



Juggling Manapua: Being a Teacher & Student at the Same Time: Orientation for International Teaching Assistants

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In small groups,
share several responses for each of these
questions:

- ❖ What things are you most **looking forward to** about being a TA?
- ❖ What things about being a TA do you feel a bit of **anxiety** about?



What things are you most looking forward to about being a TA?

- ❖ Salary
- ❖ Tuition waiver
- ❖ Office on campus
- ❖ Add to my CV
- ❖ Work directly with faculty in my field
- ❖ A chance to teach
- ❖ Learn more deeply about my field (to teach something, you have to learn it well)



What things are you most looking forward to about being a TA?

- ❖ Connect research & teaching
- ❖ Improve English abilities
- ❖ Learn from students
- ❖ Collegiality with & learn from other TAs
- ❖ A stepping stone in my career
- ❖ Freedom to develop curriculum



Areas of Concern:

1. Culture

- ❖ Ways of teaching and learning may be different
- ❖ Ways and expectations regarding grading may be different
- ❖ Saying the wrong thing re: sensitive topics



Areas of Concern:

2. Language

- ❖ Miscommunication
- ❖ Pronunciation – can students understand me?
- ❖ Grading/correcting students' work
- ❖ What if students try to manipulate me because I'm not a native speaker of English?



Areas of Concern:

3. Teaching

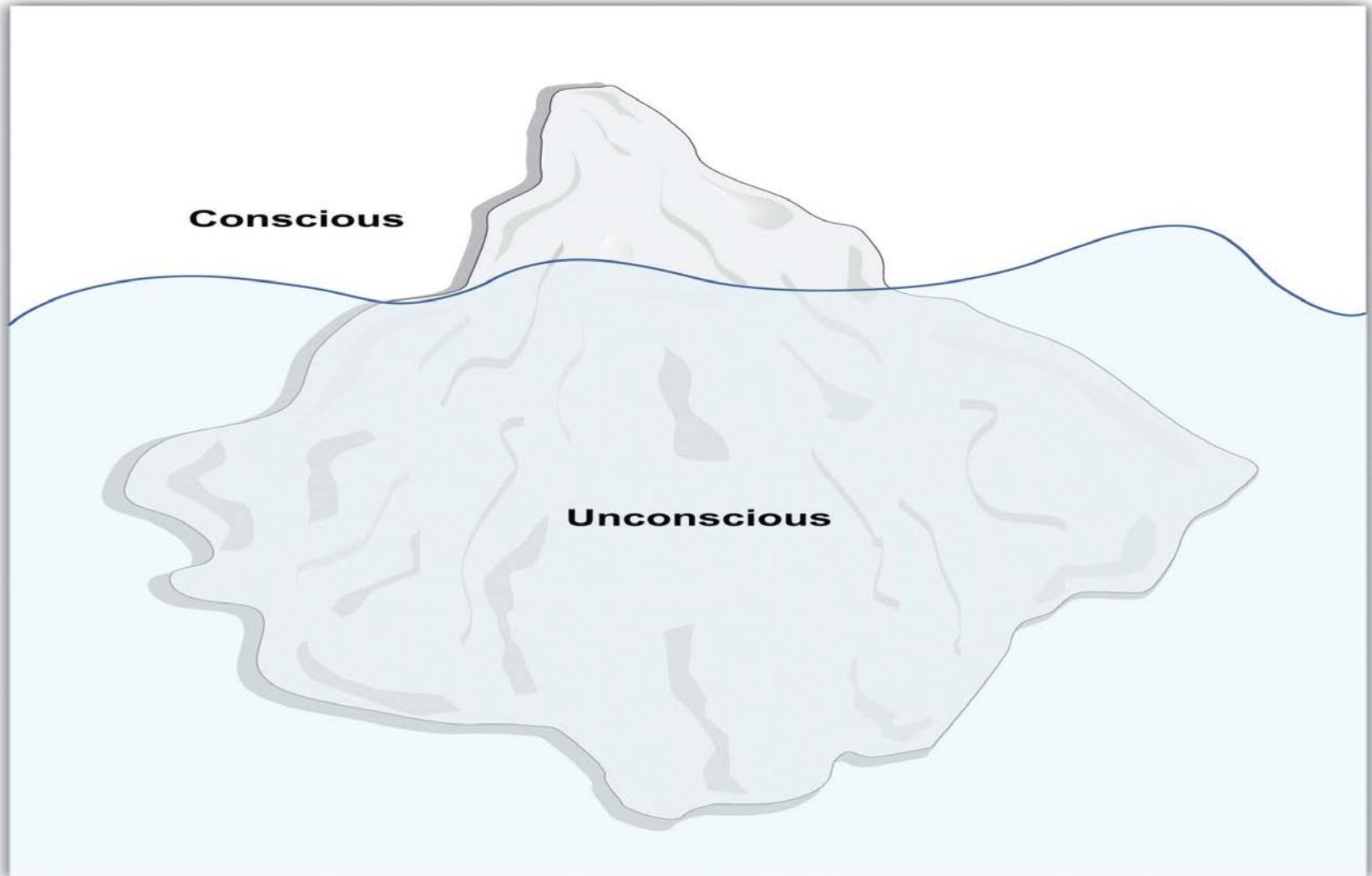
- ❖ Nervous in front of an audience
- ❖ First time to teach – can I do it well?
- ❖ ITAs may be perceived as “less” than instructors or professors
- ❖ Who do I ask for help?
- ❖ How do I create or find syllabi & materials?
- ❖ Learning the course I’m teaching

Areas of Concern:

3. Teaching

- ❖ Having to teach 2 very different courses
- ❖ Familiarity with new technologies
- ❖ Dealing with students' questions
- ❖ Dealing with problem situations
- ❖ How do I know if students like the class, and are learning what they should?
- ❖ Responsibility for students' grades
- ❖ Time issues – will I have enough time to teach and take care of my own studies?

I. Different Concepts of Culture: Some Useful Metaphors- Iceberg



Food
Music Language
Visual Arts Festivals
Performing Arts Literature
Holiday Customs Flags Games Dress

Nature of Friendship Values
Notions of Beauty Religious Beliefs Body Language
Norms Etiquette Rules Gender Roles
Learning Styles Expectations Leadership Styles
Attitudes towards Social Status Notions of 'Self'
Perceptions Attitudes towards Age
Notions of Modesty Thought Processes
Views on Raising Children
Importance of Space Concept of Fairness
Approaches to Problem Solving
Notions of Cleanliness

I. Different Concepts of Culture: Some Useful Metaphors- Routes vs. Roots



Source: Clifford, J.,2013

I. Different Concepts of Culture: Some Useful Metaphors- Lingua-culture



Source: Agar, M., 1996



I. Culture:

How can it affect you as a TA?

- ❖ Learn the academic culture of the USA, UHM, Hawaii, your department. It takes time...
- ❖ Figure out the different resources and offices on campus with useful information
- ❖ Be aware of cultural differences between you & your students



II. Language:

Keep things in perspective:

- ❖ Everyone speaks with an accent
- ❖ UH population –
multilingual/multicultural students &
teachers



II. Language: Effective Teacher Communication:

- ❖ Phrases as hints in your talks
- ❖ Comprehensible pronunciation- key words & repeated words
- ❖ Rephrase
- ❖ Visuals to reinforce
- ❖ Check understanding *throughout*



II. Language: Observe & Listen:


- ❖ Observe model teachers/ communicators
- ❖ Pay attention to students' reactions & adjust
- ❖ And finally. . .

Be realistic - not too hard on yourself

III. New Teaching Context? :

- ❖ Nervous?
- ❖ I'm "just" a TA, not professor
- ❖ What if the students don't like my teaching?

*Answer: **Emphasize your strengths!***



III. Good Teaching is Good Teaching

- ❖ Be explicit & clear
- ❖ Develop a comfortable learning atmosphere
- ❖ Be organized; prepare well
- ❖ Use visual support
- ❖ Allow time for questions
- ❖ Understand who your students are, and teach to their level

III. Good Teaching is Good Teaching

- ❖ Use a *variety* of ways of getting student feedback
- ❖ Do some type of mid-semester evaluation (eg., CTE)



III. Teaching: Getting Around on the Job

- ❖ Talk to other TAs
- ❖ Talk to your advisor (or other professors)
- ❖ Get prior semesters' syllabi and materials
- ❖ Be kind to the department secretary



The Balancing Act

One last (but very important) piece of advice...

Set aside time for yourself.

It will make you a better student, teacher and person.

Put your heart in it! Mahalo nui loa!

