
English as an International Language Pedagogy: What Teachers' Voices Tell Us

Gergana Vitanova

University of Central Florida, USA

A look at the literature in the field of English language teaching reveals that much of it has been published in Britain, North America, or Australia. At the same time, a growing number of English language teachers and curriculum developers work in conditions and cultures very different from the ones in highly developed English-speaking countries. Unfortunately, few researchers have shifted their attention to the context of English as a foreign language (EFL); in other words, in countries where English does not have an official status. Holliday (1994; 2005), for example, analyzes the macro characteristics of social contexts. In his work, he cautions against a direct technological transfer from what he terms BANA (Britain, Australasia, North America) to other countries. ("Technological" here is a larger term that entails methods of teaching.) In his view, it is problematic that methodologies developed in these countries are being transplanted "almost everywhere else" (1994, p. 12). Instead, he suggests we should think of methodologies that are appropriate for specific sociocultural contexts. Holliday stresses that teacher trainers should critically examine whether the methodologies developed in Britain or North America in "ideal" teaching-learning situations would be appropriate in other, less ideal contexts. At the same time, he acknowledges that there are "curriculum developers or teachers who are trying to effect appropriate English language teaching with students who are foreign to them" and trying to "understand their attitudes and ways of doing things, which, to the outsider, are often obscure and opaque" (1994, p. 11).

Other scholars (Pennycook, 1994; Canagarajah, 1999) have argued for a similar reconsideration of the transfer of Western pedagogies and techniques, especially the communicative language teaching approach, which may not be appropriate in other cultures. For instance, Canagarajah (1999) has shown how Tamil high school students resisted the Western cultural ideology and social values imposed on them through the use of American textbooks. A direct transfer of methodology may not only be difficult to implement in a foreign language context, but it also carries a certain degree of arrogance with it. In other words, it implies that Western models of pedagogies are the best, regardless of local contexts.

Preparing teachers for EFL contexts has also been made problematic by the fact that in today's linguistic market English has become the unquestioned lingua franca, a global, or world language. In short, English is used not only among the speakers of English as a first language, but among speakers all over the world, speakers who would like to acquire English for business and educational purposes. Moreover, unlike immigrant learners in the United States or Britain, for example, who have to be able to communicate with native speakers of the target language, learners of English as a global language may want to master the language so they can communicate with other speakers of English as an international language. A significant and growing body of research has demonstrated that the globalization of English has changed the very concept of the native speaker and, importantly for language educators, the implications for teaching English itself. McKay (2002), for example, offers a set of pedagogical goals: a focus on intelligibility rather than "correctness," interaction strategies that promote comity (friendly relations), sensitivity in the choice of cultural content in materials, and respect for the local culture of teaching and learning.

This increased interest in English as an international language seems to pose an inevitable question for language teacher educators in the United States: How well do North American TESOL programs prepare students for teaching abroad? And yet, despite the ever-increasing need for English language education in a variety of international contexts, the field has not addressed this question adequately. Govardhan, Nayar, and Sheorey's (1999) article, "Do U.S. MATESOL Programs Prepare Students to Teach Abroad" stands out as the only one that explicitly looks at the issue. In their study, the researchers examined the teaching situation abroad by analyzing job advertisements, along with the expected qualifications for them, and evaluated M.A. TESOL programs in the United States, focusing on the types of courses being offered, using Garshick's (1995) *Directory of Professional Preparation Programs in TESOL in the United States and Canada*. Govardhan, Nayar, and Sheorey concluded that, in fact, M.A. TESOL programs do not do a good job of preparing students to teach overseas, and that they could not identify any program that is "quintessentially geared toward preparing ESL/EFL teachers for teaching abroad" (p. 122). The researchers also thought that TESOL, as an institution, was silent on this issue.

Acknowledging Holliday's (1994) claim that there is a lack of data for what is actually happening in a wide range of social settings and classrooms around the world, this article reports on the results of an ongoing study. Although it asks questions similar to those asked by Govardhan et al., the nature of this study is different from theirs. It is not about looking at the teaching situation abroad in general, nor does it examine the offerings of different TESOL programs. Instead, it focuses on the particular experiences

of teachers educated in the United States, who have taught both in North America and abroad. In exploring their voices, the guiding questions were:

1. How well does M.A. TESOL education in the United States prepare students for the challenges of international sociocultural settings?
2. What are the major difficulties EFL teachers encounter?
3. What base of knowledge/what courses do teachers find essential in teaching English as an international language?
4. Can they apply the methodologies they acquire in North American-based programs to a different, foreign language milieu?

While the terminology used to refer to the different contexts of teaching English is quite complex, (for example, English as a second language, English as a foreign language, English as an additional language), this paper will employ the terms English as a foreign language and English as an international language to refer to the contexts in the so-called Expanding Circle where English is not being used as the official language of the country (for a comprehensive review of this terminology, see Nayar, 1997).

The approach that was chosen here—trying to understand teachers' personal experiences and their voices—has already been strongly established in the field of second language education. For instance, Richards (1996) aptly points out that we should approach the research in teaching “from the inside” (p. 281), and that by acknowledging real teachers' voices, we should shift our focus to the everyday realities of teaching. According to Richards, we can accomplish this shift only if we explore teachers' experiences and perceptions. Similarly, Freeman and Johnson (1998) strongly emphasize a focus on teachers as individuals and their personal experiences in the reconceptualization of language teacher education.

The Study

Taking up these theoretical and methodological calls, this study focuses on teachers' perceptions of the English as a foreign language context. Thirty-five teachers participated. All had Master's degrees in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) from programs across the United States. Some participants had doctoral degrees in TESOL or were working toward them. Although most of the teachers had taught in both types of contexts—ESL (e.g., the United States) and EFL (e.g., Latin America, China, the Middle and Far East)—the major goal of this paper is to focus on their perceptions of the EFL context. Similarly, although some of the findings related to the disconnect between methods and theories emphasized in graduate programs may also apply to ESL contexts, the goal of the study was to investigate how prepared graduates were for EFL contexts.

The participants had taught English as a foreign language in a wide range of countries: Hungary, China, Japan, Germany, Spain, Bulgaria, Jordan, Turkey, Thailand, Colombia, Korea, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Qatar. Data was collected over the course of two years. Each participant filled out an open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix) that aimed to elicit their perceptions of teaching abroad. The responses to the questionnaires were submitted either in person or by e-mail. In addition, follow-up interviews were conducted when clarification of the responses or further elaboration was needed. These clarifications were based on the participant's initial response. For example, in one case, a participant wrote that some of her Chinese students felt uncomfortable with her teaching techniques. During an in-person interview, she was asked to elaborate on what these techniques were and whether they were part of the beliefs that she acquired in her TESOL Master's program. In another case, a participant wrote that she found it difficult to adapt ESL materials to the EFL environment, and in a follow-up communication, she was prompted to specify the ways in which she found these materials inappropriate.

Follow-up interviews were tape-recorded when possible. However, because not all of the participants were in close proximity, another way of obtaining follow-up responses had to be employed. Describing the essential role of the interview as a method of inquiry in qualitative research, Fontana and Frey (2005) comment on a new direction the interviewing process has taken because of advances in technology. They write about electronic or "virtual" (p. 721) interviews and claim that these will become even more common in the future. Thus, some of the follow-up interviews were conducted electronically for participants who were not available in person.

In accordance with the goal of this study—to give voice to teachers' own perceptions and experiences—a qualitative approach to data analysis was employed. Once the data were collected, they were analyzed in several stages to identify the major themes. Qualitative analysis by its nature is an ongoing and recursive process in which coding serves an essential function. Miles and Huberman's (1994) guidelines for coding and analysis were followed. The initial data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire, and the "start list" (p. 58) of codes was created based on the responses to these specific questions. As the questionnaires were collected, a table was created for each of the questions and all the participants' responses were typed in the corresponding tables. This stage comprised the preliminary categorization. Some of these first-stage categories were, for example, "difficulties in the EFL environment" and "appropriateness of methods taught in the TESOL programs." As the responses to each of the questions in the questionnaire were reviewed one by one, more specific patterns were identified within each of the initial categories. For instance, within the initial category of major difficulties, patterns such as difficulties at the technical level or

sociopedagogical problems became apparent. This second level of analysis also allowed the identification of certain areas within the participants' responses that needed further clarification or elaboration, and it was also the stage when the participants were selected for follow-up communication. Finally, a third level of analysis reviewed all the data collected, including the in-person interviews and the electronic follow-up responses mentioned above. Throughout this process of analysis, the participants' data and the researcher's conceptual and theoretical beliefs about the issues at hand were informing and influencing each other.

Findings

Based on the questionnaire and the interview responses provided by the participants, the findings are grouped in several categories: perceived difficulties related to teaching abroad, teachers' perceptions of preparedness, the use of methods in the international setting, and the types of knowledge viewed essential for teaching abroad.

Perceived Difficulties

A major question of the study was about the perceived difficulties TESOL graduates experienced in the foreign language environment. In their article, Govardhan et al. (1999) refer to a TESOL colloquium whose panelists discussed some of the difficulties involved in teaching abroad. They list issues such as large classes, lack of teaching aids, lack of resources, and unfamiliar educational bureaucracies. Nearly a decade after this discussion, the teachers who participated in this project reported similar experiences. Among the difficulties they reported many are at a technical level. Among the technical level difficulties were: finding authentic materials, large sizes of classes (over 70 in some countries), and classroom conditions. Teachers talked, for example, about "crowded," "unheated," or "unairconditioned" rooms. As difficulties of a more critical, sociopedagogical level, teachers reported test-driven curricula and conflicts with the educational goals of host institutions. One teacher said, for example:

The problem is that institutions say they are teaching communication when indeed they are leaving it out because grammar, syntax, vocabulary is what counts. This is the schema students, most teachers, and most administrators have.

Another participant was disillusioned about her role in the new teaching environment. She saw the school practices as a business that cared little about what the students actually learned as long as they were retained:

The other major difficulty was having to be actively involved with the sales of classes. We would often have to meet with a current student and tell them

what they need to do improve by telling them how many more lessons they needed.

Among the difficulties at this level, teachers also reported professional isolation (e.g., lack of conferences or opportunities for professional development) in the foreign language context. Several teachers brought up sociopolitical difficulties such as anti-American attitudes. More general issues that almost everyone mentioned involved culture shock, housing problems, and the unpredictability of living in a foreign country.

Perception of Preparedness

The responses to the question whether the participants felt prepared by their programs for teaching abroad varied considerably. Some patterns were noticeable, however. It is worth mentioning that only four of the participants stated unequivocally that they felt prepared for teaching abroad. Seven answered that they were not prepared. Most of the teachers refused to reply directly with a “yes” or “no,” and chose to qualify their responses. Many answered with both “yes” and “no” as they provided the reasons for their choices. With only several exceptions, the majority of participants were native speakers of English. They felt prepared because they were teaching their own language, which gave them as one teacher put it, “a sense of security.” Interestingly, these who felt prepared gave credit for this level of preparedness not to their M.A. TESOL program necessarily, but to more general factors such as broad teaching strategies including reviewing what the students need, and what they already know. One teacher called these practices critical reflection that could be applied to any educational setting, ESL or EFL. Another teacher said:

I did feel prepared... I learned this through previous experience living and working in other cultures, not in my TESOL graduate classes.

Many teachers believed that their graduate programs were too theoretical, with little emphasis on the practical aspects of teachers such as how to design a lesson plan or how to teach a large group of students. Several expressed a concern about the lack of training in English grammar. They had difficulty, for example, answering some of their advanced students’ questions about “the nuts and bolts grammar of English for the purpose of instruction.”

Use of Methods

As numerous examples in the literature on English language teaching methods illustrate, communicative language teaching has occupied a central place in the countries that Holliday (1994) terms as BANA, and other scholars would term the Inner Circle. There have been a number of definitions of communicative language teaching,

but scholars (e.g., Brown, 1994; Larsen-Freeman, 2000) typically agree that it entails activities that involve authentic materials and interaction as well as small group and pair work. Most of the participants' responses reflected these trends in English language education. A young teacher, for example, who had taught in China, believed that her role as an English instructor there was to create as many speaking opportunities for her students as possible.

One of the questions of the study concerned the teachers' beliefs about the use of methods in the EFL classroom. Four of the participants did not think they needed different methods in ESL vs. EFL contexts. Thirteen claimed that they had to change their approaches to teaching. They said, "Yes, definitely," or "Absolutely." These participants who claimed that they had to use different methods justified their opinion by referring to different educational goals (for example, their EFL programs were not interactive), different student purposes, and student motivations. When pressed for an explanation, however, about exactly what the differences were, teachers often remained vague and were unable to articulate them. The ones who were more specific pointed out that the curriculum abroad required them to use grammar-based instead of the communicative, collaborative activities they wanted to do in class. The majority of the participants agreed that some adjustments needed to be made, depending on the local context. A sample of different participants' explanations for these adjustments follow:

Adjustments were made daily. . . . The goal of language teaching is communicative competence. Well, it's not when the students have to prepare to take a government English test that requires them to translate large portions of a text on a topic about which they have no background knowledge.

When I was in graduate school, explicit grammar instruction was very much discouraged. However, out in the real world, I've found it necessary and even helpful for students to be taught grammar.

I believe in basic conversational skills, first of all, everyday, practical, useful language. And I believe in getting students to speak and getting them to communicate with each other and giving them oral practice. I believe in group work and group interaction. . . . But I found that in China the students were not ready to just get up out of their seats and start exercising with me. . . . And it was completely foreign to them. They were very uncomfortable at first.

Methods are not the key. A teacher's flexibility in adjusting to classroom situations and learners is [the key].

Scholars in the field today (Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Prabhu, 1990) have rejected the notion that there is a fixed set of methods that teachers can practice uniformly. Kumaravadivelu, for instance, talks about the “postmethod” era. Similarly, Canagarajah points out that “classroom realities rarely correspond to any recognizable methods (at least as they are packaged by the research and publishing industry)” (2002, p. 140). While the teachers in this study did not exactly employ the postmethod terminology or display any explicit awareness of it, their words resonated with the view that no specific method could fit the variety of teaching styles, classroom conditions, cultural contexts, and institutional forces that they encountered. These examples suggest that most teachers were aware of having to be sensitive to the needs to their students, in their local contexts. Although, as their responses indicate, communicative approaches were strongly emphasized in methodology courses, the majority of the participants questioned the value of these approaches (and spoke of “adjustments”) in EFL situations. For example, one M.A. TESOL graduate and a current teacher in Mexico made the following recommendation to those want to teach abroad:

Don't underestimate the local teaching talent; they understand more the way of thinking of your students. Listen, adapt, try out, and then decide on your teaching materials. If you are going to teach only by using the English book, I am sure your class will be really boring.

He recommended that English language teachers abroad be open to the local ways of learning and teaching and be ready to accept criticism about how “Americans do things.”

Not all teachers, however, were critical of Western methodologies and their application in the foreign language context. A case in point is another teacher, who, in an interview, spoke of her experience in China. While teaching there, she “had the hardest time” getting her college students to move freely around the crowded classroom or to ask them to “sit in circle and do this communicative activity.” Despite the obvious student resistance she encountered (they would look awkwardly at each other or simply not move), she thought it was her job to “correct” their learning behavior. Along with the other participants in the study, this teacher found that her M.A. TESOL program had not addressed this particular discrepancy between what the North American programs perceive to be the current “cutting-edge” methodology and the requirements of programs in the other parts of the world, where more traditional approaches were prevalent.

Knowledge Perceived Essential for Teaching Abroad

Freeman and Johnson write, “We believe that the better we as teacher educators understand and define what English language teachers need to know beyond the subject

matter itself, the sooner we can move away from the current situation in many educational markets: If you speak English, you can teach it" (1998, p. 404). Their words are particularly meaningful in the contexts of teaching English as a foreign language, where teachers and employers have often assumed that all one needs is the language competence of a native speaker. One of the last questions was about the knowledge base that teachers should possess before going to teach abroad. A subquestion was related to identifying the specific courses that teachers thought would be helpful in preparing them to teach in international settings.

Almost all the participants emphasized the importance of having some knowledge of the host culture. Notably, this included knowledge of the educational system and general attitudes toward the United States. Some working knowledge of the local language was considered essential, too, and teachers considered it important because it would enable them to relate to their EFL students better. Several teachers stressed, however, that while it is helpful to know about the specific culture in which they were going to teach, general, broad strategies were "the most helpful" as one female teacher phrased it. Such strategies encompassed critical reflection along with assessment of what students already know, and what they need to know. Two experienced professionals made a point that, ironically, they did not find methodology courses helpful at all. One of them, for instance, reflected:

I don't think a course in designer methods is of any use. More valuable is a preparation in how to approach each new teaching setting and make decisions and choices that are responsive to the needs, expectations, social and cultural contexts of the learners. . . . Development of problem solving and analytical skills are more essential to me than a bag of tricks.

If training in methods was not considered particularly useful, what courses, then, did the participants find essential in their preparation to teach English abroad? The following is a summary of their suggestions: modern English grammar, materials and curriculum design, linguistics (with elements of contrastive analysis), theories of second language acquisition, English phonetics and phonology, sociolinguistics.

Most of the teachers included an English grammar course in their lists, pointing out that they have had to explain nuances of the modern grammar of English to international students and admitted that they did not always have the metalanguage for articulating these nuances. In an interview, one teacher, who worked in Japan, explained that native speakers of English may know how to speak the language, but they do not necessarily know "the ins, the outs, and the whys" of its grammar without the proper training.

Many of the teachers also recommended a course that focuses on the more general aspects of language or linguistics. One teacher, for example, reflected in an interview

that an overview of linguistics would help EFL practitioners by enabling them to realize the “diverse structures” of languages and to be “more understanding of students’ having a difficult time catching on to a grammar structure of a certain aspect of the English language that doesn’t exist in their language.”

A course in second language acquisition was also prominent in the responses, with a particular emphasis on the different approaches to language acquisition and the general mechanisms of language learning. Several students brought up specifics such as the “innateness” approach as being of interest to them. While sociolinguistics wasn’t included by everyone, it deserves special mention. Those who included sociolinguistics had either taken a course or read independently in this area. They believed that a course in sociolinguistics was beneficial as it “tells you how language works basically in everyday life, how people use language, and for what purpose.”

Several of the teachers emphasized that a course in English phonetics and pronunciation is necessary (one said it was “a must”) because, similar to the course in English grammar, it gives them a metalanguage to describe spoken English. Participants also discovered that they needed a knowledge of IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) as their international students requested that they use these symbols. Interestingly, only two of the 35 participants suggested a course in teaching English as a foreign language specifically.

Discussion

A recent issue of *Applied Linguistics Forum* (2006) addressed the training of teachers for EFL contexts. Five discussants, led by scholars Donna Brinton and Sandra Fotos, concluded that graduate programs in the United States typically focus on TESL and do not emphasize TEFL. The teachers’ voices in this study echo these discussants’ conclusions. Despite the variability in the responses to the first research question—whether the English language teachers in this study felt prepared for teaching abroad—the majority of the participants indicated that their M.A. TESOL programs did not address this issue adequately. This became apparent in their responses about the use of methods in the EFL classroom, specifically the discrepancy they found between their training in communicative teaching methodologies in the United States, and the need for more structured and even grammar-based approaches in many of the EFL contexts. One would assume that a course on methods would be especially beneficial to teachers, but teachers rebuffed the value of the courses in methods they had taken. In their view, the current methodology courses are too focused on the history and theory behind the so-called designer methods (as Nunan, 1989, calls methods such as Total Physical Response, the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, and others) and little attention is given, for

example, to classroom issues such as lesson planning. Instead of specific methods or techniques, flexibility (when curriculum requirements differed from teachers' expectations) and creativity (when resources were scarce) were repeatedly accentuated by the participants as the most needed qualities for success in teaching abroad.

One of the major questions in this study asked participants about the knowledge they deemed essential in preparing them to teach abroad, and, specifically, the courses they found helpful and would recommend be included in a TESOL program. The responses revealed that the core courses, from which teachers believed that they would benefit most, are essentially language-based: a solid knowledge base of linguistics, along with pedagogical grammar. Several of the more experienced teachers pointed out the importance of some contrastive analysis. It is certainly not possible to include a course on all the local language backgrounds in which an English teacher may find herself working in, but an understanding of language typology in terms of phonology, morphology, and syntax will help a teacher understand some of the difficulties her students are experiencing when acquiring English as a foreign language.

A course in sociolinguistics was suggested by the teachers; however, the ones who have taken such a course during their graduate training added that these courses tended to stress the social contexts in the United States. Along with the typically discussed issues (e.g., dialects, gender, or language policy), a sociolinguistics course designed to prepare students for the TEFL environment should incorporate a more global perspective on the use and status of English in the world today. A discussion of the notion of multilingualism and the concept of identity, particularly how it relates to the use of English in diverse contexts, will enrich teachers' sociocultural awareness of the different student populations they may encounter. Importantly, a sociolinguistics course in a TESOL program should help teachers gain an insight into the use of speech acts. It should emphasize that while certain linguistic or cognitive processes of learning may be universal across different cultures, speech acts are not. This is related to another finding of this study. Teachers did not find cultural diversity courses particularly helpful (as the majority of those courses focus on the different ethnic groups in the United States). However, they did suggest a course in cross-cultural communications. This is an interesting finding as the teachers' suggestion dovetails with current beliefs about the pedagogical goals in teaching English as a lingua franca and intercultural communication.

In a study like this, it is important to discuss not only what the participants' responses contained, but also what was missing. An issue that became apparent during the analysis was that most of the teachers' responses focused on grammar when asked about their training or knowledge of the local language. Very few of the participants demonstrated an explicit sociolinguistic or sociocultural awareness. Discouragingly,

even fewer demonstrated an awareness of English as a World Language or the implications of this construct for teaching. Only two of the participants mentioned the importance of World Englishes because they were exposed to this notion in their M.A. programs. Unfortunately, most teachers demonstrated a lack of sensitivity to the variety of Englishes in the world and related sociolinguistic implications. One teacher, for example, spoke of her frustration with native speakers of “Hinglish,” and particularly with their “reluctance” to use Standard English forms (as in American or British). She believed it was her responsibility as an instructor to teach them the Standard English form. To the majority of participants, English was something that students wanted to learn for their own purposes. They saw students as either motivated to learn about the English language and culture or not. Most had not considered their own role as conduits of very specific cultural values. Fewer had thought about or had been introduced to the role of English as an international language. In an interview, one teacher admitted that even though she had taken a graduate sociolinguistics course, she heard the phrase “English as an international language” for the first time during the interview. This discovery is quite surprising, given the extensive body of literature on the status of English as a lingua franca and the pedagogical implications it carries.

Thus, one specific recommendation for TESOL programs would be to incorporate a World Englishes perspective into their curricula. Teachers have to know that the status of English in the world is changing, and that today speakers who don’t belong to the so-called Inner (e.g., Britain, U.S.A., Canada) or Outer Circles (former British colonies) are calling English their own language as well. These different speakers of English as a global language bring their own sociopolitical worldviews and attitudes and redefine the whole concept of native speaker. While it is not possible for our TESOL students to learn about each single variety of English in the world (this is beyond the scope of any single course), it is important for M.A. programs to acknowledge the existence of regional varieties of English and teach graduates to value the unique local contexts in which these varieties function. As teachers begin to understand that English is used in different ways around the world and for different purposes, they will also develop an appreciation for the variety of teaching methods that have originated in other countries.

At the same time, the study found an encouraging trend. Despite the lack of awareness of the varieties of English in the world and the lack of awareness of the rapidly growing research in this area, teachers exhibited a kind of intuitive understanding of different pedagogical contexts and different local conditions. Again, as stressed above, this understanding had been acquired during the participants’ teaching practices and not during formal M.A. TESOL study. Teachers found it discrepant that they had to study what were considered the most accepted methodologies in North America (e.g., communicative), but they encountered a need for a very different

approach in their local pedagogical contexts (one that was more focused on grammar, for instance).

Some expressed frustration with this and attempted to transplant the beliefs about learning and teaching they acquired in North America to their international settings without questioning or examining the sociocultural implications (for instance, the young teacher in China who tried to make students move or sit in a circle despite their resistance). However, other teachers were more critical of the knowledge they had acquired and more willing to question its value in a different context (for example, the male teacher in Mexico who cautioned against following “the book” without reevaluation of local practices). Although they were not able to use the terminology current scholars have employed (Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Canagarajah, 2002), these more reflective teachers found their own words to voice the same concerns about transplanting a methodology from one setting to another. What is of crucial significance here is that to many of the teachers, this very openness to the local educational traditions constituted the key to becoming a successful EFL instructor.

Conclusion

Although the nature of this investigation is quite different from the Govardan et al. (1999) study and from Brighton and Fonton's (2006) discussion, the results of the three share a common thread. In particular, M.A. TESOL programs in North America tend to focus their students' preparation for ESL rather than EFL contexts. Of particular interest was that even participants who claimed they were prepared gave much credit for their preparedness to other factors (for instance, the ability to be flexible, previous experiences with other cultures, and other teachers' anecdotes about teaching overseas), and not necessarily to their TESOL training. Given the wide array of difficulties and challenges teachers encounter in diverse international settings, it is impossible to prepare teachers for each of these situations. Each government and school within a country requires its own curriculum or variety of English. Without a doubt, an understanding of linguistics and explicit knowledge of English grammar would certainly increase teachers' competence in the classroom. The participants pointed out that a set of “general strategies” would be most beneficial in their TEFL preparation.

This closely dovetails with Kumaravadivelu's (2001) conception of the role of the postmodern teacher. Such strategies would equip M.A. students with the skills to identify learners' needs, attitudes, and learning styles. It would enable them to explore and evaluate a wide range of resources, including the ones English language learners bring to the classroom.

In a postmethod era, Kumaravidevelu proposes a pedagogy of particularity, a pedagogy that is relevant to a particular group of teachers and particular group of learners. Similarly, Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) call for an “appropriate” (p. 211) pedagogy. This pedagogy, the researchers claim, should be embedded in the local sociocultural context.

In a way, it is even problematic to talk about a pedagogy; rather, teacher education programs should give students the tools to develop and implement multiple pedagogies. If we are to adopt this multiple pedagogies viewpoint, teachers’ most important role in an international context then becomes one of researcher of the needs and requirements of their local settings. These needs will be both pedagogical and sociocultural.

This study addresses only a few aspects of teaching English as an international language. To understand the contexts of English language teaching, we need more data from a variety of settings. One suggestion for future research, for instance, would include a comparison between teachers’ experiences in ESL and EFL contexts. We also need studies that investigate whether and how teachers apply the knowledge they have acquired in their M.A. TESOL programs not only to EFL, but also to different ESL environments. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need more research on teachers’ actual experiences in the real world, how they perceive their contexts, and their needs for training in these contexts. However well-built our theories of language teaching are, and however advanced our knowledge of the characteristics of educational settings is, our research is incomplete without understanding how teachers actually function in these contexts.

References

- Brown, H. D. (1994). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Canagarajah, S. A. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Canagarajah, S. A. (2002). Globalization, methods, and practice in periphery classrooms. In D. Block, & D. Cameron (Eds.), *Globalization and language teaching* (pp. 134-150). London: Routledge.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. (2005). The interview: From neutral stance to political involvement. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.) (pp. 695-727). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Freeman, D., & Johnson, K. (1998). Reconceptualizing the knowledge-base of language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(3), 397-417.

- Garshick, E. (Ed.). (1995). *Directory of teacher education programs in TESOL in the United States and Canada, 1995-1997*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL.
- Govardhan, A., Nayar, B., & Sheorey, R. (1999). Do U.S. MATESOL programs prepare students to teach abroad? *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(1), 114-25.
- Holliday, A. (1994). *Appropriate methodology and social context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Holliday, A. (2005). *The struggle to teach English as an international language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kramersch, C., & Sullivan, P. (1996). Appropriate pedagogy. *ELT Journal*, 50, 192-212.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (1994). The postmodern condition: (E)merging strategies for second/foreign language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(1), 27-48.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2001). Toward a postmethod pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35(4), 537-560.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McKay, S. L. (2002). *Teaching English as an international language: Rethinking goals and approaches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, M. A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Nayar, P. B. (1997). ESL/EFL dichotomy today: Language politics or pragmatics. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31(1), 9-37.
- Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pennycook, A. (1994). *The cultural politics of English as an international language*. London: Longman.
- Phillabaum, S., & Frazier, S. (Eds.). (2006). *Applied Linguistics Forum*, 26(2). Retrieved October 16, 2006, from <http://www.tesol.org/NewsletterSite/view.asp?nid=2857>
- Prabhu, N. S. (1990). There is no best method—why? *TESOL Quarterly*, 24(2), 161-176.
- Richards, J.C. (1996). Teachers' maxims in language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30, 281-296.

About the Author

Gergana Vitanova is Assistant Professor at the University of Central Florida. Her research interests span sociocultural issues in SLA, particularly identity and gender.

Appendix

Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! Before you respond to the questions, please tell me about your background.

Highest degree achieved _____ Academic field _____

Are you currently taking TESL courses? _____

Where are you currently teaching? _____

In which country(ies) did you teach English as a foreign language? _____

1. You've taught in (or know) both ESL and EFL contexts. What did you find were the main differences between the two?
2. What are the major difficulties you have experienced as an English as a foreign language teacher (any possible aspects)?
3. When you were teaching in an EFL context, did you feel prepared for this challenge? In what ways?
4. Did you find you could apply what you had learned here, in the States, about TESL to the EFL classroom you were in? Please specify.
5. Have you found that you need to use different methods in the two contexts? Please explain.
6. Did you have to adjust any of the methods/techniques you studied in your TESL program to the new EFL environment? Please explain how.
7. What do wish to have known before you went to teach EFL?
8. What do you think English teachers, educated in the U.S., should know before going to teach English as a foreign language abroad (e.g., what courses might you suggest)?
9. When you started to teach abroad, what did you know about English as a World language or English as a lingua franca?
10. Please share any other comments you may have on this topic.