

Novice ESL teachers perceptions of TESL programs

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The Novice Teacher

Who is the novice teacher?

Why is this teacher important?

- The first three years of experience are critical
- highest rate of attrition- 40-50% (Moon, 2007)
- Their experience is noted as “sink or swim”

Language Teacher Education

What do ESL teachers need to learn?

- A shared knowledge base/ skills-based domains of knowledge (Day, 1993; Lafayette, 1993; Richards, 1998)
 - pedagogical skills
 - linguistic expertise
- Situated and context-dependent (Freemen & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 2006, 2009)
 - The teaching “activity”
 - Teacher-learner + social context + pedagogical process

Teacher Beliefs

Why are teacher beliefs important?

- Teachers' beliefs and perceptions about their teaching skills have a strong impact on their teaching effectiveness (Knoblauch & Woolfolk Hoy, 2008)

Teacher Preparedness and Self-efficacy

How do teachers assess their effectiveness?

- Self-efficacy: teachers' beliefs about if and how s/he is able to successfully implement a teaching task (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998)
- Self-efficacy influences teaching quality and investment (Allinder, 1994)
- Self-efficacy beliefs are context-specific (fluctuate across contexts and tasks)
- Explored in K-12 - little research in adult ESL

Research Questions

1. What is novice teachers' sense of preparedness to teach in adult ESL classrooms after completing a TESL program?
2. What are novice teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy to perform various teaching tasks in adult ESL classrooms after completing a TESL program?
3. What aspects and content of a TESL program do novice teachers find useful and why?

Methodology

- Online survey and follow-up interviews
- Online questionnaire to explore:
 - teachers' sense of preparedness to teach in adult ESL classrooms (scale of 0 to 10)
 - self-efficacy to perform various teaching practices expected of adult ESL teachers drawn from TESL Ontario's accreditation requirements
- Interviews based on responses to the questionnaire

Participants

- 115 teachers (84%F, 16%M); accredited; first 3 yrs experience
- Education: > 75% - Bachelor; 22% Master's ; 3% Doctorate.
- Age spread across: < 31; 31-40; 41-50; > 50.
- Teaching experience: 31% - <3 mos.; 24% - 4-12 mos; 21% - 1 to 2 yrs; 23% - 2 to 3 yrs.
- TESL Program: 63% FT; 37% PT

Sources of data

- Online survey

- After you completed your TESL Certificate program, how prepared did you feel to teach ESL to adults?
- How prepared do you *now* feel to teach ESL to adults?
- Please rate your effectiveness *now* as a teacher to perform teaching expectations in an adult ESL classroom.
- What aspects and content of the TESL Certificate program you attended did you find the most useful? What was the least useful?

Sources of Data

- Interviews:
 - very well prepared (8-10)
 - not well prepared (1-3)
 - those who showed marked increase or decrease from time of graduation

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis:

- Descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, means and standard deviations) for the sense of preparedness and efficacy questionnaire data

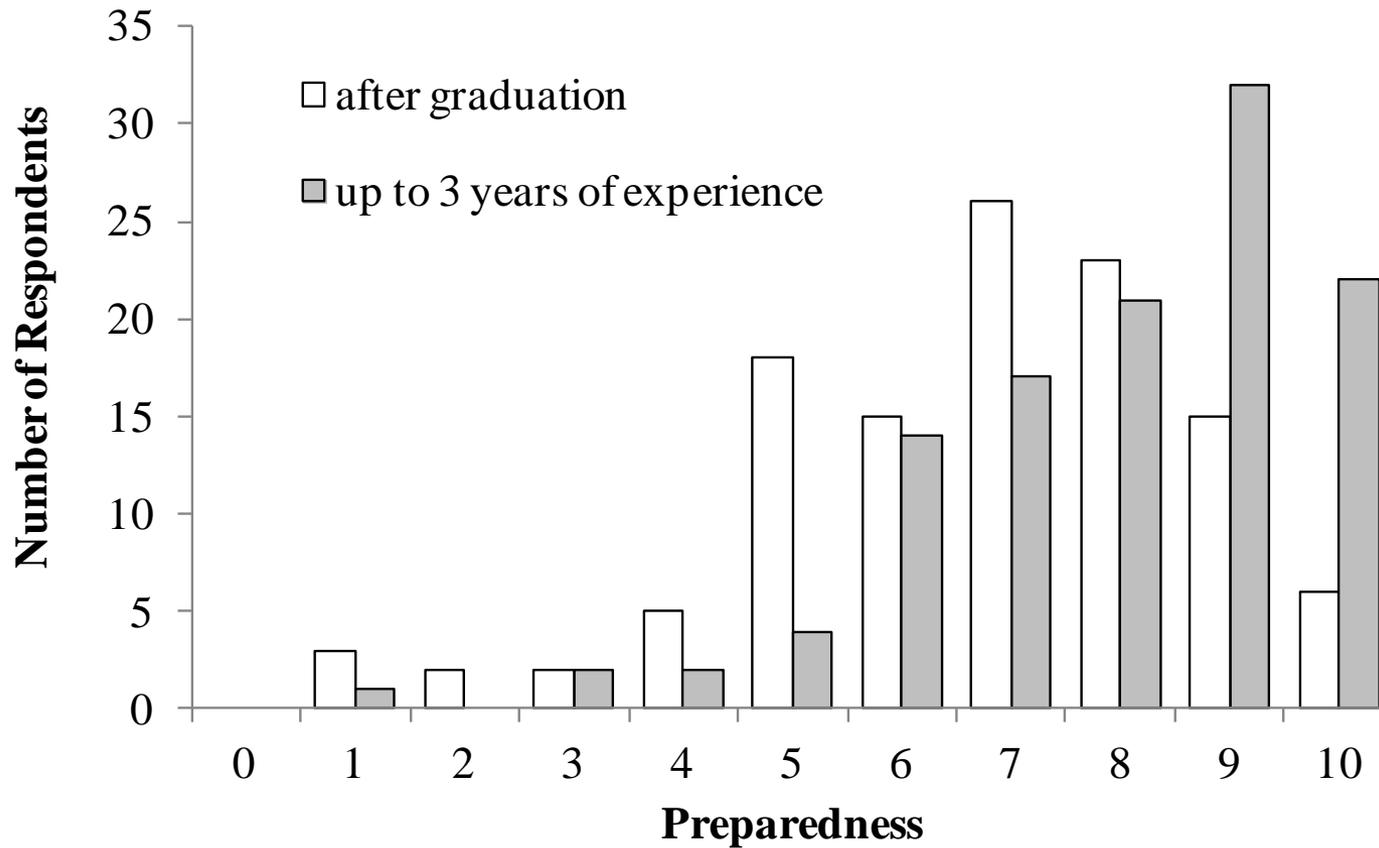
Qualitative Analysis

- Identifying themes from the open-ended questions on the questionnaire and the interview data

Findings

- Preparedness to teach in adult ESL programs
- After graduation: Mean:6.7 SD= 2
- At the time of study: Mean: 7.9 SD= 1.8
- 6% not prepared (1, 2, 3)
- 38% very well prepared (8, 9, 10)
- 59% showed increase – 13% increase of over 4 points
- 26% showed no change-
- 15% indicated decrease

Results: Sense of Preparedness (Q1)



	M	SD
Manage classrooms effectively	8.2	1.7
Select appropriate material to use in the classroom	8.1	1.6
Design effective lesson plans	8	1.7
Develop appropriate material to use in the classroom	7.9	1.8
Teach speaking skills	7.9	1.8
Teach reading skills	7.9	1.8
Use a variety of teaching methods	7.7	1.8
Teach writing skills	7.7	1.8
Teach listening skills	7.6	1.9
Teach grammar	7.5	1.9
Teach pronunciation	7.4	2
Teach international students in Canada	7.4	2.4
Use the Canadian Language Benchmarks in teaching	7	2.6
Develop tests for the classroom	7	2.2
Use technology to teach language	6.9	2.4
Use the LINC curriculum Guidelines	6.9	2.5
Use professional resources and engage with organizations in the field	6.7	2
Teach English in a foreign language context	6.6	2.7
Teach English for academic purposes	6.5	2.7
Teach ESL literacy	6.1	3

Results: Self-efficacy (Q2)

- Most effective
 - Manage classrooms effectively → 8.2
 - Select appropriate material to use in the classroom → 8.1
 - Design effective lesson plans → 8
- Least effective
 - Use technology to teach language → 6.9
 - Use the LINC curriculum Guidelines → 6.9
 - Use professional resources and engage with organizations in the field → 6.7
 - Teach English in a foreign language context → 6.6
 - Teach English for academic purposes → 6.5
 - Teach ESL literacy → 6.1

Sense of Preparedness and Change

Name	At Graduation	At Time of Study	Change
Kate	3	8	+ 5
Farin	5	9	+ 4
Karen	7	10	+3
Katrina	5	3	-2
Elizabeth	9	7	-2
Rita	7	4	-3
Zyad	10	10	0
Jack	1	1	0

Qualitative Findings

Useful:

- Practicum (cited by 82 of the 115 teachers)
 - “living the real experience of teaching in the real classroom”
 - “the practicum was the most useful. It would have been more helpful if we had more practicum and less in class learning”
 - “hands-on approach to how to structure an ESL classroom and gave us insight on our personal teaching methodologies”
- Instructors
 - “instructors were very knowledgeable and experienced”
 - “made the program interesting and relevant”

Qualitative Findings

Least Useful:

- Content

- “The [TESL] course needs to be edited for content to include more of the practical aspects of working in teaching”
- “I found that the courses were heavy on theory but too light on concrete teaching of skills. Some theory is useful but we need to have more tools to use when teaching”
- “the different theories were interesting, but not very helpful in the real classroom”

Qualitative Findings

Controversial:

- Grammar (cited by 76 respondents)
 - Most commented that grammar was a very useful component. “out course did not spend enough time in important areas like grammar”, “I found the grammar very useful”. The grammar was useful in that I am a native English speaker and needed to learn, explicitly, the structures of the language that I learned mostly implicitly
 - Lack of appreciation of grammar: “The course on grammar wasn't very useful”
 - Factors: (a) the background of the respondent (i.e., whether they learned English as their first or second language) and (b) the nature of grammar instruction in TESOL program.

Discussion

- Teachers benefit from their early classroom experience
- despite the overall increase in preparedness, some teachers reported a decrease and others no change at all
- Individual differences play a role in the quality of the classroom experience and its impact on novice teachers
- The broader employment context plays a strong role in career decisions and continuance
- Practicum is important and a concern with “surviving” the realities of the classroom

Conclusions & Implications

- TESL institutions and providers:
 - a broader view of the profession is warranted
 - re-examine the role of the practicum and situate it within the program as an integrated component
- TESL accreditation organizations:
 - take a leadership role in helping develop bridges and collaborative relationships that will support TESL programs in responding to the demands of the change and development in the field
- ESL teachers:
 - become aware of their responsibility to be cognizant of the reality of the profession in both an international and local context

Future Research

- Longitudinal study that follows novice teachers from the point of graduation through the experiences of the novice teacher's early years might capture a more genuine picture of their self-assessments.
- Teachers' perceptions about their efficacy is different from their actual efficacy
- Examine how teacher education can be improved to address the needs of teachers – and consequently the learners.
- Engage teachers at all stages of their careers as they move from teacher candidates to novice and expert teachers.

Thank you!

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