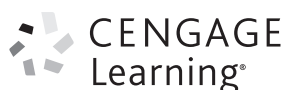


AAUSC 2013 Volume – Issues in Language Program Direction

Individual Differences, L2 Development, and Language Program Administration: From Theory to Application

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Chapter 8

The Place of Individual Differences in Language Graduate Instructors' Education Programs

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Since the last volume of AAUSC (Klee, 1994) on individual differences (IDs) and their place in a foreign language (FL) curriculum was published, the field has made great strides in the study of various well-known IDs (e.g., aptitude, learning strategies, and motivation) while also opening up the scope of investigation to lesser-known but equally important IDs such as working memory and bilingualism. The literature in the field of second language acquisition continues to expand in this area, thereby allowing applied linguists, SLA experts, and neurolinguists to examine the impact of these cognitive, affective, and personality variables on the process of learning a second/FL. While this expansion in theory is positive, it is imperative to ensure that the data are also diffused and passed on to current and future language instructors, lest this strand should fall prey to what has become a growing concern for many in the field, that is, a disengagement between research and practice (cf. Ellis, 2010). To determine if that is the case, we must take a closer look at what is happening during the teacher-training years of our future instructors.

The objective of the present chapter is two-fold: (1) to shed light on the state of current teacher-training programs in relation to how IDs are presented in their curricula, if at all and (2) to report on graduate instructors' (GIs) awareness of IDs. To address the first issue, this chapter presents the results of a survey distributed to several universities across the country that have teacher-training programs. Once the picture of the general state of the place of IDs in such curricula is painted, the chapter addresses the second issue by reporting on the results of a comparative study done with 27 GIs of commonly and less-commonly taught languages (Spanish, French, German, Arabic, Chinese, and Russian) in a large modern languages department of a public university in the Southeast. In this section, we examine the effects that the explicit inclusion of IDs in the curriculum has on GIs' awareness of IDs and on their actual teaching practices. The GI survey was administered to (1) graduate students enrolled in an SLA course ($n = 12$) where IDs are a part of the course program, and (2) graduate students enrolled in a standard Methodology course ($n = 15$), where IDs are interspersed throughout the course program but are not a separate part of the contents of study. This was done to determine whether IDs presented in different contexts brought about contrasting results in how learners view them.

Finally, recommendations are made regarding what appears to be the best way to present IDs in the curriculum of a FL teacher education program, which will be useful to program administrators, coordinators, and teaching assistant supervisors.

Literature Review

Individual Differences in SLA

We can distinguish three main types of IDs that occupied a prevalent spot in the research agenda in the mid-1960s in the field of SLA: cognitive, affective, and those pertaining to the learners' personality. The driving force behind studying these variables was to find a model relating them with each other and with the process of learning a second language (cf. Spolsky, 1989). Although the study of IDs diminished somewhat in the 1970s, closely related affective variables such as motivation and attitude became an important part of the SLA research agenda in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Skehan, 1989). Motivation in the SLA context is considered to be the force that drives learners to achieve the goal of learning a language; attitude is the belief set a learner holds with respect to a language and culture. Attitude was considered an affective factor that can encourage intake in that, if present, it helps the learner avail himself to the process of learning an L2 (Gardner, Smythe, Clement, & Gliksmann, 1976); it is also associated with the socio affective filter that learners have toward the target language and culture (Dulay & Burt, 1977). That is, the lower the filter, the more accessible the process of L2 learning would be. The learner's attitude would then manifest itself in motivation, which was considered to be a reliable predictor for success in L2 learning (e.g., Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). Beyond the constructs of integrative versus instrumental motivation that abound in studies conducted during the 1970s (e.g., Bialystok & Fröhlich, 1977), research in the last decade has shifted direction toward the contextualization of motivation in the social setting where learning occurs—what Dörnyei (2003) calls a “situated approach” (p. 12), in which willingness to communicate, task motivation, and the relationship between motivation and learning strategies come to the forefront.

Language learners develop specific learning strategies that may help them be a successful language learner. These strategies then, refer to concrete actions and behaviors that learners choose. In the 1970s, “the good language learner” body of literature developed from the need to find what these “good” learners did differently from the rest (e.g., Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978). Within the last decade, it has been found that learning strategies are closely interconnected to the affective factor of self-regulation (Dörnyei, 2005); Ortega (2009) concluded that the process of learning an L2 “demands cognitive as well as affective self-regulation, and individuals differ in their capacity to self-regulate” (p. 210). Many of these strategies will depend on the learner's learning style, an ID that establishes what cognitive abilities learners use to best learn an L2. Learners' styles are usually categorized in dichotomies: field dependent or field independent, holistic or analytic, among others (cf. Ehrman & Leaver, 2003).

In the late 1980s, specific variables such as intelligence and aptitude were being carefully studied (cf. Skehan, 1989). Verbal intelligence—the ability to analyze language—was considered by some to be one of three important subcomponents of aptitude (e.g., Pimsleur, 1966a), together with inductive ability and grammatical sensitivity (Carroll, 1973). Several tests were developed to measure levels of aptitude (Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) by Carroll and Sapon

(1959); revised by Carroll (1967); as well as the Language Aptitude Battery (LAB by Pimsleur (1966b)). In its beginning, aptitude was defined by Carroll (1973) as the rate at which a person learned a language, and it included inductive ability to analyze language, grammatical sensitivity, phonetic coding ability, and rote learning ability; more recently, researchers have redefined aptitude to include current accounts that study the processing and the storage functions of memory (i.e., working memory) (Bowden, Sanz, & Stafford, 2005). SLA researchers have found a strong interrelationship between working memory and L2 development (e.g., Ellis & Schmidt, 1997; Ellis & Sinclair, 1996; Mackey, Philp, Fuji, Egi, & Tatsumi, 2002; Sagarra & Herschensohn, 2010). Likewise, bilingualism¹ was found to be a key predicting variable for L3 achievement, when all other variables are held constant, in several studies (cf. Birdsong, 2006; Cenoz & Valencia, 1994; Sanz, 2000; Stafford, Sanz, & Bowden, 2010).

Undertaking the investigation of how some of these IDs affect the L2, learning process not only has brought about gains in our understanding of these variables and their interrelationship but also has been the catalyst for the development of several instruments to measure them. For instance, Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) devised an instrument called MOLT (Motivational Orientation of Language Teaching) to assess observable teacher behavior. Their work, based on Allen, Fröhlich, and Spada's (1984) Communication Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) coding scheme and on Dörnyei's (2001) motivational strategies framework, gave a glimpse of what instructors do in class that may promote or hamper motivation among learners.

It is evident that IDs continue to be important to the study of FL learning and that SLA has kept abreast with the rapid growth of studies in this area. It is also clear that IDs can be affected by teacher behavior (e.g., Matsumoto, 2011; Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 1999). To the best of my knowledge, what has not been addressed in the literature is whether our future teachers are sufficiently informed about IDs to begin to make meaningful changes in their classrooms. Given the enormous breadth of this topic, the present study deals with only a set of IDs. Some of the IDs that were examined in the special issue of AAUSC of 1994 will be revisited here: aptitude, motivation, and attitude, as well as learning strategies. In addition, two additional IDs—working memory and bilingualism—will be included. The reason is two-fold: (1) these are IDs that have gained momentum in the research agenda of SLA, with important repercussions for the classroom and (2) part of this study's objective is to test whether teacher-training programs reflect the advances in the field and are keeping their students up-to-date with them.

IDs in Foreign Language Programs

Before we consider how or where in the curriculum of L2 teacher-training programs the study of IDs should be placed, it is important to review briefly the views of teacher trainers in regard to what the contents of these programs should be. There is an extensive body of literature on this topic, indicative of its past and current relevance as well as of the divergent views it elicits. In the late 1980s, there was

¹Bilingualism in this paper refers to the effect that prior experience in an L2 has on learning of an L3 and subsequent languages.

a significant concern about how heavily training programs had been relying on anecdotal or “experiential” models since the 1970s (cf. Bernhardt & Hammadou, 1987; Richards, 1987). In the next decade, the mention of a lack of theoretical frameworks in the curriculum is still prevalent, while at the same time it became more apparent that teacher trainers must be aware that pre-service teachers are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with a new knowledge base. Freeman and Johnson (1998) suggested that teacher trainers take into account that teacher learners come into the programs with experiences as language learners—experiences they incorporate in their own process of learning how to teach. More recently, according to Schulz (2000), the practice of teacher education going into the twenty-first century favored the use of contents that were no longer limited to the study of teaching methods but included those that stemmed from research results in the fields of second language acquisition, psychology, and education. Over a decade has passed since Schulz’s comprehensive summary of the state of language training programs. Seeing how much the body of literature on IDs has grown, then, it would seem reasonable to assume that IDs should have a prominent place in the teacher-training curriculum.

Thus, the guiding research questions for this chapter are:

1. Are IDs addressed as a part of the curriculum in graduate teacher-training programs?
2. How do teacher education program administrators and GI supervisors regard IDs within their education curriculum?
3. What are GIs’ perceptions of the effects of IDs on learners’ development?
4. What are GIs’ perceptions of how/if they address IDs in their own teaching practice?

Method

Participants

Program Administrators and GI Supervisors

In order to answer the first two research questions regarding the importance that education training programs place on IDs and administrators’ view of them, a survey was distributed via email to 51 MAT, TESOL, FLARE, and PhD program administrators and GI supervisors across the United States and Canada. Sixteen returned the nine-question survey (see Appendix A). Of those, eight identified themselves as Language Program Directors (LPDs), four as GI Supervisors, two as Language Program Coordinators, one as the Graduate Program Director, and one as the GIs’ Methods Instructor.

Graduate Instructors (GIs)

To gather data pertinent to the third and fourth research questions, 27 graduate students were invited to fill out a second survey. This survey was distributed to 15 GIs enrolled in a first-year graduate program Methods course at a large, public American university in the Southeast and also sent to 12 students enrolled

in a graduate-level SLA course at the same university. Tables 8-1 and 8-2 show the distribution of the participating GIs' FL affiliation.² Those GIs that indicated no teaching assignment had been selected to work in the language laboratory instead of teaching as a classroom instructor. Their assignment to the language laboratory depended on the students' home units and a variety of reasons; i.e., not enough sections were open to assign them a section, or some home units had incoming GIs only observe a class during their first year before they are given a teaching assignment.

Of the total of 27 graduate student participants, 10 did not have a teaching assignment during that semester. Although these students were not able to answer the questions regarding their actual teaching practices, their input on awareness about IDs was taken into consideration and analyzed because they had concurrent exposure to a teaching environment as observers and/or they had had previous teaching experience.

Table 8-3 shows us the academic degrees pursued by the participants. About one-third of them were enrolled in an MA program in a FL; less than a third were

Table 8-1 Distribution of GIs in Foreign Language Programs in Methods Course

Foreign Language Program	<i>n</i> of GIs
Spanish	5
German	3
French	2
Chinese	1
ESL	1
No teaching assignment	3
Total <i>n</i>	15

Table 8-2 Distribution of GIs in Foreign Language Programs enrolled in SLA Course

Foreign Language Program	<i>n</i> of Responses
Spanish	3
German	0
French	1
Chinese	0
ESL	2
No teaching assignment	7
Total <i>n</i> of responses	13

² Table 8-2 has a total number of responses superior to the number of GIs because one of them was assigned to teach in more than one language program. The data provided by this participant were only counted once in all subsequent analyses.

Table 8-3 Distribution of GIs in Academic Degrees

Foreign Language Degree Sought	<i>n</i> of GIs
MA in a foreign language	8
PhD	7
MAT/TESOL	7
TESOL/PhD	2
MA/PhD	1
No answer	2
Total <i>n</i>	27

in a PhD program, less than a third in either an MAT or TESOL program, and the remaining three students were in concurrent TESOL/PhD or MA/PhD programs. Two participants chose not to answer this question.

The participants in the Methodology group were all first-year GIs and were enrolled in a methodology course called Foreign Language Teaching for College—a required class for all incoming graduate students unless they have taken a similar course in the past in a different graduate program. The textbook used for that class was Klaus Brandl's (2008). In this textbook, IDs are covered under "Principles of communicative language teaching and task-based instruction" early on in the course, in Chapter 1. The affective factors of learning that are mentioned are attitude, motivation, and anxiety.

The participants in the SLA course were in at least their second year of their respective programs. No single textbook was followed in the SLA course; instead, a packet of articles on different key SLA issues was used as the main reading material. IDs were addressed as a thematic unit during the fourth week of the semester. In addition to a brief introduction to the different kinds of IDs that are objects of study in SLA, four articles were used that discussed motivation, aptitude, and bilingualism. The studies examined were by Abrahamsson and Hylténstam (2008), Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008), Sanz (2000), and Stafford et al. (2010). The survey was distributed to both course groups (Methods and SLA) during the eighth week of the semester.

Data Collection Instrument

Program Administrators

The survey for Program Administrators was designed with the help of the free online survey software and questionnaire tool, SurveyMonkey.com; the link to the survey was included in an email that was sent to 51 institutions (distributed twice in late spring and late summer). The email explained that the survey consisted of nine questions (see Appendix A) and was estimated to take about 5–7 minutes to fill out. The first two questions elicited information on how the participants were involved in the education of their GIs. Questions 3 through 8 tapped into whether IDs were presented in the curriculum, how these were introduced to GIs, and what the participants' perceptions were about the place that IDs should have

in the training of future FL instructors. The last item only requested optional contact information.

Graduate Instructors

The GI survey was administered toward the middle of the semester (week 8); the 13-question survey (Appendices B and C) was distributed in class, with the Methods instructor's permission; the SLA course was taught by the researcher. Participation in this study for students in both courses was voluntary. The survey included multiple-choice as well as open-ended items, and it took participants between 15 and 25 minutes to fill out. The first five questions asked for information regarding their degree and target language (see Tables 8-1 through 8-3), and also asked them to list any other methodology or linguistics courses they may have taken in the past. These items on the questionnaire were meant to give us a clearer picture of the educational background of our participants. The next four questions tapped into GIs' familiarity with the term "individual differences," and the last four questions probed GIs' understanding of concrete and specific IDs; they had to use a Likert-scale to indicate how familiar they were with the particular IDs and then explain in a text box how they thought they addressed those particular IDs in their daily teaching practices.

Although the survey was filled out on the same day, it was administered in two parts. The researcher asked participants to begin by filling out Part I in its entirety, and only when they had finished answering questions on Part I did they receive Part II. Part I ended with question 8, which asked participants to define the term "individual differences" in their own words. Question 9, which appeared at the beginning of Part II, gave Dörnyei's (2009) definition of IDs and asked students if this sounded familiar to them. The split between the two parts of the survey at this juncture was made to avoid backtracking and changes that could have occurred once the definition we provided refreshed their memory or helped them articulate their own definitions in a different way.

Results

Program Administrator Survey Results

After having identified their institution and in what capacity the polled participants were in contact with their GIs, they went on to question 3, which asked them to state whether their department or program offered a Methods course for their incoming GIs: 85.7% responded affirmatively; one person mentioned that the course was not offered every year, which meant that GIs could teach for a year without having received this training.³ Another participant mentioned a similar situation, but explained that in its stead, the program offered weekly meetings and monthly in-service seminars.

³An anonymous reviewer pointed out this question in the survey was not specific enough; a course that was offered may not necessarily have been a course that the GI took. The question was designed based on the operation of the author's home department, where the only Methodology class available to all GIs is obligatory. I thank the reviewer for drawing attention to the fact that this may not be so across all institutions in the United States and Canada.

Table 8-4 Answers to Question 5 on Program Administrator Survey

What Is the Title of the Textbook That Is Used in the Methodology Course?	n of Responses
Course packet created by instructor	5
Lee and VanPatten's (1995) <i>Making Communicative Language Teaching Happen</i>	3
Omaggio's (2000) <i>Teaching Language in Context</i>	2
Shrum and Glisan's (1994) <i>Teacher's Handbook</i>	1
Brandl's (2008) <i>Communicative Language Teaching in Action</i>	1
Total n of responses	12

Participants who said they did not offer a Methods course (14.3%) explained that their programs offered either a day-long introductory workshop at the beginning of the semester or a series of workshops throughout the academic year.

When prompted to list the name of the textbook that was used in their Methods courses, the 12 people whose programs offered such a class gave the answers presented in Table 8-4. Most instructors seem to favor creating a reading list and preparing a course packet for their students.

Question 6 in the survey for Program Administrators read: "To your knowledge, are IDs addressed in the GIs' training program?" All 14 participants responded; 78.6% of the answers were affirmative. One respondent said "no" and two participants were unsure. Those participants that had answered "yes" explained how IDs were presented in the course. The answers were rich and varied in scope. It was clear that there was no single way to present IDs among institutions or even within many institutions, as some respondents stated that the manner in which the contents of the course were presented varied from year to year depending on the instructors' rotation. Most participants indicated that there was not a systematic way in which IDs were presented and that these were addressed as they appeared in the reading materials or workshops offered to GIs. Table 8-5 summarizes the answers.

Participants who had answered "no" to question 6 ("Are IDs addressed in the GI training program?") were also prompted to explain why this was so. One participant stated that IDs were not a vital aspect of FL curriculum and another one explained that IDs were not addressed due to lack of time and the fact that he/she could not find an opportune moment to teach IDs in his/her class.

Table 8-5 Answers to Question 7 on Program Administrator Survey

If You Answered "Yes" to Question 6, How Are IDs Presented?	n of Responses
As they come up in the book/reading materials/workshops	6
Separate module or unit during the semester/at workshop	3
Separate module/unit and then reinforced throughout the semester	2
Depends on instructor	1
Total n of responses	12

GI Survey Results

After the questions pertaining to their degrees and details of their teaching assistantships (questions 1–3), the survey inquired about what current or past Methods courses students had taken at their present or previous institutions. Question 5 asked about current or past SLA courses. The answers to these questions indicated that for the great majority in the Methods course, the course they were taking at the moment was the only course in Methodology they had ever been enrolled in. The other three participants mentioned a past TESL course he/she had taken at another institution, an educational psychology course taken as part of a TEFL certification, and teacher-training courses that a textbook publisher had offered in her home country. Responses from the participants in the SLA course indicated that all of them had taken at least two Methodology courses in their careers in addition to several SLA courses.

In regard to previous or current SLA classes, about half of the participants from the Methods course group indicated that they had not taken any SLA courses in the past (Table 8-6); the answers from those participants that provided a list were very varied, and many gave responses that did not answer the question, citing classical language courses or FL classes. Students from the SLA course indicated that they had taken at least one previous course in SLA (Table 8-7).

Table 8-6 Answers to Question 5 on GI Survey (Methods Course)

Current or Past Second Language Acquisition Course(s) Taken	<i>n</i> of GIs
Blank/None	7
TEFL/TESL certification courses and workshops in communicative language teaching	2
Teaching reading and writing	1
Introduction to Second Language Acquisition as an undergraduate course	1
Classical Latin, Biblical Hebrew, Koine Greek, and German	1
French 109 and 110	1
English, Spanish, and Italian as foreign languages	1
English and German during my BA	1
Total <i>n</i>	15

Table 8-7 Answers to Question 5 on GI Survey (SLA Course)

Current or Past Second Language Acquisition Course(s) Taken	<i>n</i> of GIs
4–5 SLA courses	2
2–3 SLA courses	3
1 SLA course	5
1 SLA course + an independent SLA course	1
1 SLA course + 2 Methodology courses	1
Total <i>n</i>	12

Table 8-8 Answers to Question 7 on GI Survey (Methods Course)

Can You Remember Where and When You First Encountered the Term, “Individual Differences”?	<i>n</i> of Responses
Workplace	2
Past Methods course in career	6
Past SLA course in career	1
Workplace + Past SLA course	1
Other: back home in China	1
Blank/None	4
Total <i>n</i> of responses	15

When answering question 6 regarding familiarity with the term “individual differences,” 12 of the 15 GI participants in the Methods course answered “yes”. The next question asked how or where they had been introduced to the term (see Table 8-8). Six of the participants answered that they had been introduced to the term through a Methods course, while two mentioned their workplace, and one mentioned an SLA class. Another participant chose two options, indicating that she had seen the term ID in both her workplace and a past SLA course. The person who chose the option “Other” clarified that she had seen that term “back home in China,” but it remained unclear in what context. The remaining four participants chose not to answer this question.

For the same questions, all but one of the participants in the SLA course answered that they were familiar with the term “ID”. When they answered the question of where they had been introduced to the term, the answers varied, as can be seen in Table 8-9, but it is clear that the majority ($n = 7$) had been introduced to the term in an SLA course; two selected a past methods course, and one participant chose a combination of a Methods course and her workplace. One other participant mentioned her undergraduate program as the place where she had first encountered the term, and only one person left the question unanswered.

Table 8-9 Answers to Question 7 on GI Survey (SLA Course)

Can You Remember Where and When You First Encountered the Term, “Individual Differences”?	<i>n</i> of Responses
Workplace	0
Past Methods course in career	2
Past SLA course in career	7
Workplace + Past Methods course	1
Other: undergraduate teacher education program	1
Blank/None	1
Total <i>n</i> of responses	12

Table 8-10 Answers to Question 8 on GI Survey (Methods Course)

Please, Using Your Own Words, Explain What the Term “Individual Differences” Refers to in the Context of a Foreign Language Classroom? Write Down Anything That Comes to Mind	<i>n</i> of Responses
Learners' learning strategies: audio versus visual	9
Learners' cultural, ethnic, religious backgrounds	3
Teacher's feedback and strategies used in the classroom	2
Learners' gender	2
Learners' age	1
Learners' proficiency level	1
Total <i>n</i> of responses	18

The last question of Part I asked participants to explain in their own words what the term “individual differences” meant. Table 8-10 indicates the different answers that were given by the Methods course students.⁴ Table 8-11 summarizes the answers to the same question by participants from the SLA course.

We can see that most participants made reference to learners' learning strategies as the main definition for IDs. What is not known is what the participants' definition for learning strategies was and if they did not confuse it with the broader ID of learning style. It was interesting to find that three participants mentioned non-linguistic background information. A total of four responses referred to IDs that participants labeled as the learner's “profile” (age, gender), which appeared with a learner's proficiency level; two responses linked IDs to the teacher's teaching techniques.

Among the participants in the SLA course, most of them were able to identify individual differences that included motivation, aptitude, and attitude (mentioned in one cluster in many cases), learning strategies, and learners' age, gender, and

Table 8-11 Answers to Question 8 on GI Survey (SLA Course)

Please, Using Your Own Words, Explain What the Term “Individual Differences” Refers to in the Context of a Foreign Language Classroom? Write Down Anything That Comes to Mind	<i>n</i> of Responses
Motivation, aptitude, and attitude	6
Learners' learning strategies	3
Learners' gender, age, and L1	1
Differences in interlanguage grammar	1
Blank/None	1
Total <i>n</i> of responses	12

⁴ The total number of responses does not correspond to the total number of participants since some students provided more than one answer to this question.

Table 8-12 Mean Scores for Question 10 on GI Survey (Methods and SLA Courses)

	Aptitude	Motivation	Working Memory	Attitude	Learning Strategies	Bilingualism
Course						
Group						
Methods	3.80	4.40	3.53	4.06	4.00	3.46
SLA	4.58	4.67	3.83	4.42	4.33	4.00

L1 (also mentioned in one cluster). One student mentioned “attention span”—it remains unclear whether that may have been a loose reference to working memory or not. Fewer students in this group indicated learning strategy as part of their definition of IDs than in the Methods course group, although it is uncertain whether they confused that ID with learning style since the definition was not included. One student chose not to answer this question.

After the participants turned in Part I, they started Part II of the survey by reading one of Dörnyei’s (2009) definitions of IDs. The participants were then asked whether this information was new to them or not. Of 15 participants in the Methods course, three responded “yes.” From among the 12 students in the SLA course, two responded “yes” while one did not provide any answer. For those participants who agreed that Dörnyei’s definition was not “new,” it appears that they must have considered the factors they mentioned in their own definition of IDs as “variables that modify and personalize the overall trajectory of the language acquisition processes”—which included religious and cultural factors (see Table 8-10).

Table 8-12 summarizes the results obtained from responses on a Likert-scale regarding participants’ familiarity with each ID, where 1 meant “not familiar at all” and 5 showed they were “very familiar” with it.

The ID that resonated the most with our participants in both groups was motivation. Aptitude and attitude competed for second place in the SLA and the Methods course groups respectively; on the opposite side of the familiarity spectrum were working memory for the SLA group and bilingualism for the Methods group—two IDs that have a growing presence in SLA research of recent years but that could be considered to be relatively new.

When we analyze the responses that participants gave for question 10 regarding their familiarity with specific IDs and check how much exposure to SLA or Methods courses they have had, we can see a direct correspondence. Table 8-13 displays the means for each student group (SLA / Methods) in their self-reported familiarity score with the discrete IDs, where 5 indicated “very familiar” and 1 meant “not familiar.”

Table 8-13 Familiarity with IDs

	Methods Course	SLA Course
Familiarity scores (means)	3.88	4.31

Table 8-14 Answers to Question 11 on GI Survey (Methods Course)

How Do You Think That Awareness About Individual Differences Might Impact Foreign Language (FL) Teaching?	<i>n</i> of Responses
Improvement in FL teaching technique/methods (visual vs. auditory; small vs. large group settings) to individualize our lessons	13
Changes in how materials are tested	1
Inform teacher of cause of learner failure to learn	1
Total <i>n</i> of responses	15

What is interesting about the results of Table 8-13 is that they reveal a correspondence between exposure to SLA and to Methods courses; the students in the Methodology course had taken significantly fewer courses in Methods and SLA than the participants in the SLA class.

The questions that required participants to comment on how awareness of IDs might impact FL teaching offered us interesting insights into their views of the importance of IDs. The concrete examples they provided helped us to interpret their answers. The answers that participants gave were clustered into three main categories, as presented in Tables 8-14 and 8-15. Since some participants provided more than one answer, the final number of responses does not correspond to the total number of participants.

Despite the low number of participants, we can see different trends depending on the group they belonged to. The most frequent reason that both groups gave for why it was important to be aware of IDs was to improve or tailor the instructor's teaching technique, but the proportions were different. This broad answer was present in 86.7% of the total number of responses received from the Methodology group and by 57.1% of the total responses from the SLA group. In the latter group, the responses were more accurate and elaborate in that the participants looked beyond simply the teaching style of the teacher or the grouping format (small vs. large group settings) and explored modifying task design and informing the teacher as consequences of understanding IDs. The Methodology participants, although to a lesser extent, also mentioned other ways in which IDs would impact their teaching and cited assessment and feedback for the teacher. In sum, the participants in the SLA group mentioned the impact that IDs would have on the design of class tasks—a factor that was not considered by participants in the Methods

Table 8-15 Answers to Question 11 on GI Survey (SLA Course)

How Do You Think That Awareness About Individual Differences Might Impact Foreign Language (FL) Teaching?	<i>n</i> of Responses
Improvement in FL teaching technique/methods (visual vs. auditory; small vs. large group settings) to individualize our lessons	8
Changes in the design of assignments/activities	3
Inform teacher of cause of learner failure to learn	3
Total <i>n</i> of responses	14

Table 8-16 Mean Scores for Question 12 on GI Survey (Methods and SLA Courses)

	Aptitude	Motivation	Working Memory	Attitude	Learning Strategies	Bilingualism
Course						
Group						
Methods	0.47	0.60	0.47	0.87	0.87	0.27
SLA	0.67	0.92	0.33	0.75	0.92	0.42

group. Also, more SLA participants than participants in the Methodology group mentioned the effect that awareness of IDs would have on helping the instructor understand better where his students’ weaknesses or failures were stemming from.

The next question (12) asked participants to state whether they thought that in their current practices they addressed any of the IDs mentioned in the survey. The answers to this question were tallied and averaged, where 1 point was given for “yes” and 0 for “no.” The results for both groups are contrasted in Table 8-16.

According to these results, our participants’ perceptions are that they have mostly addressed learners’ attitude (Methods group) and motivation (SLA group). In both course groups, learners’ learning strategies also scored close to 1. The ID that showed the least occurrences were bilingualism (Methods group) and working memory (SLA group). Here again, we see that SLA participants seem to be better informed about IDs, scoring higher than their Methodology group counterparts in four of the six IDs on the survey.

Question 13 on the survey required participants to brainstorm and write down specific examples of things they could do or change about their teaching practices in order to address the IDs that had been identified in the survey. Not all participants complied with this request; among those who did, the answers they gave varied; below is a summary table that shows how many participants of each group came up with specific and practical suggestions for each ID.

Table 8-17 shows how the ID with the starkest contrast in both groups was bilingualism. Only about a quarter or a third of each class came up with a way to address this ID in their classes. Quantitatively, the Methods class showed a higher number of participants who volunteered suggestions on how to address all the IDs on the list, although it was the SLA class who showed more carefully thought-out responses. The following are examples that participants from the two different groups offered in regard to the ID attitude: “Encourage a positive environment for learning trial & error” (SLA) and “I think it is a bit like motivation. Do not force students into things they don’t feel comfortable doing (talking in front of the class)” (Methods). By the same token, those in the Methods class gave less precise answers than the participants of the SLA class, but they also appeared to engage more in the task of providing suggestions. It appears that when lacking theoretical support, participants resorted to their own past experiences as learners or as former teachers and brought that host of experiential data into their classroom dynamic, which is precisely what Freeman and Johnson (1998) suggested that teacher trainers keep in mind.

Table 8-17 Percentage of Participants with Concrete Suggestions for the Classroom for Each ID (Methods and SLA Courses)

	Methods		SLA	
	Suggestions	No Suggestions	Suggestions	No Suggestions
Aptitude	60%	40%	50%	50%
Motivation	66.7%	33.3%	41.7%	58.3%
Working memory	46.7%	53.3%	33.3%	66.7%
Attitude	60%	40%	41.7%	58.3%
Learning strategies	53.3%	46.7%	50%	50%
Bilingualism	33.3%	66.7%	25%	75%

Discussion

The two surveys that were used for this study elicited current information on several issues related to the presence (or lack thereof) of IDs in current training programs, and how they are perceived by both Program Administrators and GIs.

From the responses, it seems that while most GI supervisors are aware of the importance of IDs, they do not seem to find the time or place to talk about them, especially if they are following a textbook. The most-frequently cited textbook in this study, Lee and VanPatten (1995), does not address IDs. The remaining textbooks used in most Methodology courses touch on IDs but do not devote more than a section of a chapter to their discussion. Brandl's textbook mentions them in the first chapter (*Principles of Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Instruction*), while in Omaggio's textbook, individual learner factors appear briefly in Chapter 2 (*On Learning a Language: Some Theoretical Perspectives*). Shrum and Glisan's textbook does not contain a specific section on IDs but does discuss the role of affect and motivation as part of Chapter 1 (*Understanding the Role of Contextualized Input, Output, and Interaction in Language Learning*). When IDs were presented as a separate and independent component, as was the case in the SLA class, students seemed to be more aware of them. The SLA course participants were also better able to articulate a definition for IDs and outperformed the Methods group in explaining how awareness of IDs could have a direct influence on how instructors design tasks for class. In sum, it appears that students with a background in SLA are better equipped to understand and incorporate the concept of IDS in their own classes.

The results of this study also indicate that although the instructors in charge of GI training are aware of the importance of IDs, these are only addressed when the reading materials mention them in isolation; the result is that, because they are so interspersed throughout the semester or examined so superficially, GIs still do not conceive of them as a distinct or critical part of the L2 learning process. Responses from administrators also showed that some programs do not offer a Methods course for incoming GIs on a yearly basis. This could explain why we

have more participants who identified an SLA class as the first time they were introduced to the term ID rather than a Methods class (see Table 8-9). Our results appear to confirm that while research is making good and strong strides in studying variables such as working memory or bilingualism, the information is not reaching our education practitioners, which means that these variables are not being incorporated in curriculum development and lesson plan design. Attitude and learning strategies seemed to be the ones that GIs mentioned the most and, therefore, are addressed in their classes.

Conclusion and Implications for Curricular Decisions in Teacher Education Programs

Research in SLA has shown how relevant the study of IDs is to better understand L2 development, yet our GI training programs are still far behind in comparison to the pace at which our SLA research is advancing. As the body of research grows, we also need to ensure that the pedagogical implications of the theory are transmitted to teacher education classrooms in order to make the theory applicable. This can only happen when those in charge of teacher education programs or supervision of GIs are made aware of the importance of including IDs in their curriculum. The results of the survey in this study appear to indicate that administrators and supervisors are, in fact, well informed. A good indicator of this is the high percentage of programs that offer a Methods course to GIs; in spite of the positive numbers, however, one must keep in mind that while in certain institutions the course is available, it may not be obligatory, or it might not be offered every year on a regular basis. It is understandable that with tight schedules and even tighter budgets, many programs can only opt for a one- or two-day workshop at the beginning of the semester to familiarize incoming GIs with the syllabi, the program, the teaching materials, and a few important departmental policies. However, as this study seems to suggest, the key to guaranteeing that information is absorbed is through frequency of exposure. Participants who had taken only one course of Methodology were not as aware of IDs as participants who had taken at least one more methodology or SLA course. The amount of prior exposure made a difference in GIs' recognition of IDs and in how they thought IDs would impact their teaching practices. So, the first problem might not be whether or not IDs are presented in the curriculum, but rather whether or not there is an established time when IDs can be discussed with GIs. To this end, an LPD should make sure to establish a required methodology course for all new GIs. If the curricula of the different programs or budget restrictions do not allow for a full 3-credit course, another recourse to take the place of the course should be set up: weekly meetings with a supervisor or bi-monthly brown bag lunches are two viable and cost-efficient solutions in which IDs can be presented as separate and independent units or modules in the curriculum.

After securing the setting in which IDs can be discussed, the choice of materials used to introduce, identify, and explore IDs is of utmost importance. As seen in this chapter, most textbooks do not contain much information on IDs or

contain only a brief mention of them. It is clear from this study's survey given to administrators that close to half of our participants agreed that a single textbook may not offer all the information that GIs need, and they opted for a course packet. This might be a growing trend among more teacher education programs and could very well be the most practical way to accomplish three goals: (1) individualize instruction, (2) introduce GIs to the theory of SLA through empirical studies, and (3) keep abreast of the latest findings in the body of current research. LPDs, or administrators in charge of GIs' teacher-training programs, should enlist an SLA expert for the job of selecting the contents of the course packets and making sure that this packet gets updated at least once every two years. Of course, IDs should be an important part of the materials used in teacher-training programs and should be presented as a separate unit. As our survey showed, over half of our participants, although agreeing that IDs were important, reported that IDs only came up sporadically or depended on the instructor who taught the course in a particular year; 25% reported that IDs were presented in a separate module; and only 16% claimed that IDs were presented separately and then reinforced throughout the semester.

LPDs or teacher-training program administrators can have a direct impact on how IDs are incorporated in our GIs' inventory of theoretical SLA constructs and in their teaching practices. Frequent and systematic GI training, consisting of carefully-chosen materials and driven by sound theoretical tenets, is one way of producing autonomous, well-informed GIs, and guaranteeing top-quality FL instruction in their programs.

Methods instructors should also think about ways to make IDs more student-friendly. That is, just as we have exercises in which we prompt our GIs to think of tasks in which we facilitate the process of vocabulary acquisition or encourage GIs to create ways to activate learners' prior knowledge before engaging in a reading task, so should we be prepared to guide GIs in the conception of a model that connects IDs and FL classroom practices.

Limitations and Future Research

Although we controlled as much as possible the order of answering questions in the survey that we administered to the GIs, we found a few instances of backtracking. Future studies might consider the use of an online survey to prohibit backtracking. Online instruments are, alas, not problem-free. The electronic survey sent to the program administrators resulted in a relatively small number of participants, probably due to redirection of our email to university spam folders.

Furthermore, due to logistics in how the courses were designed, the surveys could only be administered during the eighth week of the semester. This may have skewed the results in that the SLA students may have retained the information on IDs better than the Methodology students because the former had examined them more recently than the latter.

Future studies should also explore how Program Administrators define IDs and recognize how widespread the notion of IDs as key factors in SLA is among instructors, supervisors, and program directors.

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Appendix A

Survey for Program Administrators

1. Institution you are affiliated with:
2. Capacity in which you are in contact with your department's/program's graduate instructors
 - a. Language Program Director
 - b. Language Coordinator
 - c. Supervisor for graduate instructors
 - d. Other: specify...
3. Does your department/program offer a Methodology course for incoming GIs?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. If you answered "no" to question 3, how do GIs get teacher training?
5. If you answered "yes" to question 3, what is the title of the textbook that is used in that Methodology course?
6. To your knowledge, are individual differences (IDs) addressed in the GI training program?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
7. If you answered "yes" to question 6, how are IDs presented (i.e., as they come up in the book, in a separate module, etc.)
8. If you answered "no" to question 6, pick one of the following options that best describes the reason why individual differences (IDs) are not part of the GIs' training or the Methodology course.
 - a. IDs are not a vital aspect in a foreign language curriculum.
 - b. We follow the textbook. If IDs are not part of the textbook content, they are left out of the foreign language curriculum.
 - c. Other
9. Name and title, or email address (optional)

Appendix B

Survey for Graduate Instructors (Part I)

1. Program: circle one or as many as apply.
 MA MAT TESOL PhD Other
2. Currently a teaching assistant? Circle "yes" or "no"
 Yes No
3. If "yes" for 2, what language do you teach?

4. Current or past Methodology courses taken. For example, 776, 777, etc. If taken at other institutions, mention them here also.
5. Current or past Second Language Acquisition courses taken:
6. Have you heard of the term “individual differences” or “IDs” in the context of foreign language (FL) teaching/learning? Circle “yes” or “no.”

Yes	No
-----	----
7. Can you remember where and when you first encountered this term, “Individual Differences”?
 - a. At workplace, school of internship or practicum (name school/college)
 - b. In a Foreign Language Methodology class (such as FORL 776 OR 777)
 - c. In a Linguistics/Second Language Acquisition class (such as FORL 730, LING 790/791/792)
 - d. Other: _____
8. Please, using your own words, explain what the term “individual differences” refers to in the context of a foreign language classroom? Write down anything that comes to mind.

Appendix C

Survey for Graduate Instructors (Part II)

9. According to Dörnyei (2009), in the field of second language acquisition individual differences have been regarded as “variables that modify and personalize the overall trajectory of the language acquisition processes.” Is this new information to you today?

Yes No

If *yes*, do you think this is something you should be concerned about as a FL teacher?

If *no*, is there anything you would add to this definition?

10. Which one of these individual differences are you familiar with? Mark 5 for very familiar, 1 for not familiar at all.

a) Aptitude	1	2	3	4	5
b) Motivation	1	2	3	4	5
c) Working memory	1	2	3	4	5
d) Attitude	1	2	3	4	5
e) Learning styles or strategies	1	2	3	4	5
f) Bilingualism	1	2	3	4	5

11. How do you think that awareness about individual differences might impact foreign language (FL) teaching? Can you give a concrete example of this?

12. Do you think you have addressed any of the mentioned individual differences (aptitude, motivation, working memory, attitude, bilingualism) in your teaching before today? For each ID, circle either “yes” or “no.” If *yes*, explain how.

Aptitude	yes	no	How:
Motivation	yes	no	How:
Working memory	yes	no	How:
Attitude	yes	no	How:
Learning styles/strategies	yes	no	How:
Bilingualism	yes	no	How:

13. Having learned about individual differences, do you think that there is something in your teaching that you could change to address them more thoroughly? What? How will you do that for *each one* of the individual differences listed below?

- Aptitude:
- Motivation:
- Working memory:
- Attitude:
- Learning styles/strategies:
- Bilingualism: