Title of Project
Bridging Corpus Linguistics to ITA Training and Testing –
Validation of Functional Language in Academic Lectures

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TIRF Research Topics Investigated
Language Assessment & English as a Medium of Instruction

Project Summary
Recognizing the central role of international teaching assistants (ITAs) in the teaching force in North American higher education, universities use locally administered ITA tests to assess incoming ITAs' ability to assume teaching duties. However, although the local ITA tests involve tasks designed for eliciting language in authentic teaching settings, institutions differ in whether *teaching skills* is considered a target construct in addition to *language skills*. To this end, corpus linguistics studies provide a plethora of evidence that supports the connection between *language ability* (as reflected by forms of language output) and *teaching ability* (as reflected by language-fulfilled discourse functions). However, no previous empirical studies have examined the potential for corpus linguistics to connect *teaching skills* and *language skills,* which have been traditionally treated as separate constructs in contemporary ITA assessment.

Therefore, this mixed-method project investigates the impact of ITAs' use of functional languages discussed in contemporary corpus linguistics studies and how this use may interact with other established constructs (e.g., pronunciation). Using data from ITA tests at two institutions, I examine expert raters' and undergraduate students' judgments of ITAs' teaching performance using corpus linguistics and sociolinguistics methods. This study will contribute to a reasonable operationalization of the two core constructs in ITA assessment, and serve as a validation for the applicability of corpus studies to language assessment. This project will also result in readily usable materials from corpus studies for EMI instructors (including ITAs) to adopt as training or self-study resources.