training each day, and vary in length from a few days to a month (Gorsuch et al., 2003). The content of these courses also varies, with some programs concentrating only on language development—pronunciation, fluency, and accent-reduction—and other programs offering both language development and instructional training (Gorsuch et al., 2003; Ohio State, 2018).

Many universities have opted to use standardized oral language testing to demonstrate ITA language proficiency. These universities consider international students to be English proficient if they score at or above a pre-determined level on the speaking subset of the TOEFL, the

International English Language Testing System Academic® (IELTS),¹ or, to a lesser degree, the Pearson Test of English Academic® (PTE).² Through either computer-based programs (TOEFL and PTE) or live examiners (IELTS), these tests elicit speech samples which are rated for pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and language use (British Council, n.d.; ETS, 2014; ETS, 2019a; Pearson, Inc., 2017a; Pearson, Inc., 2018). All three standardized tests have been validated as indicators of English proficiency in academic settings, and the speaking subset of the TOEFL iBT, an internet-based TOEFL exam, has been found to be a valid tool for evaluating ITAs (Charge & Taylor, 1997; Cotos & Chung, 2018; Xi, 2008; Zheng, 2011). At many universities, ITA candidates not meeting minimum speaking scores on these standardized tests are required to take either the SPEAK test or another oral language assessment to determine their spoken English proficiency (Yale University, 2018; Hoekje & Linnell, 1994).

The SPEAK test has been one of the most widely used instruments for testing ITA English proficiency at universities (Hoekje & Linnell, 1994). Although widely used, the SPEAK test has been found to have some major issues. Several researchers have identified ITA dissatisfaction with the tests arising from the types of questions asked and the limited amount of time allotted for responses (Gokcora, 1992; Hoekje & Linnell, 1994; Hoekje & Williams, 1992). ITAs have also complained that the SPEAK test does not provide them with an opportunity to demonstrate their

¹ The IELTS is a language test administered by the British Council, Cambridge English Language Assessment, and International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges since 1989 which assesses examinees' general language skills through speaking and listening modules and academic language skills through reading and writing modules (Manhattan Review, 2019).

² The PTE is a language test administered by Pearson, a British publishing company, since 2009. The exam includes three parts—speaking and writing, reading, and listening—and scores are determined via computer (Pearson Inc., 2017).

knowledge of their field of study or to display their ability to discuss scientific and technical terms in English. Some ITAs have found the SPEAK test questions to be irrelevant and insultingly simple (Gokcora, 1992; Hoekje & Linnell, 1994). Godfrey (1992) and Johnson (1991) have further asserted that the SPEAK test is not representative of a real conversation. They claim that since the SPEAK test lacks an interlocutor and relies on taped messages and responses, the SPEAK test presents an artificial speaking environment (Hoekje & Linnell, 1994). Ponder (1991) further suggests that the speech samples elicited through the SPEAK test are difficult to evaluate (Hoekje & Linnell, 1994). Despite these issues, the SPEAK test continues to be widely used by administrators who consider the test be an effective tool to measure communicability and to “capture a number of activities that graduate students are expected to perform” such as interpreting data, describing items, and presenting material.³

By 2010, an additional issue developed regarding the SPEAK test. In the early 2000s, ETS expanded its internet-based TOEFL exam (the TOEFL iBT) to include a speaking portion. This expansion made the TSE obsolete, and the company retired the TSE in 2009 and stopped selling SPEAK test kits in 2010 (ETS, 2009). This has presented a problem for universities that have relied, and continue to rely, on the SPEAK test to assess ITA English proficiency. The SPEAK tests are becoming out-of-date, and the technology used to administer the tests—tape recorders and cassettes—is becoming obsolete. The questions now faced by universities are: How should non-native English speakers who are seeking teaching assistantships and who score below TOEFL, IELTS, and PTE thresholds be tested for English proficiency, given that the SPEAK test is

³ D. Macdonald, personal communication, November 12, 2018.

becoming obsolete? What types of speech samples should be elicited from non-native English speakers to assess their ability of to meet the language demands of teaching assistants?

Although state statutes call for universities to test ITAs' oral English language proficiency, this required testing often does not take into consideration that communicative needs change in different social situations and in different contexts (Hoekje & Williams, 1992). It has been suggested that, instead of testing for language proficiency, universities should test ITAs for their "communicative competence" in English (Oppenheimer, 1998). Communicative competence, as described by Canale and Swain (1980), is a model of language proficiency which requires speakers to demonstrate competencies in grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic language components (Aguilar, 2007; Bagarić & Djigunović, 2007; Canale, 1983). A speaker's grammatical competence, which Canale and Swain (1980) define based on Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence (1965, 1973), is knowledge of a language's vocabulary, syntactic, phonological, and morphological rules which enables speakers to understand and express the literal meanings of utterances (Bagarić & Djigunović, 2007; Canale & Swain, 1980). Sociolinguistic competence is a speaker's demonstrated ability to use appropriate language in different social situations, including how to use and comprehend language in different sociolinguistic and sociocultural contexts. Through discourse competence, speakers demonstrate knowledge of how to cohesively combine utterances to achieve meaningful speech (Bagarić & Djigunović, 2007). Finally, strategic competence is a speaker's ability to use verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to get messages across when communication breakdowns in grammatical, sociolinguistic, or dialect competencies occur (Aguilar, 2007; Bagarić & Djigunović, 2007).

Because of its depth of linguistic and sociolinguistic components, a model of communicative competence has been widely used in the fields of second and foreign language acquisition, language testing, and ITA program development (Bagarić & Djigunović, 2007; Hoekje & Williams, 1992). In ITA research specifically, findings have shown that grammatical competencies in pronunciation, prosody, and intonation impact ITA comprehensibility and students' perceptions of ITAs (Levis, Levis, and Slater, 2012; Gorsuch 2016). For example, ITA comprehensibility has been shown to decrease when ITAs use inappropriate pauses and word stress, and ITAs have been perceived as being disengaged or unfriendly when their speech includes a high degree of level and falling intonations (Levis et al., 2012; Gorsuch 2016). In addition, ITA use of sociolinguistic skills such as utilizing a wide ranges of speech styles and using humor in presentations has resulted in favorable classroom evaluations while ITA misunderstandings of cultural issues, such as not understanding and adhering to U.S. teaching norms, have resulted in poor ITA performance ratings (Hoekje & Williams, 1992). Discourse competence has also been shown to be important in classroom settings. The use of appropriate discourse markers has been found to increase ITA comprehensibility during lectures and office hour discussions (Levis et al., 2012). While these competencies are important, Hoekje and Williams (1992), contend that the most important communication competence for ITAs may be strategic language competence:

Because ITAs, almost without exception, demonstrate gaps in the first three areas of communicative competence, this component may prove to be a crucial one. It may be possible to teach ITAs communication strategies in order to make up for knowledge or abilities that are weak in other areas; in this way, they may learn to use compensatory strategies to increase their effectiveness as teachers. (p. 257)

While each of these competencies on their own is important, it is suggested that ITAs need to integrate all four of these communicative competencies to meet the complex speech demands of U.S. classrooms (Hoekje & Williams, 1992).

The SPEAK test, which focuses on grammar, pronunciation and comprehensibility, is considered to test for three of the four communicative competencies (Clark & Swinton, 1980). According to its rating rubric, the SPEAK test rates speech samples based on linguistic, discourse, sociolinguistic, and functional competencies (ETS, 1996). Linguistically, speech samples are rated for vocabulary, grammar usage, delivery, and pronunciation, which aligns with the grammatical competence of Canale and Swain's model (Canale & Swain, 1980; ETS, 1996). The discourse competence criteria assess an examinee's ability to coherently organize information, while the sociolinguistic competence criteria test examinees' demonstrated awareness of audience and situation through their language choice and tone. These two competencies are similar to Canale and Swain's discourse and sociolinguistic competencies (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983). The final competence assessed by the SPEAK test, functional competence, assesses an examinee's ability to select the language necessary to carry out a function or a task (ETS, 1996). While this ability is not considered an individual competence by Canale and Swain, it is considered to be a component of their sociolinguistic competence (Bagarić & Djigunović, 2007). The SPEAK test, therefore, tests all of the competencies of Canale and Swain's communicative competence model except for the strategic language competence.

In 1990, Bachman suggested that communicatively competent language needs to be applied in specific situational contexts to achieve communicative goals (Bagarić & Djigunović, 2007). Hoekje and Linnell (1994) expand on this need for communicative language in contextual settings by proposing that ITAs should be tested in "authentic" oral language situations, situations that revolve around the actual language situations within which ITAs function. That is, ITA language testing should include a component that tests the ITA's ability to use spoken English to

lecture, lead discussion sessions, supervise labs, and converse with students during office hours (Oppenheimer, 1998). Levis et al. (2012) further assert that presentation skills and the ability to explain content are imperative skills for ITAs. Results of research on the SPEAK, OPI, and a performance-related test (i.e., tests of non-native speaker's English presentation skills) has revealed that performance-related tests are more authentic and better indicators of ITA communicative competence in academic settings (Hoekje & Linnell, 1994). The legality of these tests, however, may be questionable as they may be perceived to test for work-related skills versus communicative competence (Bailey, 1985; Hoekje & Williams, 1992).

Based on this review of the literature, a theoretical framework for oral language testing should include both an assessment of an ITA's communicative competence and ability to communicate in authentic, contextualized academic situations. Assessing communicative competencies provides insight into an ITA's ability to pronounce words and use intonation; to adapt language to different social situations, and to use discourse markers and other linguistic strategies to communicate effectively. Testing an ITA candidate's use of field-specific language and English presentational skills allows universities to assess how the candidate will perform in actual academic settings. Both communicative competence and authentic language situations are considered essential for ITA effectiveness.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

While there is substantial literature on ITAs, communicative competence, and oral language proficiency tests, little research has been conducted on the types of language tests being used within U.S. universities to test ITA oral English proficiency. This research is becoming critical as the SPEAK test, which is still used by many universities, is becoming outdated and obsolete (Clark & Swinton, 1980; ETS, 2009; Yale University, 2018). The purpose of this research is to identify the methods of oral English proficiency testing being used within universities and the attributes of these tests to identify a replacement for the SPEAK test.

Sample Selection

Data were collected from nine Big 10 universities and twelve Mid-American Conference (MAC) universities. Big 10 universities are large, research-based universities known for their excellence in teaching (Grove, 2017); MAC universities are mid- to large-sized universities with notable academic programs (Grove, 2017a). Both types of universities are Midwest-based and, due to their size, are likely to use international graduate students in instructional roles.

Data Collection and Analysis

Information was collected from the websites of the selected universities and, when necessary, from correspondence with university personnel responsible for oral English proficiency testing. The collected information included:

- The minimum standardized tests scores above which universities deemed a graduate student to be proficient in spoken English;
- The oral language test(s) being used by each university to test oral English proficiency;
- The type of test, examples of test questions, and the speech features being elicited for evaluation (e.g., grammar, pronunciation, or content knowledge); and
- The types of courses, tutoring, or other training recommended or required by universities to develop graduate student and ITA spoken English and/or teaching skills.

Information such as the undergraduate population and state requirements for ITA oral English proficiency was also collected for comparative purposes.

Data for each university were collected, organized in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, and analyzed. The analyzed data included the type of university (Big 10 or MAC), the size of the university based on undergraduate enrollment, the location of the university by state, and the type(s) of oral English proficiency tests performed. Standardized test scores, ESL coursework requirements, and ITA assignments based on test results were also collected, organized, and analyzed.

Data were also collected and analyzed based on test type. For language tests (e.g., SPEAK test) and oral language interviews, questions were gathered from sample tests or interviews. The questions were categorized based on performance task such as definition of terms, description of items, and presentation of material. These performance tasks were identified from original SPEAK tests and were expanded based on analyses of later versions of the SPEAK tests and other language tests. Information regarding teaching demonstration was also collected from websites and analyzed, and categories were developed based on trends within the data. The data were organized and analyzed for each relevant university.

The results of the data are provided in Chapter 4, and a discussion of the data is provided in Chapter 5. Based on this discussion, recommendations for a SPEAK test modification and a process for ITA placement are identified. These recommendations are provided and discussed in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Based on the research conducted, 17 of the 21 universities studied required some form of oral English proficiency assessment for ITAs (see Table 1). The universities that did not require proficiency testing were the four MAC schools located in Indiana and Michigan (Ball State, Central Michigan, Eastern Michigan, and Western Michigan). These universities generally considered international students to be qualified for ITA positions if they met the language proficiency requirements for graduate school admission, with some departments requiring additional testing.¹ The eight remaining MAC schools (67%) and all of the Big 10 schools required ITA language testing. The majority of these institutions were located in Ohio (41%), Illinois (12%), Indiana (12%), and Michigan (12%), with others located in Iowa, Minnesota, and New York. Only three of the states in which the schools are located—Illinois, Ohio, and Minnesota—mandate oral English proficiency testing for classroom instructors (Brown et al., 1990; Illinois Public Act, 1984; Illinois Public Act, 1989; Ohio Revised Code, 1986).

Approximately 65% of the universities requiring ITA language testing also accepted pre-determined speaking subset scores from TOEFL, IELTS, or PTE as a demonstration of oral language proficiency. As shown in Table 2, the Big 10 schools set higher standards for minimum

¹ C. Hamstra, personal communication, January 28, 2019; A. Larson, personal communication, February 14, 2019.

Table 1

Methods of English Proficiency Testing by Universities

University	State	Type	Undergrad Enrollment	State Law/ Mandate	Method of English Proficiency Testing			
					Language Test	Oral Interview	Teaching Demo	Course Work
Ohio State	Ohio	Big 10	44,131	Yes			a,b ¹	b
Michigan State	Michigan	Big 10	39,143		a		b ¹	b
Indiana	Indiana	Big 10	38,364			a		
U of Minnesota	Minnesota	Big 10	34,071	Yes			a	b
U of Illinois	Illinois	Big 10	33,368	Yes		a		
U of Wisconsin	Wisconsin	Big 10	31,662		a			
Purdue	Indiana	Big 10	29,497		a			b
U of Michigan	Michigan	Big 10	28,983				a	
Kent State	Ohio	MAC	23,684	Yes		a	b ¹	b
Ohio U	Ohio	MAC	23,585	Yes	a			
U of Iowa	Iowa	Big 10	23,357		a		a	
U at Buffalo	New York	MAC	20,412		a			
Central Michigan ²	Michigan	MAC	19,877					
Western Michigan ²	Michigan	MAC	18,313					
Eastern Michigan ²	Michigan	MAC	17,682					
U of Akron	Ohio	MAC	17,417	Yes		a	a	
Ball State ²	Indiana	MAC	17,011					
Miami	Ohio	MAC	16,981	Yes	a			
U of Toledo	Ohio	MAC	16,223	Yes	a			
Bowling Green State	Ohio	MAC	14,852	Yes			a	
Northern Illinois	Illinois	MAC	14,079	Yes	a			

a = Primary test(s) used to assess English language proficiency. Some universities required two or more types of proficiency testing.

b = Secondary test and/or coursework required to assess English Language proficiency.

¹ Additional testing conducted in relation to ESL course work.

² No ITA proficiency testing needed beyond graduate school admittance requirements.

Table 2

Standardized Test Scores Needed to Meet Oral English Proficiency Requirements

University	Type	Standardized Score Minimums for Classroom Instruction Without Further Testing Required		
		TOEFL iBT	IELTS	PTE
Indiana ¹	Big 10			
Michigan State ¹	Big 10			
Ohio State	Big 10	Speaking 28+	Speaking 8.5+	
Purdue	Big 10	Speaking 27+	Speaking 8.0+	Speaking 76+
U of Illinois	Big 10	Speaking 25+	Speaking 8.0+	
U of Iowa	Big 10	Speaking 25+ Listening 26+		
U of Michigan ¹	Big 10			
U of Minnesota	Big 10	Speaking 27+		
U of Wisconsin	Big 10	Speaking 26+	Speaking 8.0+	
Bowling Green State	MAC	Speaking 24+	Speaking 7.0+	
Kent State ¹	MAC			
Miami ²	MAC			
Northern Illinois	MAC	Speaking 24+ Overall 80+	Speaking 7.0+ Overall 6.5+	
Ohio U	MAC	Speaking 24+ Listening, 17+ Reading 17+ Writing 17+	Speaking 7.0+ Listening 6.5+ Reading 6.5+ Writing 6.5+	
U at Buffalo ¹	MAC			
U of Akron	MAC	Speaking 23+		
U of Toledo	MAC	Speaking 22+	Speaking 6.5+	

¹ Standardized test scores do not satisfy oral ITA English proficiency requirements.

speaking scores than MAC schools. Big 10 minimum speaking scores ranged from 25 to 28 for the TOEFL and from 8.0 to 8.5 for the IELTS. These scores equated to “good” on the TOEFL scale and “very good” on the IELTS scale (British Council, 2012; ETS, 2019a). The MAC universities required slightly lower speaking scores, ranging from 22 to 24 for the TOEFL and from 6.5 to 7.0 for the IELTS. Candidates with these scores were considered “fair” on the TOEFL scale and “competent” to “good” on the IELTS scale (British Council, 2012; ETS, 2019a).

ITA candidates not meeting TOEFL, IELTS or PTE speaking score requirements and those attending schools that did not accept standardized language scores were required to take one or more oral language proficiency assessments: language tests, oral interviews, and/or teaching demonstrations. The most common form of assessment used was the language test, with over half of the universities using some form of a language test¹ (see Table 3). Two schools, Purdue and Iowa, created their own language test while seven of the schools used actual or modified versions of the SPEAK test.

The SPEAK practice test includes 15 questions (see Table 4). The first three questions are not scored and are used to familiarize the candidate with the test. A majority of the questions (12 of 15) elicit general, everyday speech samples. Candidates are assessed on eight types of performance competencies including the ability to define terms, describe items, give directions, express opinions, perform graphical analysis, narrate events, persuade others, and present information. Speech samples are scored by trained raters for sociolinguistic, discourse, and grammar competencies (ETS, 1996).

¹ Calculation based on the 17 universities conducting tests for oral proficiency.

Table 3
Language Tests by Type

SPEAK test	Modified SPEAK test	University Created Test
Wisconsin (Big 10)	Michigan State (Big 10)	Purdue (Big 10)
Miami (MAC)	U of Toledo (MAC)	U of Iowa (Big 10)
Northern Illinois (MAC)		
Ohio U (MAC)		
U at Buffalo (MAC)		

Table 4
Comparison of Oral English Language Tests

Question Types	SPEAK Test ¹	MSU Speaking test	Purdue OEPT	Iowa EPISA
Scored Questions	12 (80%)	12 (75%)	8 (100%)	6 (100%)
Un-scored Questions	3 (20%)	4 (25%)		
Types of Questions				
General	12 (80%)	6 (38%)		
Academic	3 (20%)	10 (63%)	8 (100%)	6 (100%)
Performance Tasks				
Biographical (Warm-up)	3 (20%)	4 (25%)		
Definitions	1 (7%)	1 (6%)		1 (17%)
Description	1 (7%)	1 (6%)		
Directions	1 (7%)			
Explanation			1 (13%)	
Expression of Opinion	3 (20%)	5 (31%)		
Graphic Analysis	2 (13%)	2 (13%)	1 (13%)	1 (17%)
Narration of Events	1 (7%)		2 (25%)	
Persuasive Speech	2 (13%)	1 (6%)	1 (13%)	
Presentation	1 (7%)	1 (6%)		2 (33%)
Reading/Pronouncing			1 (13%)	2 (33%)
Situational Analysis		1 (6%)	2 (25%)	

¹ The SPEAK test is used by Wisconsin, Miami, Northern Illinois, Ohio U, and Buffalo to test English proficiency. A modified version of the test is used at Michigan State (as shown) and Toledo.

The MSU Speaking practice test demonstrated several characteristics similar to the SPEAK test (see Table 4 and Appendix A). This test is comprised of 16 questions, with the first four questions being used to familiarize candidates with the test; these questions are not scored. Similar to the SPEAK test, the MSU Speaking test assesses candidates' abilities to define terms, describe items, express opinions, perform graphical analysis, persuade others, and present information. This modified SPEAK test, however, does not require candidates to give directions, and it places more emphasis on questions requiring ITA candidates to express opinions and analyze situations. The MSU Speaking test questions are also more academically focused than those on the SPEAK test, with 10 of the 16 questions (63%) targeting academic situations. Raters for the MSU Speaking test assess speech samples based on grammar and discourse competencies (Michigan State University, 2018).

The Purdue Oral English Proficiency Test (OEPT) and the Iowa English Speaking Proficiency Assessment (EPSA) were developed by the respective universities and are similar to the SPEAK test and MSU Speaking test. The Purdue OEPT asks questions pertaining to graphical analysis, narration of event, persuasive speech, and situational analysis. The Iowa EPSA includes questions requiring candidates to define terms, perform graphical analysis, and make presentations. Both the Purdue OEPT and the Iowa EPSA have a reading section, which is a task included on early versions of the SPEAK test (Clark & Swinton, 1980). The Purdue OEPT and the Iowa EPSA have fewer questions than the SPEAK test and MSU Speaking text, asking six to eight questions, respectively, and the questions are more academically focused than those of the SPEAK test. Raters for the Purdue OEPT and the Iowa EPSA score candidates based on grammar,

sociolinguistic, and discourse competencies (Purdue University, 2016; University of Iowa ESL Programs Office, n.d.).

All of the schools studied administer language tests via digital recording equipment or computer with the exception of Northern Illinois, where tape recorders and cassettes are still used to administer questions and to record responses. At each of the universities, elicited speech samples are recorded and rated by two to three trained raters.

Oral interviews are another type of language proficiency test used by Big 10 and MAC schools, though to a lesser degree than other language tests. Only four universities (Indiana, Illinois, Kent State, and Akron) use oral interviews as a means of assessing English language proficiency (see Table 5). Other universities such as Ohio State, Michigan, and Bowling Green require interviews, but these are usually brief interviews conducted before teaching demonstrations.

Table 5
Oral Interview Information

University	Test	Type of Interview	Duration	Interviewers
Indiana (Big 10)	Test of English Proficiency for International Associate Instructor Candidates (TEPAIC)	Face-to-Face	15 minutes	2 trained interviewers/raters from Department of Second Language Studies
U of Illinois (Big 10)	English Proficiency Interview (EPI)	Face-to-Face	15 minutes	1 trained interviewer/rater and 1 silent rater from the Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning
Kent State ¹ (MAC)	TA Interview	Face-to-Face	5-10 minutes	1 Speech Pathologist and 1 ESL Center faculty interviewer/rater
U of Akron (MAC)	U-ADEPT	Face-to-Face	40 minutes	Two interviewers/raters who are faculty members with the English Language Institute

¹ Information received from A. Brodsky, personal communication, January 8, 2019.

The oral interviews conducted by the four universities are face-to-face interviews with administration times ranging from 5 to 10 minutes at Kent State and up to 40 minutes at Akron. Interviews are conducted by two interviewers from ESL/second language programs at Indiana and Akron, and by an ESL faculty member and a speech pathologist at Kent State. Illinois uses one interviewer who interacts with the candidate and a second “silent rater” who does not; both the interviewer and the rater are from the Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning (CITL). At all four schools, interviewers and silent raters are responsible for rating interview results based on grammar, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic language competencies.

The oral interviews target similar performance tasks as the language tests. During the interviews, candidates are asked to define terms, explain items, express opinions, present information, and analyze situations (see Table 6). While the types of questions are similar to the recorded language tests, the format of the oral interview differs. The oral interviews are interactive, providing interviewers with the opportunity to adjust questions to target noticed problem areas and affording examinees the opportunity to reformulate answers and self-correct, demonstrating an important aspect of strategic competence. The oral interview questions also tend to be more general than academic, similar to the questions on the SPEAK test.

The third type of oral proficiency testing used by Big 10 and MAC universities is the teaching demonstration. Six universities require teaching demonstrations as primary forms of assessment and four (Michigan State, Ohio State, Kent State, and Buffalo) require candidates to perform teaching demonstrations after the completion of ESL coursework (see Table 7). Teaching demonstrations last from eight to fifteen minutes and require candidates to present one or two concepts from their field of study, usually with limited use of visual aids (handouts and white

Table 6
Comparison of Oral Interview Questions

Performance	Indiana U TEPAIC	U of Illinois EPI	U of Akron U-ADEPT
Biographical/Background			
Definition		x	
Description			
Explanation	x	x	x
Expression of Opinion		x	
Narration of Events			
Presentation	x		
Situational Analysis	x		x
Solicitation of Information			x

¹ Sample questions from Kent State were not available.

boards are generally allowed; PowerPoint slides are not). Most teaching demonstrations include some form of question and answer (Q&A) session, either during the demonstration or after its completion. Three universities conduct brief oral interviews before the teaching demonstration. Two universities, Michigan State and Michigan, require candidates to participate in office-hour role playing and either an announcement presentation or a videotaped Q&A session.

The teaching demonstrations are generally observed and rated by at least two people with ESL experience. At universities such as Michigan and Minnesota, representatives from the hiring department and undergraduate students are invited to be part of the demonstration assessments. Teaching and related demonstrations are typically rated for grammar, sociolinguistic, strategic language, and discourse competencies.

While proficiency testing such as language tests, oral interviews, and teaching demonstrations is the primary source for granting teaching assignments to international students, the completion of coursework after failed attempts to pass oral proficiency tests is another

Table 7

Comparison of Teaching Demonstrations

University and Test	Time	Item(s) to Present	Visual Aids	Audience/ Raters	Other Information
<u>Michigan State</u> ITA Oral Interaction Test (Big 10)	12 minutes	2 concepts from field of study (provided by hiring department); Q&A both during and at the end of the session	Use of a graph, chart, or diagram required	2 examiners with extensive experience in ESL	AAE 451 or AAE452 must be completed prior to Teaching Demo Session includes Office-Hour Role Play and Classroom Announcement Brief interview before Teaching Demo
<u>Ohio State</u> Oral Proficiency Assessment (Big 10)	8 minutes	1 introductory and 1 advanced concept from field of study	Use of notes, PowerPoint, boards, or any other kind of visual aid is prohibited	2 raters from the Spoken English Program	Brief interview before Teaching Demo
<u>U of Iowa</u> English Language Performance Test (Big 10)	15 minutes	1 concept from field that would be covered mid semester; Q&A at end of session	Able to use notes or a copy of the textbook; PowerPoint and similar computer applications are prohibited	3-4 ESL professionals	EPSA test to be completed before Teaching Demo
<u>U of Michigan</u> The Graduate Student Instructor Oral English Test (Big 10)	14-15 minutes	1 concept from field of study; Q&A during session	Able to access boards during the presentation. Handouts allowed; PowerPoint and similar computer applications are prohibited	2-3 evaluators from the Language Assessment Center; Optional faculty	Brief Interview before Teaching Demo. Session also includes Office-Hour Role Play and Videotaped Q&A

(Continued on following page.)

Table 7 (continued)

University and Test	Time	Item(s) to Present	Visual Aids	Audience/ Raters	Other Information
<u>U of Minnesota</u> The Spoken English Test for Teaching Assistants (Big 10)	10 minutes	2 concepts (provided by testing agency); Q&A after each task demo	Able to use boards or document camera	2 trained raters and an undergraduate student	n/a
<u>Bowling Green</u> Spoken English Test (MAC)	7-10 minutes	1 concept from field of study; Q&A at end of session	Able to use any appropriate visual aids deemed necessary; Use of computer projectors or other technology is discouraged	2 ESOL staff members; undergraduate students and a representative from the prospective graduate assistant's department may also be present	Brief Interview before Teaching Demo
<u>U of Akron</u> U-ADEPT (MAC)	15 minutes	1 concept from field of study; Q&A during session	Able to access to boards and an overhead projector; Computer and PowerPoint not allowed	2 English Language Institute faculty members	Oral Interview before Teaching Demo

mechanism used to grant teaching eligibility at some universities (see Appendix B). For example, Purdue offers ITA candidates with an OEPT score of 40 or 45 (out of a possible 60 points) the opportunity to take a course on classroom communication. Favorable student performance during this course, along with strong classroom presentations and satisfactory ratings from teacher evaluations, can result in full teaching eligibility (Purdue University, 2018). At Minnesota, students who do not receive an acceptable score on the Spoken English Test for Teaching Assistants (SETTA) or who successfully complete GRAD 5102 coursework are allowed to enroll in GRAD 5105, a practicum for university teaching. A passing grade on the GRAD 5105 final exam certifies the candidate for a teaching position. At some universities, such as Iowa, further coursework is required before oral proficiency re-testing can occur. At other universities, ITAs with scores slightly below those required for full teaching eligibility are conditionally placed in teaching positions for a semester while being enrolled in specified ESL classes. Successful completion of the ESL coursework provides these ITAs with full teaching rights (see Appendices B and C).

At a majority of the universities studied (12 of the 17) there is a tiered system of assigning teaching duties based on oral proficiency testing results (see Appendix C). Candidates receiving high assessment results are granted full eligibility to teach, while candidates receiving slightly lower scores are either conditionally assigned to teaching positions with required ESL coursework (as discussed above) or are assigned to supervised lab positions. Those receiving moderately low scores are assigned classroom duties with little or no contact with students. ITA candidates receiving low grades are typically considered ineligible for any type of teaching duty and are required to take ESL classes and re-test before any form of classroom duty can be assigned. In

most universities, ITAs can improve their assigned positions through further coursework and re-testing.

Overall, ITA placement at the universities studied is typically much more nuanced than just issuing an oral proficiency test. Speaking scores from standardized language tests are assessed, oral proficiency tests are given, and ITAs are placed into positions based on their scores. ESL coursework and re-testing provide mechanisms for enhancing or obtaining ITA placement when original test scores are low. ITA placement at the universities studied, therefore, is more than the passing or failing of a single language proficiency assessment and often involves a process of multiple assessments, tiered placement, and required ESL coursework for less proficient candidates.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The information and data collected through the review of the literature and the research provides insight into oral proficiency tests and the types of tests currently being used at Midwest universities. The data collected also reveal different processes that universities are using to evaluate the communicative competence of ITAs. These processes typically include using one or more tools to assess ITA oral proficiency; requiring or recommending coursework to build ITA language skills; and placing ITAs into different teaching and classroom positions based on assessment results. The findings of this research are discussed below based on the four research questions presented in Chapter 1. The questions are presented, followed by an analysis and discussion of the data.

Question 1: Major Theories Impacting ITA Oral Proficiency Tests

What are the major theories impacting oral proficiency tests and ITA assessment?

The major theories surrounding oral language proficiency testing are communicative competence and authentic language theories. Research suggests that ITAs require an integration of grammar, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic language competencies in English (i.e., communicative competencies) to meet the complex communication needs of U.S. classrooms (i.e., authentic language situations for ITAs) (Canale & Swain, 1980; Finder, 2005; Hoekje & Linnell, 1994; Hoekje & Williams, 1992; Oppenheimer, 1998). ITAs, therefore, need proficiencies in

pronouncing, organizing, and using academic and field-specific language for lecturing, leading discussions, and supervising labs. They also need familiarity with everyday language and U.S. academic culture to interact effectively with U.S. students, other teaching assistants, and faculty. Furthermore, ITAs need a repertoire of language strategies, such as re-phrasing and re-stating utterances, to promote the comprehensibility of their speech (Hoekje & Williams, 1992; Hoekje & Linnell, 1994; Levis et al., 2012; Oppenheimer, 1998).

Oral proficiency assessments, therefore, need to test ITAs' abilities to use both academic and informal speech in classrooms, laboratories, discussion groups, and office hour settings. Assessments such as the SPEAK test and oral interviews, which are designed to test communicative competence through general, everyday speech, may not assess the full scope of language needed to function within academic settings (Clark & Swinton, 1980; Hoekje & Linnell, 1994). Likewise, assessments which target primarily academic language may not provide sufficient insight into ITAs' abilities to use informal English which is required during office hour interactions (Hoekje & Williams, 1992). The administration of assessments in language labs, on computers, and through face-to-face interviews also presents artificial communicative situations which are not authentic to the environment in which ITAs function. As a result, language tests and oral interviews are limited in their abilities to assess ITA communicative competence in authentic ITA situations. Instead, teaching demonstrations which include Q&A sessions and office-hour role playing may provide a better solution. These teaching demonstrations are designed to test ITAs' formal use of academic language through lecture or demonstration; their ability to re-phrase and clarify information through Q&A sessions; and their ability to interact with students and use informal language during office-hour role play.

While language tests, oral interviews, and teaching demonstrations are used to assess ITA communicative competence in academic settings, it is questionable if any such assessment is sufficient to predict ITA effectiveness in the classroom. Levis et al. (2012) have found that even when ITAs demonstrate grammatically accurate and adequately pronounced language, students often consider their presentations to be less comprehensible than those of native teaching assistances (TAs). Specifically, students find ITA discussions to be difficult to follow due to the overuse of ineffective discourse markers (e.g., “yeah”) and underuse of effective markers (e.g., “I mean”) (Levis et al., 2012). Earlier research by Hoekje and Williams (1992) supports this finding and asserts that ITAs may be *unaware* of how discourse markers promote comprehensibility. Levis et al. (2012) also discovered that the overall structure of ITA presentations tends to differ from the structure of native TA presentations. Native TAs generally define topics at the beginning of the lecture, elaborate on these topics throughout the lecture, and recap the topic at the end of the lecture (Levis et al., 2012). Nearly all of the ITAs observed by Levis et al. (2012) deviated from this structure during their lectures. Hoekje and Williams (1992) further suggest that ITA lectures and presentations differ from native TAs’ due to the ITAs’ employment of teaching techniques from their home countries which may differ from those used in the United States (Hoekje & Williams, 1992). Overall, the unfamiliar presentation and lecturing formats used by ITAs often confuse U.S. students.

ITA ineffectiveness, therefore, does not always result from ITA pronunciation or grammatical issues. Instead, it can be due to organizational, discourse, and pedagogical issues arising from cultural differences between the United States and the ITAs’ home countries. International students with limited or no exposure to U.S. classrooms may be unaware that these

issues exist. In addition, oral proficiency tests which assess ITA English spoken proficiency do not assess ITA cultural awareness and pedagogical effectiveness. As a result, non-language issues that impact ITA effectiveness are often not identified through oral proficiency assessments. Universities should be aware that non-language issues may exist and that even the most English-proficient and communicatively competent ITA may benefit from coursework or tutoring targeting U.S. academic culture and teaching pedagogies.

Question 2: Impact of Legislative Requirements on ITA Proficiency Testing

What impact do legislative requirements for ITA proficiency in spoken English have on language testing at universities?

As mentioned in Chapter 2, over 30 states mandate that universities within their jurisdiction assess the oral English language proficiency of ITAs (Finder, 2005; Brown et al., 1990; Oppenheimer, 1998). Only three of these states—Illinois, Minnesota and Ohio—are represented in this study. Despite the lack of mandated requirements for ITA language testing, a large number of the universities studied require ITA oral language proficiency testing. For universities with over 20,000 undergraduate students, ITA language testing occurs irrespective of state requirements (see Table 1). For schools with undergraduate populations from 14,000 to 20,000 students, ITA oral proficiency testing occurs only in states requiring such testing.¹

¹ As mentioned previously, the schools not requiring ITA English proficiency testing deem international students meeting language requirements for graduate school admittance to be sufficiently proficient in English to be assigned to teaching positions. Individual departments can require additional testing.

Factors other than state requirements, therefore, must impact a university's decision to perform English proficiency testing. As most of the large universities included in this study are research schools with academic programs in the fields of mathematics, science, and engineering, there may be pressure on these schools to hire international students to meet research and instructional needs (Aslan, 2016; Finder, 2005; Hoekje & Linnell, 1994; Plakans, 1997). Well-documented problems between students and ITAs due to ITA incomprehensibility may cause these large schools to adopt policies to test language proficiency for all incoming instructors, despite the lack of state mandates, as a means to address or circumvent issues between undergraduate students and ITAs (Brown et al., 1990; Oppenheimer, 1998). In addition, these schools may have international students seeking ITA positions who are already enrolled in graduate or undergraduate programs. These students are likely to have submitted TOEFL, IELTS, or PTE scores as part of the admission process and may not be required to submit new standardized language scores as part of the ITA application process. The previously submitted standardized scores may be outdated and un-usable for the ITA hiring.² Universities, therefore, may require these ITA candidates to take oral language assessments to validate their English proficiency.

This, however, does not explain why four of the mid-sized schools (Ball State, Central Michigan, Eastern Michigan, and Western Michigan) do not require ITA proficiency testing. These schools offer degrees in mathematics, science, and engineering or pre-engineering and are likely to face the same pressures to hire international graduate students to meet instructional needs as the larger schools. These universities may find their current method of using standardized language

² Most universities require that standardized language test scores be less than two years old for ITA placement purposes.

scores from graduate school admissions to be sufficient for vetting ITA language capabilities, or the schools may be impacted by limited access to ESL professionals or cost constraints which make ITA oral proficiency testing inaccessible. This thesis does not explore why further ITA testing is not conducted at these mid-sized universities, and any reasons provided are speculative.

Overall, there appear to be several factors influencing a university's decision to conduct oral language proficiency tests. State mandates, the size of school, the school's experience with ITAs, ESL accessibility, and costs may all contribute to a university's decision to implement, or to not implement, language proficiency testing. Research into how different factors impact the use of oral ITA proficiency testing is beyond the scope of this thesis and could present an opportunity for future research.

Question 3: Methods of Assessing Oral Proficiency

How are various universities assessing ITA proficiency in English, and what impact does this knowledge have on the recommendation of an oral proficiency assessment?

The universities studied use a variety of methods to test the oral language proficiency of ITAs. Over 40% of the universities use some form of SPEAK test, either an actual SPEAK test or a modified version of the test, and two universities use language tests similar to the SPEAK test. (Discussion surrounding the SPEAK and other language tests is provided in response to Question 4 below and will not be further discussed in this section.) Four universities use oral interviews, and six use teaching demonstrations as their primary form of language assessment. Several universities require more than one form of proficiency testing to demonstrate language proficiency,

and many schools accept standardized test scores or completion of coursework as evidence of oral proficiency. These assessments are discussed in further detail below.

Nearly 65% of the universities performing oral proficiency testing allow speaking scores from standardized language tests to demonstrate ITA oral proficiency. International students who receive either fair/competent scores (MAC schools) or good/very good scores (Big 10 schools) on TOEFL and IELTS speaking sections are considered sufficiently proficient to take on instructional duties (see Table 2).

As mentioned previously, both the TOEFL and the IELTS tests have been validated as indicators of English language performance in academic settings, and the TOEFL iBT speaking subset score has been identified as an effective screening tool for ITA assignment (Charge & Taylor, 1997; Cotos & Chung, 2018; Xi, 2008; Zheng, 2011). There is no consensus, however, about which TOEFL iBT speaking scores—the higher Big 10 scores or the moderate MAC scores—provide a better indication of ITA effectiveness. Research by Xi (2008) shows that, at two of the universities studied, TOEFL speaking scores of 23 and 24 generated the same ITA hiring results as the oral assessments being used (SPEAK tests and/or teaching demonstrations). At the other two universities studied, these same TOEFL speaking scores (23 and 24) aligned with hiring results providing only provisional ITA placement (ITAs assigned to teaching duties with required ESL coursework) (Xi, 2008). TOEFL speaking scores of 27 to 28 were needed at these universities to align with oral proficiency results granting full ITA placement (Xi, 2008). Research, therefore, provides no clear indication about whether moderate or high TOEFL speaking scores are better indicators of ITA effectiveness, and more research is required.

As standardized language scores are generally required for graduate school admission, hiring departments can use TOEFL, IELTS, or PTE speaking scores to pre-screen international students for teaching positions. These scores, when combined with Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores and education histories, can provide insight into international students' content knowledge and English proficiency. Universities may deem students with high GRE and standardized language scores to be qualified for instructional duties and may offer teaching assignments as part of the graduate school admissions process. These test scores, however, may not be indicative of an ITA's effectiveness, and hiring departments may want to require additional language verification through on-line language tests, virtual interviews, or videotaped teaching demonstrations. Required attendance at TA or ITA orientation sessions and/or pedagogical classes may also better prepare ITAs for their assignments in U.S. classrooms.

In addition to standardized tests, universities also use oral interviews to assess language proficiency. Four of the universities studied use face-to-face interviews as their primary form of language assessment. These oral interviews are generally conducted by two interviewers who engage with the ITA candidate and rate the candidate's performance. As demonstrated through this research (see Tables 4 and 6), oral interviews solicit performance tasks similar to the SPEAK and other language tests and assess grammar, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic language competencies. Due to the face-to-face structure of these interviews, interviewers are able to adjust questions to target and evaluate interviewee speech proficiencies and deficiencies, and ITA candidates are able to demonstrate strategic competence through re-formulation of responses and self-correction.

While the oral interview has advantages over language tests (i.e., interview questions can be modified during testing and these interviews assess all four communicative competencies), oral interviews have several disadvantages. The format of the oral interviews can create an asymmetrical power structure between the interviewers and the interviewee that is not representative of actual speaking situations, and the interviewers' focus on eliciting specific speech content can produce a communication situation that is not representative of a true conversation (Johnson, 2000). Administratively, a pool of trained interviewers is required to administer the tests, and inconsistencies may arise between interviews due to the use of different interviewers. In addition, as oral interviews are conducted face-to-face, it may be challenging to use these interviews to assess ITAs who are located outside the United States and whose assignments begin at or near the date of their arrival on campus. Universities may elect to use internet-based programs to administer these interviews, though technical issues and internet accessibility may present additional challenges. Oral interviews can also provide ITA candidates with little recourse to challenge scores as most interviews are not recorded, and it may be difficult for interviewers to isolate areas for further language development due to the lack of recorded material. Oral interviews, therefore, can be challenging to administer and may not fully present authentic ITA situations.

The final oral proficiency testing method used by universities is the teaching demonstration. Six of the universities studied use teaching demonstrations as their primary form of language assessment, and four universities use teaching demonstrations to assess language performance upon completion of ESL coursework. These demonstrations allow universities to test ITA candidates' abilities to use spoken English to lecture, lead discussion sessions, and present

material (Levis et al., 2012; Oppenheimer, 1998). Two universities—Michigan and Michigan State—also require office-hour role playing which tests candidates’ abilities to converse and interact with students. Overall, teaching demonstrations have been found to elicit speech samples that are demonstrative of ITA speaking abilities in authentic, contextualized academic situations which are rated for grammar, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic language competencies.

Although teaching demonstrations provide authentic ITA language situations and evaluate all four communicative competencies, there is some concern over the legality of these tests (Bailey, 1985; Hoekje & Williams, 1992). Bailey (1985) suggests:

As a screening test [teaching demonstration] for foreign TAs focuses less on purely linguistic competence and more on the specific functional skills involved in teaching, it will become, paradoxically, less fair, and presumably, less acceptable. At what point do we stop testing contextualized oral English proficiency and start testing teaching ability instead? (p. 167)

Teaching demonstrations, therefore, may be considered to test for work-related skills (teaching and presentation skills) instead of testing for English proficiency as required by state mandates (Finder, 2005; Brown et al., 1990; Hoekje & Williams, 1992; Oppenheimer, 1998). Many universities circumvent this issue by providing information, usually via the internet, about teaching demonstrations and the methods used for assessment. Michigan’s website, for example, states that “the Graduate Student Instructor Oral English Test (GSI OET) is a procedure for testing the spoken English of prospective graduate student instructors” while Iowa’s website indicates that teaching demonstrations are rated for comprehensibility in spoken English, development and organization of material, and usage of non-linguistic techniques to promote comprehensibility (University of Michigan, n.d.; University of Iowa ESL Programs Office, n.d.). These disclosures enable universities to present teaching demonstrations as tests of spoken English proficiency as opposed to tests of work-related skills.

There is also a question of the validity of teaching demonstrations. While it is suggested that some universities have validated teaching demonstrations as viable ITA screening tools and research has shown that teaching demonstrations are more effective than other oral proficiency tests, there is little to no research in the public realm which validates teaching demonstrations as indicators of language competence (Hoekje & Linnell, 1994; Xi, 2008). Therefore, even though there is strong support for the use of teaching demonstrations as ITA screening tools, further research is needed to validate teaching demonstrations as indicators of English proficiency in academic settings.

Question 4: Attributes of the SPEAK Test to Retain

What attributes of the SPEAK test, if any, should be present in an oral proficiency assessment?

The SPEAK test continues to be widely used by the universities studied, with over 40% percent of the schools using some form of the SPEAK test. This test, which originally required examinees to perform tasks such as responding to biographical questions, reading aloud, narrating events, analyzing situations, describing items, expressing opinions, and presenting material, continues to require examinees to perform many of these tasks (Clark & Swinton, 1980). More contemporary versions of the SPEAK tests also require examinees to demonstrate their abilities to analyze graphs, define concepts, and use persuasive speech (ETS, 2010).

The tasks of the SPEAK test elicit speech examples which can be assessed for grammar, sociolinguistic, and discourse competencies (ETS, 2014). As presented in Table 4, many of these performance tasks are also required on the MSU Speaking test, the Purdue OEPT, and the Iowa EPSA test. In addition, the oral interview assessments used by Indiana, Illinois, and Akron also

require ITA candidates to perform tasks similar to those on the SPEAK test (see Table 6). Based on the wide acceptance of these performance tasks and the validation of the SPEAK test as an indicator of language proficiency, these tasks can be considered to be valid indicators of real-life communication skills (Clark & Swinton, 1980; Sarwark et al., 1995). The use of these performance tasks, therefore, should be continued in any suggested modification or replacement of the SPEAK test.

While the types of performance tasks included on the SPEAK test continue to be valid, other features of the SPEAK test are questionable. Nearly all universities using the SPEAK test have adapted the test so that it can be administered through digital recorders or computers (see Appendix B). This eliminates concern that the original technology used for administering the test—tape recorders and cassettes—is becoming obsolete and subject to breakage. In addition, universities that have modified the SPEAK test or developed their own language tests use questions that are more academically-based than the SPEAK test (see Table 4). The academic focus of these new and/or modified tests is believed to provide ITA candidates with opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge of field-specific language and to use language more authentic to academic settings. There is concern, however, that merely eliciting academic speech may not allow for the assessment of everyday speech which is crucial for student interactions.

Some of the SPEAK test's current performance tasks also need to be revised to better represent contemporary ITA situations and to make the test more culturally neutral. For example, the current task of providing locational directions is no longer a skill required of ITAs as most

people rely on mobile devices for directions.³ Therefore, questions soliciting locational directions should be removed from the assessment. In addition, questions regarding dating and other social circumstances which have been used in different versions of the SPEAK test may be difficult for people from different cultures to understand or to feel comfortable responding to.⁴ All SPEAK questions, therefore, should be reviewed and modified as needed to make the questions more relatable to all examinees. Even though there are cultural differences in classrooms across the world, moving questions from general to more academic situations may reduce cultural ambiguity and misunderstanding as nearly all ITA candidates have experience with academic and classroom settings.

The MSU Speaking test, which is a modified SPEAK test, includes some of these modifications (see Appendix A). Non-scored, general questions at the beginning of the test have been revised to include two academically focused questions. In addition, five of the twelve scored questions have been modified to ask more academically focused questions which require examinees to analyze situations and express opinions. The remaining seven scored questions are similar to the SPEAK test questions in focus and content.

Even with modifications, the SPEAK test and other language tests continue to be limited by the nature of the test. Although these tests can be developed or modified to elicit academic speech, the tests are typically administered in language labs or on computers which do not simulate classroom or office settings (Hoekje & Linnell, 1994). In addition, the tests use pre-recorded messages and recorded responses which present artificial speaking environments which are not

³ Skills targeting directions for the completion of tasks are considered relevant for the SPEAK test.

⁴ L. Bird, personal communication, November 7, 2018.

representative of real conversations (Hoekje & Linnell, 1994). These language tests, therefore, do not meet requirements for authentic language situations. Despite these challenges, the language tests are easy to administer; the systems for scoring are well established; and, with pre-recorded messaging, the tests provide a consistent means of testing ITAs for oral language proficiency.

Additional Information: ITA Placement Processes

For many universities, language proficiency testing is not the only mechanism used for ITA testing and placement. Many universities discussed in the study require additional proficiency testing or coursework before ITAs can be placed into instructional positions. Many universities also assign ITAs based on assessment results, placing more proficient candidates into teaching positions and less proficient candidates into positions with little to no student interaction.

Several of the universities studied require more than one type of assessment to evaluate ITA candidates. Iowa, for example, requires ITA candidates who do not receive high scores on the Iowa EPSA assessment to provide a teaching demonstration via the English Language Performance Test (ELPT). At Akron, ITA candidates participate in both an oral interview and a teaching demonstration. Several other universities require ESL coursework and additional assessment through teaching demonstrations when initial testing results are not sufficient to offer teaching positions. The universities requiring two forms of oral proficiency testing usually require ITA candidates to participate in either a language test or an oral interview and to perform a teaching demonstration.

Many of the universities studied also recommend or require coursework for ITAs and ITA candidates. At several schools, ITA candidates who do not receive test scores high enough to be

eligible to teach are required to take ESL classes or participate in tutoring sessions before they can be re-tested or assessed through teaching demonstration. The required ESL coursework and tutoring programs generally target pronunciation improvement, accent reduction, and increased fluency, with some classes providing presentational and teaching skills.

A majority of the universities also use a tiered structure for assigning ITAs. Potential ITAs with higher scores are generally assigned to teaching positions; those with slightly lower scores are offered supervised laboratory positions or are assigned to teaching positions with full-time assignment conditional upon the completion of ESL coursework. Those with lower scores may be assigned to positions which have little to no contact with students such as grading papers or proctoring exams, and candidates with the lowest scores are considered ineligible for any classroom assignment. At most schools, ITAs can improve their assigned position by taking ESL coursework and/or re-testing.

ITA placement at many universities, therefore, is a process that assesses, trains, and offers different types of placement opportunities to international students. ITA candidates are generally assessed using one or more forms of oral proficiency testing allowing universities to test different language skills in different settings. ITA candidates are placed in different academic positions based on their demonstrated proficiency and, as applicable, are offered language training opportunities to improve their competencies in English. Universities looking to modify or change their ITA language assessment, therefore, should consider reviewing and developing the entire process they are using to evaluate and develop ITA candidates to better align with the processes being used by other universities within their region. These universities also need to assess and address the impact of ITA process changes—increased costs, delayed or lengthened visa processes,

increased ESL staffing and training needs—before making any changes to ITA placement processes.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that the hiring of ITAs expands beyond the administration and passage of a single oral proficiency assessment. At most of the universities studied, ITA placement is a process that requires one or more types of oral language testing, tiered placement of ITAs, and recommended or required ESL coursework. Universities seeking to replace the SPEAK test should not only select a replacement for the test but should also develop a multi-faceted process to hire, place, and prepare ITAs for classroom positions. The recommended process should include four components: a teaching demonstration and either a language test or an oral interview; placement of ITAs based on assessment results; and structured training and/or tutoring to develop ITA language competencies. Rationale for these recommendations is provided. In addition, information is provided detailing how this process enables universities to evaluate the language competence of ITAs in actual ITA settings and to provide ESL coursework to develop the language skills of less competent international students. Overall, this process helps universities to ensure that all ITAs have the communicative competence they need to function within U.S. classrooms.

Oral Proficiency Testing Recommendations

Within the recommended ITA placement process, universities are to select one or more language proficiency tool. Due to the communicative competence and authentic language situation

requirements of oral proficiency testing, as well as the need for tests to be validated and administered virtually, the preferred method of ITA proficiency testing includes two components: a teaching demonstration and either a language test or an oral interview. As presented in Table 8, each of these forms of assessment has strengths and weaknesses based on the ease of administration, the authenticity of the test and the testing environment, and the test's assessment of ITA communicative competence.

As noted, language tests are easy to administer, assess for both academic and everyday language, and assess three of the four communicative competencies (strategic language competence is not assessed). These tests, however, are generally administered using pre-recorded messages either on the computer or in language labs and do not provide testing environments that simulate classroom environments. Oral interviews allow interviewers to engage ITA candidates in conversation, to modify questions as needed, and to assess all four communicative competencies. These interviews, however, require a pool of qualified interviewers and raters to administer the tests, and the dynamics of the interview preclude these interviews from emulating true conversations.

While both language tests and oral interviews are relatively effective at assessing communicative competence, language tests may be a better option than oral interviews at universities with limited ESL resources. Language tests can be administered to multiple ITA candidates during a single session with one ESL professional administering the test; oral interviews can only be administered to one ITA candidate at a time, and each interview is best administered with two ESL professionals. Also, because language tests use pre-recorded messages, they can be consistently administered to ITA candidates while oral interviews may vary due to the use of

Table 8

Advantages and Disadvantages of Oral Proficiency Tests

Type of Test	Advantages	Disadvantages
Language tests (e.g. SPEAK tests)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forms of the tests have been validated • Tests are easy to administer and can be administered on-line • Questions can be developed to elicit everyday and academic language • Results can be assessed for grammar, sociolinguistic, and discourse competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-recorded messages and taped responses are not representative of real conversations • Language lab and computer-based testing does not present an authentic language situation for ITAs
Oral interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forms of oral interviews have been validated • Interviews engage ITA candidates in conversation • Questions can be modified to better assess ITA communicative strengths and weaknesses • Interviews can be conducted virtually • Results can be assessed for grammar, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic language competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pool of trained interviewers is required to administer the tests • Oral interviews may be inconsistently administered across different interviewers • Preferred interview format (two interviewers to one interviewee) and questioning is not representative of a true conversation and does not create an authentic ITA language situation
Teaching demonstrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching demonstrations represent authentic ITA situations • ITAs are able to demonstrate social language competencies through Q&A sessions • Hiring department can be involved in the oral proficiency testing • Results can be assessed for grammar, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic language competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching demonstrations may be considered to be more representative of work-related skills (e.g., teaching skills) than language skills • Teaching demonstrations have not been validated for language assessment • Virtual administration of demonstrations is limited as raters are not able to interact with ITA candidates

different interviewers to conduct the interviews. Language tests also record responses which can be used to validate scores and to identify the language development needs of examinees while oral interviews are frequently not recorded. Both language tests and oral interviews, however, lack authentic language situations and do not meet the theoretical requirements of oral proficiency testing.

Teaching demonstrations do meet these theoretical requirements. Teaching demonstrations, which take place in classroom or classroom-like settings and are often enhanced by Q&A sessions and office-hour role playing, assess ITA candidates in authentic language situations. These demonstrations also use two or more raters—ESL professionals, hiring department personnel, and/or students—to evaluate ITA candidates based on the pronunciation and fluency of their demonstrations (grammar competence), their organization of the material (discourse competence), and their ability to communicate meaning through different language situations (social and strategic language competencies). Teaching demonstrations, therefore, provide an authentic language setting in which both ESL staff and hiring departments assess all four communicative competencies.

While teaching demonstrations meet the theoretical requirements of oral proficiency assessments, these demonstrations can be enhanced by combining them with either a language test or an oral interview. Specifically, forms of these other proficiency tests have been validated as indicators of language proficiency, and these assessments can include on-line or virtual versions which can be used to screen ITAs prior to their arrival in the United States. Universities can offer teaching assignments to high scorers before they arrive on campus and can require further testing and/or required coursework for mid- to low-scorers. In addition, an oral interview segment can

be added to teaching demonstrations to allow university personnel to further engage ITA candidates and better assess their communicative competencies.

Therefore, even though teaching demonstrations offer a good option for oral proficiency testing, the evaluation of an ITA can be strengthened and better administered when teaching demonstrations are combined with either an oral interview or a language test. The two-test approach—a teaching demonstration and either a language test or an oral interview—is recommended for evaluating ITA oral proficiency.

Recommended SPEAK Test Modifications

Language tests remain a viable option for oral proficiency testing, and the SPEAK test, with modifications, remains a viable option. Based on the results of this research, many of the performance tasks solicited by the test are considered to provide speech samples that can be assessed for communicative competencies. In addition, the SPEAK test has structured rubrics for scoring examinee performance, and many of the universities studied are familiar with the SPEAK tests and its scoring criteria. The adoption of a language test based on modifications to the SPEAK test, therefore, would be a relatively seamless transition for these universities.

Test administration is a primary concern for universities using the SPEAK test. The SPEAK test ideally needs to be computerized or administered via digital recording devices (nearly all of the universities researched have already moved to such devices). This removes the test from a cassette and tape recorder model which is outdated and subject to breakage. Movement to a computerized version also facilitates the ability to perform early proficiency testing on ITAs who have not yet entered the country via the internet, allowing program administrators to screen these

ITA candidates prior to offering them assistantships. Universities that use the SPEAK test should move to computerized or digital administration of the test if they have not already done so.

Another factor that needs to be adjusted is the general focus of the test questions. SPEAK questions were developed to solicit generalized, everyday speaking proficiency (Clark & Swinton, 1979). While generalized speech is needed for interactions with students, ITAs also need to use more formalized, academic language during lectures, discussion sessions, and supervised labs (Hoekje & Linnell, 1994; Oppenheimer, 1998). A selection of SPEAK test questions, therefore, should elicit speech samples that demonstrate academic speaking capabilities. As mentioned, Michigan State, which use a modified SPEAK assessment, has adjusted the SPEAK test so that eight of the twelve questions scored (67%) are academically focused. These questions range from asking ITA candidates to define terms in their selected field of study to asking them to express an opinion about learning methodologies (Michigan State University, 2018). The questions from the Purdue and Iowa language tests are also academically focused, asking ITAs to do such tasks as describing a lecture, reading a list of academic words, or role playing an interaction with a student (Purdue University, 2018a; University of Iowa ESL Programs Office, n.d.). Modifying the SPEAK test to include similar types of questions would enhance the test's ability to elicit the range of formal and informal speech required by ITAs.

The focus on more academic situations also provides for more culturally-neutral questions. Although classroom power structures and methods of teacher-student interaction can differ between cultures, many international students are familiar with classroom settings, the use of lectures and discussions for presenting material, and methodologies for teaching and learning (Hoekje & Williams, 1992). In contrast, international students may have different perceptions of,

or little experience with, certain types of social situations that have previously been presented on SPEAK tests. For example, they may have difficulty describing concerts or depicting pictures of people on a date.¹ As a result, the use of academic situations not only solicits language more authentic to a classroom setting, but it also presents an opportunity to present situations that are culturally neutral.

A final recommended change to the SPEAK test is a modification of the types of performance tasks solicited. Some tasks, such as giving directions from a map and role playing telephone conversations, no longer represent skills needed by ITAs.² While it can be argued that ITAs require skills for providing task-related directions, the ability to provide locational directions is no longer needed. People now rely on the map applications on their mobile telephones to find locations. In addition, people now send messages via texting, direct messaging, or email and rely less on telephone and voicemail as a form of communication. These tasks, therefore, should be removed from the SPEAK text and replaced with more relevant tasks. Michigan State has removed both of these tasks on its modified SPEAK test, replacing them with questions that ask ITA candidates to express opinions, analyze situations, and persuade people (see Appendix A). The Purdue OEPT does not ask candidates to provide directions but instead asks candidates to read a segment of academic writing. This reading task assesses examinees' abilities to pronounce field-specific language. A similar reading task was included on early versions of the SPEAK test, and the task is considered to be a relevant example of real-life language use, especially in academic settings (Clark & Swinton, 1979). Overall, by assessing current SPEAK test questions and

¹ L. Bird, personal communication, November 7, 2018.

² L. Bird, personal communication, November 7, 2018.

replacing irrelevant tasks, universities can develop a language test that is more reflective of contemporary ITA language situations.

An example of a language test developed from recommended changes to the SPEAK test is provided in Table 9. The modified test includes 12 scored questions and three non-scored questions, similar to the current SPEAK test. It draws from questions on practice versions of the SPEAK test, the MSU Speaking test, the Purdue OEPT, and the IELTS. Nine of the scored questions are academically focused, and the test asks examinees to define terms, describe objects, express opinions, read academic texts, conduct situational analysis, analyze graphs, and present material. This language test, therefore, elicits academic and everyday language using performance tasks that simulate culturally neutral ITA situations.

ITA Placement and ESL Coursework Recommendations

While the SPEAK test and teaching demonstration can provide insight into speaking proficiency, a multi-faceted approach is recommended for ITA processes. This multi-faceted approach should include standards for proficiency testing as already discussed, the development of a tiered ITA placement system, and the identification of ESL coursework or tutoring programs to develop less proficient candidates.

To implement a tiered ITA placement system, departments within universities need to analyze their teaching, research, and staffing needs which are not being met by U.S. citizens, along with the funding and the tuition waivers they have available. Departments should then assess the degree of English language skills required for each unfilled position and assign minimum oral proficiency scores which meet the English demands of these positions. Higher proficiency scores

Table 9

Recommended Changes to the SPEAK Test

Modified SPEAK Test Question	Performance Task	Type	Source
What is your examinee identification number? (<i>10 seconds</i>)	Warm-up/Not scored	General	SPEAK test
What is the weather like today? (<i>10 seconds</i>)	Warm-up/Not scored	General	SPEAK test
What were your first impressions of the university when you came here? (<i>10 seconds</i>)	Warm-up/Not scored	Academic	MSU Speaking test
Where is a place I should visit if I go to your hometown? (<i>45 seconds</i>)	Description	General	IELTS Influenced
Please read the following section from an academic paper silently for one minute and then read the section aloud when I ask you to do so. (Reading selection provided by department.) (<i>60 seconds silent pre-read; 60 seconds reading aloud</i>)	Reading	Academic	Purdue OEPT Influenced
Please tell me about your major and why you chose it. (<i>60 seconds</i>)	Description	Academic	IELTS Influenced
A student has come to you during office hours to ask to change the time of a test because she will be out of town. How would you respond to the student? (<i>60 seconds</i>)	Situational Analysis	Academic	Purdue OEPT Influenced
Imagine that you are a Teaching Assistant. One of your students received a low grade on an important test. He tells you that he is planning to drop out of your class because he thinks he will fail the entire class. How would you respond to him? (<i>60 seconds</i>)	Situational Analysis	Academic	MSU Speaking test
Sometimes school projects can be fun and exciting, but other times they can be rather boring. What is the best way to become focused and motivated to work on a boring project? (<i>45 seconds</i>)	Persuasive Speech	Academic	MSU Speaking test

(Continued on following page.)

Table 9 (continued)

Modified SPEAK Test Question	Performance Task	Type	Source
Both newspapers and television news programs can be good sources of information about current events. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of each of these sources? (60 seconds)	Expression of Opinion	General	SPEAK test
Many people enjoy visiting zoos and seeing the animals. Other people believe that animals should not be taken from their natural surroundings and put into zoos. I'd like to know what you think about this issue. (60 seconds)	Expression of Opinion	General	SPEAK test
I'm not familiar with your field of study. Select a term used frequently in your field and define it for me. (60 seconds)	Definitions	Academic	SPEAK test
The graph below presents the actual and projected percentage of the world population living in cities from 1950 to 2020. Describe to me the information given in the graph. (60 seconds)	Graphic Analysis	Academic	SPEAK test - modified
Now discuss what this information might mean for the future. (45 seconds)	Graphic Analysis	Academic	SPEAK test - modified
Please look at some information about a change in the syllabus. Imagine that you are the instructor of this class. Due to some weather events, some classes were cancelled, and you had to adjust the syllabus. You must inform the students of the changes to the schedule. In your presentation do not just read the information printed but present it as if you were talking to a class. You will now have one minute to plan your presentation. Do not start speaking until I tell you to do so. (60 seconds to study the chart; 90 seconds to describe the chart)	Presentation	Academic	SPEAK test - modified

should be assigned to positions requiring high amounts of student interactions, such as direct instruction in classroom and laboratory settings, while lower proficiency scores should be assigned to positions with little to no student interaction, such as research or proctoring positions. As discussed, universities should also ensure that the methods they are using to assess oral proficiency are implementable so that ITAs, especially those in countries outside of the United States, can be identified, assessed, and cleared for positions with ample time available to attract the students, secure visas, assign teaching positions, and complete the necessary university paperwork.

Universities should also consider offering ways to develop the English speaking skills of less proficient ITA candidates as a part of their ITA process. This will require universities to determine the type(s) of opportunities to provide, such as coursework or tutoring, based on the number of ITAs hired and the funding available. Schools with significant numbers of ITA candidates may consider ESL courses to be more cost effective, while schools with lower numbers of ITAs may consider tutoring to be a better option. As nearly all ITAs can benefit from U.S. cultural and pedagogical training, universities should consider offering orientation programs, ITA workshops, or teaching and presentational coursework to better prepare ITAs for U.S. teaching positions.

While these courses better prepare ITAs, universities need to consider a number of administrative issues before offering these courses. First, universities need to determine who will pay for ITA courses and tutoring. Universities may require less proficient ITAs to take ESL coursework as non-credit courses while being conditionally assigned to teaching positions. These less proficient ITAs, therefore, will require additional time to complete their degrees and will essentially “pay” for their ESL coursework through longer teaching availability. Hiring

departments can also cover the costs of ITA training, thereby ensuring that only departments requiring ITAs bear the full costs of the ITAs.

Universities also need to determine which departments—ESL, instructional development, or hiring departments—are responsible for conducting ITA training. Universities need to decide if the skills being developed during this training are language skills (ESL), teaching and classroom management skills (instructional development), field-specific skills (hiring department), or a combination of the three. Based on this determination, responsibilities for the training should be granted to the appropriate department(s) and funding should be provided. Assessments should also be developed and administered to ensure that the courses, instructors, and students are meeting requirements for developing ITA communicative competencies and teaching proficiencies.

Limitations and Needs for Further Research

The ITA process suggested in this paper shows promise as a means to assess, develop, and validate ITA language competencies in authentic ITA language situations. As universities must balance their need for qualified and comprehensible teachers with the costs of ITA hiring and development, more research is needed to evaluate the efficacy of this process. That is, research needs to be conducted to test whether teaching demonstrations and an additional form of proficiency testing actually contributes to the hiring of more comprehensible and effective ITAs. Research also needs to be performed to determine if tiered placement systems and ESL coursework requirements are effective in preparing ITAs for instruction in U.S. classrooms. Further research is also needed to identify the range of TOEFL, IELTS, and PTE speaking scores which best forecast ITA effectiveness and whether these tests can be used in place of other oral proficiency

tests. Such research could provide a better understanding of the impacts of ITA proficiency testing, tiered placement systems, and training on ITA classroom performance and could provide universities with a better indication of cost-effective processes to use for ITA hiring and development.

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APPENDIX A

COMPARISON OF SPEAK TEST TO MSU SPEAKING TEST

Table 10

Comparison of SPEAK Test to MSU Speaking Test

SPEAK Practice Test		MSU Speaking Test (Practice)	
Question	Performance Task	Question	Performance Task
<u>Not Scored</u>		<u>Not Scored</u>	
What is your examinee identification number?	General/ Biographical	What is your student ID number?	General/ Biographical
What is the weather like today?	General/ Biographical	What department are you planning to teach in?	Academic/ Biographical
What are your plans for the rest of the day?	General/ Biographical	What were your first impressions of MSU when you came here?	Academic/ Biographical
		What other U.S. cities would you like to visit, and why?	General/ Biographical

(Continued on following page.)

Table 10 (Continued)

SPEAK Practice Test		MSU Speaking Test (Practice)	
Question	Performance Task	Question	Performance Task
<u>Scored (Questions are Similar)</u>		<u>Scored (Questions are Similar)</u>	
One of your favorite movies is playing at the theater. Please tell me about the movie and why you like it.	General/ Description	One of your favorite movies is playing in a local theater. Tell me about the movie and why you like it.	General/ Description
The man in the pictures is reading a newspaper. Both newspapers and television news programs can be good sources of information about current events. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of each of these sources?	General/ Expression of Opinion	Both newspapers and television news programs can be good sources of information about current events. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of each of these sources?	General/ Expression of Opinion
Many people enjoy visiting zoos and seeing the animals. Other people believe that animals should not be taken from their natural surroundings and put into zoos. I'd like to know what you think about this issue.	General/ Expression of Opinion	Many people enjoy visiting zoos and seeing the animals. Other people believe that animals should not be taken from their natural surroundings and put into zoos. I'd like to know what you think about this issue.	General/ Expression of Opinion
I'm not familiar with your field of study. Select a term used frequently in your field and define it for me.	Academic/ Definitions	What is your field of study? Select a term used frequently in your field and define it for me.	Academic/ Definitions
The graph below presents the actual and projected percentage of the world population living in cities from 1950 to 2010. Describe to me the information given in the graph.	Academic/ Graphic Analysis	The graph below presents the actual and projected percentage of the world population living in cities from 1950 to 2020. Describe the information given in the graph.	Academic/ Graphic Analysis
Now discuss what this information might mean for the future.	Academic/ Graphic Analysis	What do you think this information might mean for the future?	Academic/ Graphic Analysis

(Continued on following page.)

Table 10 (Continued)

SPEAK Practice Test		MSU Speaking Test (Practice)	
Question	Performance Task	Question	Performance Task
<u>Scored (Questions are Similar)</u>		<u>Scored (Questions are Similar)</u>	
<p>Now please look at some information about a trip to Washington, D.C., that has been organized for the members of the Forest City Historical Society. Imagine that you are the president of this organization. At the last meeting you gave out a schedule for the trip, but there have been some changes. You must remind the members about the details of the trip and tell them about the changes indicated on the schedule. In your presentation do not just read the information printed, but present it as if you were talking to a group of people. You will now have one minute to plan your presentation. Do not start speaking until I tell you to do so.</p>	<p>General/ Presentation</p>	<p>The information below is about a trip to Washington, D.C. that has been organized for the members of the Forest City Historical Society. Imagine that you are the president of this organization. At the last meeting you gave out a schedule for the trip, but there have been some changes. You must remind the members about the details of the trip and tell them about the changes indicated on the schedule. In your presentation, do not just read the information printed, but present it as if you were talking to a group of people. You will now have one minute to plan your presentation. Do not start speaking until I tell you to do so.</p>	<p>General/ Presentation</p>

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Table 10 (Continued)

SPEAK Practice Test	
Question	Performance Task
<u>Scored (Questions are Different)</u>	
I'd like to see a movie. Please give me directions from the bus station to the movie theater.	General/ Directions (Locational)
Choose one place on the map that you think I should visit and give me some reasons why you recommend this place.	General/ Persuasive Speech
Tell me the story that the pictures show. (Set of 6 line drawings)	General/ Narration of Events
What could the painters have done to prevent this?	General/ Expression of Opinion
Imagine that this happens to you. After you have taken the suit to the dry cleaners, you find out that you need to wear the suit the next morning. The dry cleaning service usually takes two days. Call the dry cleaners and try to persuade them to have the suit ready later today.	General/ Persuasive Speech

MSU Speaking Test (Practice)	
Question	Performance Task
<u>Scored (Questions are Different)</u>	
Some students attend large universities. Other prefer smaller schools. What do you think are the advantages of each type of education?	Academic/ Expression of Opinion
Imagine that MSU decided to offer only online courses in all departments. Would you still want to attend this school? Why or why not?	Academic/ Expression of Opinion
Which is more important for students: memorizing large amounts of information or learning critical thinking skills?	Academic/ Expression of Opinion
Imagine that you are a Teaching Assistant for an MSU class. One of your students received a low grade on an important test. He tells you that he is planning to drop out of your class because he thinks he will fail the entire class. How would you respond to him?	Academic/ Situational Analysis
Sometimes school projects can be fun and exciting, but other times they can be rather boring. What is the best way to become focused and motivated to work on a boring project?	Academic/ Persuasive Speech

APPENDIX B

ORAL ENGLISH PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT AND
ESL COURSEWORK BY UNIVERSITY

Table 11

Oral English Proficiency Assessments, Test Types, and ESL Coursework by University

University	Test	Type of Oral English Proficiency Test	ITA Assigned to a Position Concurrent with Coursework?	Class Work Recommended/ Required Based on Scores
Indiana (Big 10)	Test of English Proficiency for International Associate Instructor Candidates (TEPAIC)	Oral Interview	Yes (TEPAIC C3, NC4)	T502: Communication Skills for International AI's recommended
Michigan State (Big 10)	MSU Speaking Test	Modified SPEAK test (digital recording)	No	ITA placement occurs with scores 50+. No additional coursework required/recommended. AAE 451: Oral Communication for ITAs or
	ITA Oral Interaction Test (ITAOI)	Teaching Demo and Office-Hour Role Play after completion of course(s)	No	AAE 452: Language of the American Classroom for ITAs Must be completed before test administered
Ohio State (Big 10)	Oral Proficiency Assessment (OPA)	Teaching Demo with Brief Interview	Yes (OPA 2-4.75)	EDUTL 5050: Classroom English for International Graduate Teaching Associates recommended/ required or EDUTL 5040: Advanced Spoken English for International Graduate Students required
Purdue (Big 10)	Oral English Proficiency Test (OEPT)	Language Test (computer based)	Yes (OEPT 45)	ENGL 620: Classroom Communication for International Graduate Students recommended

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Table 11 (continued)

University	Test	Type of Oral English Proficiency Test	ITA Assigned to a Position Concurrent with Coursework?	Class Work Recommended/ Required Based on Scores
U of Illinois (Big 10)	English Proficiency Interview (EPI)	Oral Interview	Yes (EPI 4CP)	ESL 508: Seminar for International TAs required and Graduate Academy for College Teaching required
U of Iowa (Big 10)	English Speaking Proficiency Assessment (EPSA)	Language Test (digital recording)	Yes (EPSA 50,55 and ELPT B,C)	TAPE 5100: TA Preparation - Pronunciation, Fluency Building and Culture recommended/required and/or
	English Language Performance Test (ELPT)	Teaching Demo & Answering Session required based on EPSA score		TAPE 5220: TA Preparation - Pronunciation recommended/required
U of Michigan (Big 10)	The Graduate Student Instructor Oral English Test (GSI OET)	Teaching Demo and Office-Hour Role Play	No	ITA placement occurs with scores A or B. No additional coursework required/recommended
U of Minnesota (Big 10)	The Spoken English Test for Teaching Assistants (SETTA)	Teaching Demo & Answering Session	Yes (SETTA 2)	GRAD 5105: Practicum in University Teaching for Nonnative English Speakers required and/or GRAD 5102: Preparation for University Teaching for Nonnative Speakers of English
U of Wisconsin (Big 10)	SPEAK Test	SPEAK Test (computer based)	Yes (SPEAK 45)	ESL 370: International Teaching Assistant Training recommended or must be enrolled in other program to improve English skills

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Table 11 (continued)

University	Test	Type of Oral English Proficiency Test	ITA Assigned to a Position Concurrent with Coursework?	Class Work Recommended/ Required Based on Scores
Bowling Green State (MAC)	Spoken English Test (SET)	Teaching Demo & Answering Session	Yes (SET 18-24)	ESOL 5050: English for International Teaching Assistants II and/or CDIS 6000 required and/or ESOL 5040: English for International Teaching Assistants I required
Kent State (MAC)	TA Interview	Oral Interview	Yes (Conditionally Cleared)	Accent reduction therapy/tutoring required
	Lecture	Teaching Demo after completion of therapy sessions	No	14 weeks of accent reducing therapy/tutoring required before administration of test
Miami	SPEAK Test	SPEAK Test (computer based)	Yes (SPEAK 40,45)	ACE 619 - Advanced Speaking and Presenting required
Northern Illinois (MAC)	SPEAK Test	SPEAK Test (tape recorder)	No	ESL tutoring recommended for non-passing scores
Ohio U (MAC)	SPEAK test	SPEAK Test (computer based)	Yes (SPEAK 190-220)	ELIP 5220: Classroom Communication Skills for International Teaching Assistants required
U at Buffalo (MAC)	SPEAK test	SPEAK Test (digital recording)	No	ESL 512: Communication for International Teaching Assistants recommended; Teaching Demo required for non-passing scores
U of Akron (MAC)	U-ADEPT	Oral Interview & Teaching Demo	No	Additional ESL course work recommended based on test results
U of Toledo (MAC)	A.L.I. SPEAK test	Modified SPEAK test (computer based)	No	ITA Training Seminar required

APPENDIX C

ITA RESPONSIBILITIES BASED ON ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Table 12.

ITA Responsibilities Based on Assessment Results

University	Oral English Proficiency Testing or Coursework	Required Scores	Required Course Work/Tutoring	Responsibilities
Indiana (Big 10)	Test of English Proficiency for International Associate Instructor Candidates (TEPAIC)	TEPAIC C1 - Outstanding TEPAIC C2 - Satisfactory	None	Eligible to teach
		TEPAIC C3 - Adequate	T502: Communication Skills for International AI's recommended	Eligible to teach with supervision/support
		TEPAIC NC4 – Not Certified (Borderline)	T502: Communication Skills for International AI's recommended	Eligible to answer student questions, hand out papers, and perform other classroom duties
		TEPAIC NC5 – Not Certified (Far From Borderline)	None	Not eligible to teach
Michigan State (Big 10)	MSU Speaking Test	MSU Speaking 50+	None	Eligible to teach
	ITA Oral Interaction Test (ITAOI)	ITAOI 50+	Must have completed AAE 451: Oral Communication for ITAs or	Eligible to teach
			452: Language of the American Classroom for ITAs	
MSU Speaking Test	MSU Speaking 45+ (Foreign Lang. TAs only)	None	Eligible to teach foreign language classes only	

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Table 12 (continued)

University	Oral English Proficiency Testing or Coursework	Required Scores	Required Course Work/Tutoring	Responsibilities
Ohio State (Big 10)	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking 28+ IELTS Speaking 8.5+	None	Eligible to teach
	Oral Proficiency Assessment (OPA)	OPA 5	None	Eligible to teach
		OPA 4.25-4.75	EDUTL 5050: Classroom English for International Graduate Teaching Associates recommended	Eligible to teach
		OPA 4	EDUTL 5050: Classroom English for International Graduate Teaching Associates recommended	Eligible to lead discussions or labs with little/no supervision
		OPA 3-3.75	EDUTL 5050: Classroom English for International Graduate Teaching Associates required	Eligible to assist in labs or supervised recitation while enrolled in EDUTL 5050
		OPA 3-3.75 (Foreign Lang. TAs only)	None	Eligible to teach foreign language classes only
		OPA 2-2.75	EDUTL 5040: Advanced Spoken English for International Graduate Students required	Eligible to conduct office hours only while enrolled in EDUTL 5040
		OPA 0-1.75	EDUTL 5040: Advanced Spoken English for International Graduate Students required	Eligible to grade papers or handle other classroom duties with no direct contact with students

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Table 12 (continued)

University	Oral English Proficiency Testing or Coursework	Required Scores	Required Course Work/Tutoring	Responsibilities
Ohio State (continued) (Big 10)	Oral Proficiency Certification Assessment (OPCA)	OPCA Passing Grade	Must be enrolled in or have completed EDUTL 5050: Classroom English for International Graduate Teaching Associates	Eligible to teach or to lead discussions or labs while enrolled in EDUTL 5050
Purdue (Big 10)	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking 27+ IELTS Speaking 8.0+ PTE Speaking 76+	None	Eligible to teach
	Oral English Proficiency Test (OEPT)	OEPT 50,55	None	Eligible to teach
	ENGL 620	Satisfactory ENGL 620 evaluations	Must have completed ENGL 620: Classroom Communication for International Graduate Students	Eligible to teach
	Oral English Proficiency Test (OEPT)	OEPT 45	ENGL 620: Classroom Communication for International Graduate Students recommended	Eligible to teach with supervision/support
		OEPT 40	ENGL 620: Classroom Communication for International Graduate Students recommended	Not eligible to teach
		OEPT <40	None. Not eligible for ENGL 620	Not eligible to teach

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Table 12 (continued)

University	Oral English Proficiency Testing or Coursework	Required Scores	Required Course Work/Tutoring	Responsibilities
U of Illinois (Big 10)	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking 25+ IELTS Speaking 8.0+	Graduate Academy for College Teaching required	Eligible to teach
	English Proficiency Interview (EPI)	EPI 5,6	Graduate Academy for College Teaching required	Eligible to teach
		EPI 4CP	ESL 508: Seminar for International TAs required and Graduate Academy for College Teaching required	Eligible to teach for one semester while enrolled in ESL 508
	English Proficiency Interview (EPI)	EPI <4	Must complete one English improvement activity in order to be eligible to re-take the EPI.	Not eligible to teach
U of Iowa (Big 10)	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking 25+ TOEFL Listening 26+	TAPE 5330: TA Preparation: Orientation Program required	Eligible to teach
	English Speaking Proficiency Assessment (EPSA)	EPSA 60	TAPE 5330: TA Preparation: Orientation Program required	Eligible to teach

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Table 12 (continued)

University	Oral English Proficiency Testing or Coursework	Required Scores	Required Course Work/Tutoring	Responsibilities
U of Iowa (continued) (Big 10)	English Speaking Proficiency Assessment (EPSA) and English Language Performance Test (ELPT)	EPSA 50, 55 ELPT A-Fully Certified	TAPE 5330: TA Preparation: Orientation Program required	Eligible to teach
		EPSA 50, 55 ELPT B-Partially Certified	TAPE 5100: TA Preparation- Pronunciation, Fluency Building, and Culture or TAPE 5220: TA Preparation- Pronunciation recommended.	Eligible to lead discussions or labs with little/no supervision
		EPSA 50 ELPT C-Partially Certified	TAPE 5100: TA Preparation- Pronunciation, Fluency Building, and Culture or TAPE 5220: TA Preparation- Pronunciation recommended. ELPT re-testing required to become Fully Certified to teach	Eligible to assist in labs with supervision

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Table 12 (continued)

University	Oral English Proficiency Testing or Coursework	Required Scores	Required Course Work/Tutoring	Responsibilities
U of Iowa (continued) (Big 10)	English Speaking Proficiency Assessment (EPSA) and English Language Performance Test (ELPT)	EPSA 45 ELPT C-Partially Certified (Foreign Lang. TAs only)	None.	Eligible to teach foreign language classes only
		EPSA 50+ ELPT D-Not Certified	TAPE 5100: TA Preparation - Pronunciation, Fluency Building, and Culture and/or TAPE 5220: TA Preparation - Pronunciation required before EPSA can be re-taken	Eligible to conduct office hours only
		EPSA <45 ELPT D-Not Certified	TAPE 5100: TA Preparation - Pronunciation, Fluency Building, and Culture and/or TAPE 5220: TA Preparation - Pronunciation required before EPSA can be re-taken	Eligible to grade papers or handle other classroom duties with no direct contact with students
U of Michigan (Big 10)	The Graduate Student Instructor Oral English Test (GSI OET)	A - High Pass; B - Pass	None	Eligible to teach
		C- Fail; D- Fail	None	Not eligible to teach

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Table 12 (continued)

University	Oral English Proficiency Testing or Coursework	Required Scores	Required Course Work/Tutoring	Responsibilities
U of Minnesota (Big 10)	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking 27+	None	Eligible to teach
	The Spoken English Test for Teaching Assistants (SETTA)	SETTA 1	None	Eligible to teach
	GRAD 5105	GRAD 5105 Final Exam Passed	Must have completed GRAD 5105: Practicum in University Teaching for Non-native English Speakers	Eligible to teach
	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking 23-26	GRAD 5105: Practicum in University Teaching for Non-native English Speakers required	Eligible to teach or to lead discussions or labs while enrolled in GRAD 5105
	The Spoken English Test for Teaching Assistants (SETTA)	SETTA 2	GRAD 5105: Practicum in University Teaching for Non-native English Speakers required	Eligible to teach or to lead discussions or labs while enrolled in GRAD 5105

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Table 12 (continued)

University	Oral English Proficiency Testing or Coursework	Required Scores	Required Course Work/Tutoring	Responsibilities
U of Minnesota (continued) (Big 10)	GRAD 5102	GRAD 5102 Final Exam Passed	GRAD 5105: Practicum in University Teaching for Non-native English Speakers required Must have completed GRAD 5102: Preparation for University Teaching for Non-native Speakers of English	Eligible to teach or to lead discussions or labs while enrolled in GRAD 5105
	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL speaking 18-22	GRAD 5102: Preparation for University Teaching for Non-native Speakers of English required	Eligible to grade, tutor, hold office hours, or proctor while enrolled in GRAD 5102
	The Spoken English Test for Teaching Assistants (SETTA)	SETTA 4	GRAD 5102: Preparation for University Teaching for Non-native Speakers of English required	Eligible to grade, tutor, hold office hours, or proctor while enrolled in GRAD 5102
	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking <18	Further course in English required before SETTA may be re-taken	Not eligible to teach
	The Spoken English Test for Teaching Assistants (SETTA)	SETTA 5	Further course in English required before SETTA may be re-taken	Not eligible to teach

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Table 12 (continued)

University	Oral English Proficiency Testing or Coursework	Required Scores	Required Course Work/Tutoring	Responsibilities
U of Wisconsin (Big 10)	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking 26+ IELTS Speaking 8.0+	ESL 370: International Teaching Assistant Training recommended	Eligible to teach
	SPEAK test	SPEAK 50+	ESL 370: International Teaching Assistant Training recommended	Eligible to teach
		SPEAK 45	Course work to improve English skills required	Eligible to teach while enrolled in a program to improve English skills
		SPEAK <45	None	Not eligible to teach
	Other mechanisms for assessing English proficiency.	Determined by Department	Determined by Department	Determined by Department

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Table 12 (continued)

University	Oral English Proficiency Testing or Course Work	Required Scores	Required Course Work/Tutoring	Responsibilities
Bowling Green (MAC)	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking 24+ IELTS Speaking 7.0+	None	Eligible to teach
	Spoken English Test (SET)	SET 25+	None	Eligible to teach
	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking 21-23 IELTS Speaking 6.5	ESOL 5050: English for International Teaching Assistants II and/or CDIS 6000 required. Must re-take TOEFL, IELTS or SET for full teaching rights	Eligible to teach or lead labs for one semester while enrolled in ESOL 5050 and/or CDIS 6000.
	Spoken English Test (SET)	SET 18-24	ESOL 5050: English for International Teaching Assistants II and/or CDIS 6000 required. Must re-take TOEFL, IELTS or SET for full teaching rights	Eligible to teach or lead labs for one semester while enrolled in ESOL 5050 and/or CDIS 6000.
	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking 21-23 IELTS Speaking 6.5	ESOL 5040: English for International Teaching Assistants I required. Must re-take TOEFL, IELTS or SET for full teaching rights	Eligible to provide support in labs or tutor for one semester while enrolled in ESOL 5040.

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Table 12 (continued)

University	Oral English Proficiency Testing or Course Work	Required Scores	Required Course Work/Tutoring	Responsibilities
Bowling Green (continued) (MAC)	Spoken English Test (SET)	SET 18-24	ESOL 5040: English for International Teaching Assistants I required. Must re-take TOEFL, IELTS or SET for full teaching rights	Eligible to provide support in labs or tutor for one semester while enrolled in ESOL 5040.
	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking 22+ IELTS Speaking 7.0+	None	Eligible to teach foreign language classes only
	Spoken English Test (SET)	SET 23-30	None	Eligible to teach foreign language classes only
	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking <21 IELTS Speaking <6.0	ESOL 5030: Intermediate Listening and Speaking and/or CDIS 6000 recommended. Must re-take TOEFL, IELTS or SET to be considered for TA positions	Not eligible to teach
	Spoken English Test (SET)	SET <18	ESOL 5030: Intermediate Listening and Speaking and/or CDIS 6000 recommended. Must re-take TOEFL, IELTS or SET to be considered for TA positions	Not eligible to teach

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Table 12 (continued)

University	Oral English Proficiency Testing or Course Work	Required Scores	Required Course Work/Tutoring	Responsibilities
Kent State (MAC)	TA Interview	C-Cleared to Teach	None	Eligible to teach
		CC-Conditionally Cleared	Must participate in accent reduction therapy/tutoring. Must give lecture after 14 weeks of tutoring to clear for teaching	Eligible to teach if participates in accent reduction therapy/tutoring
		NC - Not Cleared	Must participate in tutoring and be reassessed at semester's end. Must give lecture after 14 weeks of tutoring to clear for teaching	Not eligible to teach
	TA Lecture	C-Cleared to Teach	Must have completed 14 weeks of tutoring	Eligible to teach
Miami (MAC)	SPEAK test	SPEAK 50+	None	Eligible to teach
		SPEAK 40,45	ACE 619 - Advanced Speaking and Presenting required. Must re-take SPEAK test for teaching eligibility.	Eligible to teach for one semester while enrolled in ACE 619
		SPEAK <40	ACE 619 - Advanced Speaking and Presenting required. Must re-take SPEAK test for teaching eligibility.	Not eligible to teach

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Table 12 (continued)

University	Oral English Proficiency Testing or Course Work	Required Scores	Required Course Work/Tutoring	Responsibilities
Northern Illinois U (MAC)	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking 24+ IELTS Speaking 7.0+	None	Eligible to teach
	SPEAK test	SPEAK 50+	None	Eligible to teach
	SPEAK test	SPEAK <50	ESL Center tutoring recommended before re-taking SPEAK test.	Not eligible to teach
Ohio (MAC)	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Overall 80+ TOEFL Speaking 24+ TOEFL Listening, Reading, Writing 17+ IELTS Overall 6.5+ IELTS speaking 7.0+ IELTS Listening, Reading, Writing 6.5+	None	Eligible to teach
	On-Campus TOEFL and SPEAK test	TOEFL Overall 550+ TOEFL Listening, Grammar, Reading 52+ SPEAK 230+	None	Eligible to teach

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Table 12 (continued)

University	Oral English Proficiency Testing or Course Work	Required Scores	Required Course Work/Tutoring	Responsibilities
Ohio (continued) (MAC)	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Overall 80+ TOEFL Speaking 21-23 TOEFL Listening, Reading, Writing 17+ IELTS Overall 6.5+ IELTS speaking 6.5 IELTS Listening, Reading, Writing 6.5+	ELIP 5220: Classroom Communication Skills for International Teaching Assistants required. Must re-take SPEAK test at end of term to be qualified to teach	Eligible to teach while enrolled in ELIP 5220.
	On-Campus TOEFL and SPEAK test	TOEFL Overall 550+ TOEFL Listening, Grammar, Reading 52+ SPEAK 190-220	ELIP 5220: Classroom Communication Skills for International Teaching Assistants required. Must re-take SPEAK test at end of term to be qualified to teach	Eligible to teach while enrolled in ELIP 5220.
U at Buffalo (MAC)	SPEAK test	SPEAK 55,60	None	Eligible to teach
	SPEAK test and Teaching Demonstration	SPEAK 45,50 Teaching Demo: Pass	ESL 512: Communication for International Teaching Assistants recommended	Teaching demonstration is required before a student is eligible to teach, hold office hours, or perform other duties requiring student interaction.
	SPEAK test	SPEAK <40	ESL 411: Spoken English recommended before re-taking SPEAK test.	Not eligible to teach

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Table 12 (continued)

University	Oral English Proficiency Testing or Course Work	Required Scores	Required Course Work/Tutoring	Responsibilities
U of Akron (MAC)	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking 23+	None	Eligible to teach
	U-ADEPT	Pass, High Pass, Near Native Proficiency	None	Eligible to teach
	U-ADEPT	Inadequate Oral Proficiency or Lack of Oral Proficiency	None	Not eligible to teach
U of Toledo (MAC)	Standardized Test Scores	TOEFL Speaking 22+ IELTS Speaking 6.5+	None	Eligible to teach
	A.L.I. SPEAK test	TOEFL Speaking 19-21 TOEFL PbT Any Score IELTS Speaking >6.0 ALI SPEAK ≥220	None	Eligible to teach
		TOEFL Speaking 19-21 TOEFL PbT Any Score IELTS Speaking >6.0 ALI SPEAK <220	ITA Training Seminar required	Not eligible to teach, proctor, or tutor until ITA Training Seminar is successfully completed
		TOEFL Speaking ≤18 IELTS Speaking ≤6.0	None	Not eligible to teach