LEARNING TO TEACH IN AN INTENSIVE INTRODUCTORY TESL TRAINING COURSE: A CASE STUDY OF ENGLISH TEACHER LEARNING

by

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Abstract

Despite a growing body of research on the influence of the characteristics and beliefs as well as the teaching and learning experiences of trainee teachers on their learning during pre-service programs, intensive introductory TESL training courses are still designed to instruct a “standard” type of trainee teacher. This research study investigates the factors that mediate trainee teachers’ learning process as well as the interaction between these factors, which either facilitate and/or hinder trainee teachers’ success during an intensive introductory TESL training course. Using a qualitative holistic single-case study, informed by an interpretivist perspective, this study explores how three trainee teachers learned how to teach during a course in Southern Ontario, Canada. An integrated conceptual framework, formed by a sociocultural perspective of teacher learning, a holistic view of curriculum, and transformative pedagogy, was employed as a lens through which these trainee teachers’ learning was more thoroughly understood. Findings include four major factors that mediated trainee teachers’ teacher learning process and three types of interaction that facilitated and/or hindered their success during the program.
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List of Abbreviations

3 Ts – Transmission, Transaction and Transformation
BA – Bachelor of Arts
BEd – Bachelor of Education
CA – Controlled Activate
CCQs – Concept Checking Questions
CELTA – Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
ELL – English Language Learners
ELT – English Language Teaching
ESA – Engage, Study, Activate
ESL – English as a Second Language
L2 – Second Language
MA – Master of Arts
NEAS – National ELT Accreditation Scheme
NZQA – New Zealand Qualification Authorities
TESL – Teaching English as a Second Language
TEFL – Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL – Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TTT – Teacher Talking Time
SLTE – Second language Teacher Education
ss – Students
STT – Student Talking Time
Dedication

To the love of my life – without you, this thesis paper would have never been possible. You are my strength, my inspiration, my model. I love you – thank you.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Rationale

In classrooms around the world children, adolescents and adults are involved in the study of English (McKay, 2008). According to Kachru and Smith (2008), 25% of the earth’s population uses English for some purpose in their lives. English is no longer used by non-native speakers to communicate with native speakers, but indeed as a means of communication amongst native speakers of various languages (Kachru & Smith, 2008).

The interest in learning English has grown to such an extent that English is now considered an international language (McKay, 2008). As such learning English has become an issue of concern not only to educators. The knowledge of English is a matter of social and political concerns for countries worldwide (McKay, 2008). In order for countries to actively participate in the global economy as well as have access to information and knowledge which provide the foundation for social and economic development, English language skills are considered vital (Burns & Richards, 2009). As a consequence, there has been a ubiquitous increase in the demand for qualified English language teachers worldwide and for more effective approaches to their preparation (Burns & Richards, 2009).

In such a globalised scenario, internationally recognised intensive introductory Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)\(^1\) training courses have thrived. They are an especially popular avenue of entry into the English Language Teaching (ELT) profession and attract thousands of people every year (Ferguson & Donno, 2003). These courses aim to provide a sound basis in the fundamentals of language teaching practice and focus on a range of practical

\(^1\) No differentiation between TESL, TESOL or TEFL was made in this research.
skills for teaching English to learners. They are recognised by government examination bodies such as TESL Canada in Canada, National ELT Accreditation Scheme (NEAS) in Australia, New Zealand Qualification Authorities (NZQA) in New Zealand, Accreditation UK in the United Kingdom, and accepted worldwide, although there is no international organisation responsible for the standardisation of such qualifications (Thorn, 2011).

Despite the considerable impact intensive introductory TESL training courses exert on ELT profession globally, research on such programs is scarce (Ferguson & Donno, 2003). This paucity of research is even more surprising as these courses have the potential to help develop a systematic research agenda to investigate teacher learning in second language teacher education (SLTE) (Borg, 2006). Although a growing new body of research interested in “the complexities of who teachers are, what they know and believe, how they learn to teach, and how they carry out their work” (Johnson, 2006, p. 236) has emerged as a major focus in the field, research in a range of contexts has not been extensive. This fact contributes to a lack of any clear systematic trends in SLTE (Borg, 2006).

In addition, the fact that there has been an ever-increasing demand for qualified English language teachers and more effective approaches to their preparation have also given rise to a need to investigate how English language teachers learn to teach. As intensive introductory TESL training courses are responsible for qualifying a vast number of English language teachers every year, more research investigating English language teacher learning in such context is not only desirable but also needed.

Thus, this research is an attempt to address the scarcity of literature on English language teacher learning in intensive introductory TESL training courses. I focus on how the intricacies of who trainee teachers are, their knowledge and beliefs, and classroom learning and practice
mediate their teacher learning process, facilitating or hindering their learning and success in an intensive introductory TESL training course.

In this research, I use the term ‘English language teacher learning’ or simply ‘English teacher learning’ as English is taught as second, foreign or additional language in different contexts around the world, even though the term ‘second language (L2) teacher learning’ is more commonly used in the SLTE field. I also use the terms ‘training course’ and ‘trainee teachers’ rather than ‘teaching education program’ and ‘teacher candidates’ due to the focus on training and the development of practical teaching skills in such courses. In addition, the terms – ‘training course’ and ‘trainee teachers’ – are used to describe this type of TESL course and its students in the literature.

Research Questions

In order to address the dearth of research on intensive introductory TESL training courses as well as contribute to the literature in teacher learning in SLTE, I propose the following research questions:

1. What factors mediate trainee teachers’ learning process in an intensive introductory TESL training course?

2. How do these factors interact with one another to facilitate and/or hinder trainee teachers’ success in the course?

In the following section, I provide a rationale for my research topic and questions.
Background

The way teacher learning has been conceptualised in SLTE is a result of an epistemological shift, from a process-product paradigm to an interpretive stance. Its reconceptualisation as socially negotiated and dependent upon knowledge of students, subject matter, curricula, setting, and self (Freeman, 1996) has had a significant impact in the field. A new interest in “uncovering what they [teachers] already know and are able to do, and how they make sense of their work within the contexts in which they teach” gave rise to innumerable studies on how teachers learn to teach (Johnson, 2009, p.9). Despite this growing interest in English language teacher learning in SLTE, little is still known about how trainee teachers learn to teach in intensive introductory TESL training courses. Although these programs are not a new phenomenon in the ELT profession, more research in this type of setting has yet to be conducted in the SLTE field.

Intensive introductory TESL training courses have been qualifying English language teachers for the ELT industry for more than 50 years, with the British ELT industry as a pioneer in the field. In spite of the long-lasting influence such courses have had on the ELT profession, there is no international organisation responsible for setting standards for the ELT industry. However, qualification providers such as TESL Canada, NEAS, NZQA, in order to claim a “credible” recognition worldwide, adopt a “default reputable criterion” (Thorn, 2011). This criterion was determined by a historical precedent established by Accreditation UK delivery criteria, which set the level of certificate qualification needed to teach English in countries where English is the commonly spoken language.

Accreditation UK is a voluntary quality assurance scheme for providers of ELT services in the UK, functioning as a partnership between the British Council and English UK.
(Accreditation UK Handbook). Accreditation UK delivery criteria for a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) initial entry qualification are echoed across national organisations such as TESL Canada, NEAS, and NZQA, and state that a course must:

- **be externally validated** by a reputable examination body (usually a university or a recognised examinations board).
- contain **at least six hours supervised teaching practice** (i.e., practice where a qualified assessor observes the trainee teacher teaching real TEFL students and gives feedback to the trainee on his/her performance).
- contain **at least 100 hours of TEFL input**. (Thorn, 2011, p.1, *bold in the original*)

Thus, the “internationally recognised entry level standard for a TESL certificate” is historically established by Accreditation UK delivery criteria and ratified by the ELT profession. As a result of this international recognition, such certificates are accepted worldwide, which allows their graduates to teach English virtually anywhere in the world.

It merits consideration that although such courses are considered initial or introductory or pre-service courses, there are no restrictions on the acceptance of trainee teachers with previous ELT teaching experience. Despite this fact, these programs are designed and implemented under the assumption that trainee teachers do not have experience teaching English as an additional language or any other subject area such as math, science, etc. To illustrate this fact, the handbook of one of the most well-recognised intensive introductory TESL training course states, “Candidates should also be aware that due to the integration of theory and practice throughout the course, no exemptions or recognition of prior learning can be accepted” (CELTA Administration Handbook, 2012, p.10). However, due to their international appeal, the

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2 Information taught to trainee teachers including methodology, language systems and skills, professional development as well as written assignments and peer observation.
certificates awarded by such programs prove particularly advantageous for the experienced teachers who want to teach overseas but lack an internationally recognised qualification to do so. Hence, it is extremely common to encounter highly experienced trainee teachers alongside others who have never taught before.

Therefore, more research into how trainee teachers learn to teach English in this type of setting is paramount. In addition, gaining insight into trainee teachers’ learning in such programs will likely benefit the field of SLTE as well as the ELT profession.

I first contextualised this study providing some general information to situate my research questions. I then presented my research questions and provided a background on intensive introductory TESL training courses. In the next chapter, I review the literature pertinent to this study. This is followed by a discussion of the conceptual framework and an outline of the research methodology. Next, I provide a close look into the intensive introductory TESL training course and the findings. I then conclude with a discussion of the findings, the limitations of my research and its expected contributions.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

In this section, I provide a brief historic overview of research on teacher education, situating the reader within current views of SLTE. I review the literature focusing on student teachers’ prior experiences and beliefs as well as their classroom learning and practicum experiences in teacher education programs. I conclude by reviewing the research on intensive introductory TESL training courses.

A Brief Historic Overview of Research on SLTE

The roots of language teacher education can be found in the field of education, stretching back to more than 40 years (Freeman, 1996, 1996a; Borg, 2006). Educational research throughout the last century had typically concentrated on student learning and achievement (Freeman, 1996). Teaching, therefore, was seen almost solely through that lens (Suppes, 1978). The dominant approach to research in education prior to mid-70s sought to describe teaching in terms of a set of behaviours and activities that could be assessed by learning outcomes (Freeman, 1996). The assumption was that if such a set of quantifiable behaviours and activities were carried out effectively, it would ensure student learning (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). A classic example of this research was reported by Dunkin and Biddle (1974). Through the examination of the effects of four variables, i.e., background (student’s background, gender, etc.), context (community, school), process (behaviours and changes in the classroom), product (effects on student’s learning and achievement), it was assumed that teaching could be related to learning. This research came to be known as the process-product research paradigm (Freeman, 1996; Freeman & Johnson, 1998, Borg 2006).
Attempting to provide a professional identity for language teachers and legitimise the teaching profession, the field of SLTE built its foundations on disciplines such as linguistics, applied linguistics and psychology. What language teachers should know and do in their classrooms was defined by such academic disciplines (Freeman & Richards, 1996; Freeman, 2009). Thus, teachers would perform better if they were equipped with more research-driven knowledge (Holmes Group, 1986). This view was also disseminated amongst most teacher educators, who believed that “teachers needed discrete amounts of knowledge, usually in the form of general theories and methods that were assumed to be applicable to any teaching context” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p.399). In this perspective, learning to teach encompassed knowledge of the language (i.e., target language proficiency and knowledge about its structure, phonology, etc), as well as knowledge of language teaching methods and/or training in discrete teaching skills. It was assumed that teachers would use what they knew about content and pedagogy either in their course practicum, if offered, or on the job (Graves, 2009).

Although the process-product paradigm was the predominant structure of research in language teaching (Freeman, 1995; Nunan 1992), alternatives began to appear in the late 1960s (Borg, 2006). Developments in cognitive psychology, increased recognition of the teacher as an active and central player in the education process as well as the limitations of the dominant approach were some of the several events in educational research that marked the advent of a new research tradition – a shift away from a process-product orientation to a more hermeneutic paradigm (Freeman, 1996; Borg, 2006). In this new framework, teachers’ thinking and mental processes were of central concern – teaching should be examined in term of teachers’ mental processes and their actions (Freeman, 1996). Therefore:
teaching was no longer being viewed solely in terms of behaviours but rather in terms of *thoughtful behaviour*; and teachers were not being viewed as mechanical implementers of external prescriptions, but as active, thinking decision-makers, who processed and made sense of a diverse array of information in the course of their work (Borg, 2006, p.7, *italics* in the original).

A new socio-political and epistemological research agenda was advanced with high-profile research reports in the USA and England, and also with the publication of two highly influential books (Freeman, 1996). The books, *Life in the Classroom* (Jackson, 1968) and *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study* (Lortie, 1975) – which argued for recentering educational research on the classroom – and the research reports “Classroom decision-making”, “Teaching as clinical decision-making” and “Teaching as clinical information processing”, were instrumental in establishing a new conceptual framework focused on teachers (Freeman, 1996; Borg, 2006). This new body of research, in which teachers’ behaviours are shaped by their cognitive processes, i.e., the teachers’ thoughts, judgments and decisions, came to be known as teacher cognition, or teacher thinking, or teacher knowledge (Borg, 2006; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Shavelson & Stern, 1981).

An expansion of studies based on this new agenda was witnessed during the 1980s. Research began to uncover the complexities of teachers’ mental lives (Freeman, 2002). Important advances in the study of practical knowledge, teachers’ thought processes, and teacher knowledge were made (Borg, 2006). By the mid-80s, teacher’s prior experiences as students (Lortie, 1975), their personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), and their values and beliefs (Pajares, 1992) had started to emerge as important factors that shaped the way teachers think about their work (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).
During the 1990s, reviews discussing various aspects of the literature on teacher cognition abounded as a result of the great number of research studies published during the late 1980s and early 1990s (Borg, 2006). The context of teachers’ work was recognised as central in shaping teachers' conceptions of their profession (Kleinsasser & Savignon, 1992; Rosenholtz, 1989; Freeman, 1996). It was assumed that what teachers know about teaching was, to a great extent, socially constructed from their experiences and teaching in the classroom (Freeman, 1996). The way in which teachers actually used their knowledge in classrooms was seen as “highly interpretive, socially negotiated, and continually restructured within the classrooms and schools where teachers work” (Bullough, 1989; Clandinin, 1986; Grossman, 1990, In Freeman, 1996, p.400).

Studies on teacher cognition saw no sign of dwindling in the past decade. Teacher cognition became an established area of research and has helped to reconceptualise how teachers learn to do their work (Johnson, 2009). Developments in teacher learning since the 2000s have witnessed tensions between a more propositional and practice-oriented views of teacher knowledge, a concern with teacher learning within the broader context of community, institution, policy, and profession (Borg, 2006), as well as a focus on teacher identity (Mantero, 2004, Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & A. Johnson, 2009, Kanno & Stuart 2011). A continuing interest in the study of teacher cognition can still be seen in key journals in education; however, some problematic areas such as the relationship between teacher cognition and student learning, and the affective dimension of teaching have yet to be more fully explored.
Teacher Learning in SLTE

The conceptualisation of teacher learning in SLTE has shifted dramatically during the last 40 years. Traditional views saw teacher learning as a solely cognitive process, whereby the teacher’s task was to put theory into practice. Teachers’ failure to acquire new content was considered an issue of overcoming their resistance to change (Burns & Richards, 2009). Student achievement would be achieved if teachers had mastered the content they were expected to teach and delivered it through efficient methods (Johnson, 2006). This view was based on a transmission model, where the complexity of teaching and learning was reduced to the behavioural notion that discrete behaviours and activities could be studied, quantified, and assessed by student achievement (Freeman, 1996, 2002).

A shift in this view was driven by cognitive learning theories and information processing models. Questions about what teachers know, how they use their knowledge and the impact of their decisions helped to reconceptualise teachers as decision makers (Johnson, 2006). Although teacher education was still focused on content knowledge and teaching practices, teachers were expected to make their tacit knowledge and decisions explicit, and benefit from them (Johnson, 2006). A consequent focus on teachers’ mental lives (Freeman, 2002) was instrumental in shaping how and why teachers do what they do. As Johnson points out:

This shift did not occur in isolation but was influenced by epistemological shifts in how various intellectual traditions had come to conceptualize human learning; more specifically, historically documented shifts from behaviorist, to cognitive, to situated, social, and distributed views of human cognition. (2009, p.236)

Therefore, current views of teacher learning in second language teaching conceptualise it as being a mental process in which the situated and social nature of learning is built by
“constructing new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and process” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 4). Thus, the participants, the discourses they create and take part in, the activities, the artifact and resources become pivotal to the teacher learning process: “[l]earning is seen to emerge through social interaction within a community of practice” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 4).

In view of this new conceptualisation of teacher learning, teachers are not seen as “empty vessels waiting to be filled with theoretical and pedagogical skills; they are individuals who enter teacher education programs with prior experiences, personal values, and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and shape what they do in their classrooms” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 401). Thus, it is vital to understand how teacher learning takes place during second language teacher education programs. As a result, investigating how student teachers’ prior experiences and beliefs as well as how their actual classroom learning and practice inform teacher learning “clearly deserves our attention and study if we mean to strengthen and improve, rather than simply preserve and replicate, educational practice” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, 401).

**Prior Experiences and Beliefs**

The impact of student teachers’ prior experiences and beliefs on their understandings of teacher learning has been discussed extensively in the literature (Holt Reynolds, 1992; Bailey et al., 1996; Freeman, 1992; Johnson, 1994; Numrich, 1996; Borg, 2006 and others).

The phenomenon of the “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975), i.e., the thousands of hours spent as learners since our primary school observing and evaluating teachers in action, became a touchstone for teacher educators (Graves, 2009). According to Lortie (1975), by the time a student-teacher starts teaching, he or she has already had an average of sixteen continuous
years of contact with teachers, and this observation serves as an apprenticeship in teaching.

Teaching, therefore, differs from other professions because student-teachers see teachers at work much more than any other occupational group, an average of 13,000 hours in direct contact with classroom teachers (Lortie, 1975).

Bailey et al. (1996) provide an example of the examination of the apprenticeship of observation in second language teaching. In an article entitled, *The language learner’s autobiography: Examining the “apprenticeship of observation”*, they investigated how seven Master of Arts (MA) candidates and a teacher educator, through autobiographical writing and journal entries, examined the influence of their personal “apprenticeships” on shaping their current teaching philosophies and practices. The analysis of the autobiography tasks revealed several factors related to the teaching and learning situations that influenced their perception of their own language learning experiences:

1. Teacher personality and style versus methodology and/or material
2. Our concepts of “good” and “bad” teaching
3. Teachers’ high expectations for students’ success, and/or teachers’ friendly supportive attitude
4. Teachers’ respect for learners and learners’ respect for teacher
5. Students’ responsibility for maintaining their motivation and/or their teachers’ responsibility for supporting the students’ motivation
6. Comparison of the learning atmosphere in formal instructional settings versus naturalistic acquisition. (Bailey et al., 1996, p.14)

The authors felt the “apprenticeship of observation” influenced they way they would teach.
In a similar context, Numrich (1996), working on 26 diary studies of novice English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers enrolled in a master’s degree program in Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL) in the USA, found that the effect of learning an L2 was often carried over to the teaching of an L2. Numrich observed, “[w]hereas some methods and techniques from their own language learning experiences were replicated in their own teaching, several techniques were consciously rejected by the teachers” (1996, p. 139). The teachers would replicate or reject teaching strategies according to their positive or negative experiences of these respective strategies as learners. For instance, a group of teachers reported they wanted to integrate a cultural component into their teaching because they had enjoyable cultural experiences as part of their L2 learning. In contrast, the teachers stated that they avoided teaching grammar or correcting errors because their own negative experiences of their L2 instruction with these aspects.

Also examining the effects of past learning experiences in teacher education, Farrell (1999), investigated five preservice teachers who were taking a mandated Grammar Methods course in a Bachelor of Arts (BA) Degree in English in Singapore and found that they tended to approach grammar in the same way they had been taught it themselves. The teachers were asked to write about their past experience of learning English, their personal beliefs about teaching grammar as well as to decide whether they would adopt an inductive or a deductive approach to teach grammar. Their writings revealed that their prior language learning experiences (learning English grammar through a deductive approach in Singapore) influenced their choices. For instance, a teacher’s prior experience with boring but effective grammar teaching (deductive) posed serious questions for him about incorporating a communicative approach (inductive) to teach grammar.
Richards, Ho and Giblin, investigating a well-known intensive introductory TESL training course, found that individual trainees teachers interpreted what they were taught in the course in different ways, even though the program was built around a well-articulated model of teaching. They concluded that teacher trainees deconstruct this model of teaching “in the light of their teaching experiences and reconstruct it drawing on their own beliefs and assumptions about themselves, about teachers, about teaching, and about learners” (1996, p.258).

Thus, there is ample evidence in the literature to demonstrate that student teachers’ prior experiences and beliefs influence the way these teachers learn how to teach.

Further studies also show that these experiences and beliefs function as a lens through which student teachers view the content of their teacher education programs as well as their own language teaching experiences during their preservice programs (Freeman, 1992, 2002; Johnson, 1999).

Exploring preservice teachers’ personal history and beliefs during a mandated reading course in a Midwestern university in the USA, Holt-Reynolds (1992) found that these teachers’ beliefs “work behind the scenes as invisible, often tacitly known criteria for evaluating the potential efficacy of ideas, theories, and strategies of instruction they encounter as they formally study teaching”. She documented how these teachers used the knowledge they brought with them from their lives as students to make decisions while engaged in course work. She recommended more sustained support for preservice teachers, claiming that only one isolated course would not do much to interrupt the continuity of their “apprenticeship of observation” to their lives as teachers.

Also investigating in a university setting, Johnson (1994) examined how the beliefs of four preservice ESL teachers enrolled in a MA in TESOL shaped the ways in which they
conceptualize their instructional practices, as well as their evolving images as second language
teachers. Through the analysis of their narrative, she found that “preservice ESL teachers’ beliefs
may be based largely on images from their formal language learning experiences, and in all
likelihood, will represent their dominant model of action during the practicum teaching
experience” (p. 450). She concluded by stating that teachers’ beliefs may have been responsible
for the “ineffectual instructional practices that preservice ESL teachers exhibit during their initial
teaching experiences” (p.450).

Urmston (2003) reported a longitudinal study examining the extent to which the beliefs
and knowledge of English teachers changed between leaving secondary school and entering the
teaching profession. Using a detailed questionnaire completed by teachers learning to teach
English at the City University of Hong Kong, he found that the teachers’ experiences as students
within the education system in Hong Kong were the foundation for their beliefs and knowledge.

In reviewing 64 studies on what teachers think, believe and do, i.e., teacher cognition,
Borg (2003) found that individual student teachers make sense of and are affected by teacher
education programs differently and uniquely. He also argued that further investigation into
student teachers’ prior cognitions should be carried out due to the influence these cognitions
have on student teachers’ learning and practice. According to Borg:

> It is perhaps surprising that more specific research into the prior cognitions of pre-service
> language teachers has not been conducted given the recognized influence such cognitions
> have on what and how teachers in training learn and on the practices which they adopt
during their early teaching experiences in the classroom (2006, p.54)

Borg (2006) also pointed out a lack of any evident trends in the field. He recommended a
systematic approach which would generate findings that allow a greater deal of comparability
than is possible at present, claiming that there is clearly scope for a program of research focusing on specific teacher education contexts. Similarly, Ferguson and Donno (2003) and M. Borg, (2005) also pointed out the fact that despite the great relevance of the internationally recognised one-month teacher training programs to ELT profession, scarce are the published empirical studies investigating them.

Thus, a general picture seems to emerge from the literature reviewed here: it is widely accepted that student teachers’ prior experiences and beliefs form the foundation of their initial conceptualisations of second language teaching and greatly influence their teacher learning, working as a filter through which these student teachers interpret their teacher learning experiences. As Freeman and Johnson put it:

> We as teacher educators have thus come to recognize that much of what teachers know about teaching comes from their memories as students, as language learners, and as students of language teaching. We now know that teachers' beliefs about teachers and teaching are instrumental in shaping how they interpret what goes on in their classrooms. (1998, p. 401)

An issue which merits further consideration, though, is the fact that almost all the studies reported in this section were conducted in a very similar context, that is to say, university BA or MA settings. It is important to acknowledge that the ELT profession, despite receiving many new teachers from these programs, is also populated with teachers qualified by a variety of TESL programs. Each year, thousands of new English teachers enter the profession with certification other than BAs or MAs. Therefore, the relevance of investigating student teachers’ prior learning experiences and beliefs in contexts other than university programs becomes paramount.
Classroom Learning and Practicum Experiences in SLTE Programs

Numerous studies in SLTE reveal that trainee teachers’ classroom learning and practicum experiences during the program are shaped by a myriad of interacting and often conflicting factors (Borg, 2003).

Studying the instructional actions and decisions of six preservice ESL teachers during their initial teaching experiences, Johnson (1992) found that these teachers’ instructional actions were shaped by unexpected student responses and the desire to keep the flow of instructional activities. Through teaching videotapes and recall comments, Johnson examined the ways in which these teachers perceived and responded to student input, the instructional decisions, and their prior knowledge supporting those decisions. She claimed that her findings “support the need for second language teacher preparation programs to provide opportunities for preservice ESL teachers to understand the dynamics of how they think and act as they learn to teach” (p. 507).

Golombek (1998) examined how two ESL teachers’ personal practical knowledge, i.e., their experiential knowledge, informed their classroom practice. Focusing on the tensions each teacher faced in their classroom, Golombek found that this knowledge filtered these teachers’ experience such that they reconstructed it and acted in response to the exigencies of the teaching situation. Their personal practical knowledge also provided physical form to their practice. According to Golombek, it was their knowledge in action. She further argued that “personal practical knowledge is an affective and moral way of knowing that is permeated with a concern for the consequences of practice for both teachers and students” (p.447).

Teachers’ personal practical knowledge was also investigated by Tsang (2004) in a study involving three pre-service non-native ESL teachers. Tsang examined the role that these teachers’ personal practical knowledge, which was operationalised as maxims, played in their
interactive decisions, i.e., decisions made during teaching. She found that the teachers had limited access to their personal practical knowledge during classroom teaching. However, this knowledge was important in informing the decisions made after teaching and also helped evaluate new teaching maxims. Tsang claimed that “some parts of personal practical knowledge are competing among themselves and conditional upon classroom variables” (p.1792). She also argued that while some new philosophies start been shaped during classroom teaching, some old ones are seen in a new light.

Further studies focus on the complexity of English language teaching learning by highlighting a diversity of factors interacting with one another in the classroom.

Childs (2011) followed a novice ESL teacher in his teacher learning journey during his MA TESL program in the USA. She found that his conceptualisation of English language teaching was individually and collectively mediated by four specific activities systems:

1. his language learning beliefs (language learning as social practice);
2. balancing his roles as both graduate student and a novice ESL teacher;
3. his support systems (i.e., supervising professor, the professional development program itself, peer ESL teachers, graduate courses);
4. his classroom teaching activity.

Childs concluded that teacher educators can mediate novice teachers’ conceptualisations of teaching through supportive relationships, consistency of concepts and over a period of time. She argued that cognitive support is only one kind of support that mediates how novice teachers conceptualise their teaching. The other kind, however, is “the emotional support provided through open, healthy relationships between and among the novice teacher, teaching peers and teacher educators” (2011, p. 85).
Focussing on the nature and role of teaching principles, Richards (1996) suggested that teachers develop personal principles which inform their approach to teaching. These principles work as maxims, i.e., rules for best behaviours, and guide a great deal of the teachers’ instructional decisions. Richards claimed that cultural factors, belief systems, experience, and training appear to be reflected in the teachers’ maxims. He stressed the importance of the use of personal maxims or principles in the professional preparation of teachers, pointing out that “student teachers’ maxims can serve as one source of information that can help them interpret and evaluate their own teaching as well as the teaching of others” (p.294).

Kuzmic (1993) concentrated on a different type of knowledge seen in the classroom. Reporting on a teacher, Kara, during her first semester of her teaching, he found how the “images” she brought to her first year of teaching influenced her ability to make sense of the organizational context she was in. Kuzmic claimed that teachers also need to develop an understanding of life within schools and the organizational realities of these institutions – "organisational literacy". He concluded by suggesting that teacher education programs need to do more than just help teachers to develop reflective skills about their own teaching. He argued for the integration of some form of organizational literacy into the curriculum of these programs as a means for empowering teachers:

"organizational literacy, as both a theoretical and practical component of teacher education programs, can help preservice teachers foster a clearer understanding of the bureaucratic and organizational realities of educational institutions, the impact of these on school and classroom practices, and the potential for educational reform through individual and collective teacher action (1993, p. 26)."
More recent literature on teacher learning has started to investigate the relationship between classroom practice and teachers’ identity development (Mantero, 2004, Kanno & Stuart 2011). Kanno and Stuart (2011) pointed out that despite the accumulating body of research on teacher learning in SLTE over the past two decades, few studies focusing on novice language teachers’ identity development are found in the literature. They investigated how two graduate students in a MA TESOL program in a U.S. university learned to teach. They also examined how their practices shaped these their identities while teaching their own ESL classes for the first time. They claimed that there was an intertwined relationship between these novice teachers’ identity development and their evolving classroom practices. They argued for “the need to include a deeper understanding of teacher identity development as a core constituent of the knowledge base of L2 teacher education” (p. 237).

Therefore, there is extensive evidence in the literature to support the fact that English teacher teacher learning is not “simply the exercise of skills or application of methods in a classroom” (Graves, 2009, p.118). It is during classroom learning and practicum experiences in teacher education programs that English language teacher learning comes to life – student teachers have the opportunity to confront their prior knowledge and skills with the realities of the classroom, deconstruct and then reconstructed them in light of their own beliefs and assumptions about themselves, about teachers, teaching and learning (Richards, 1996).

In addition, it is worth highlighting that most of the studies reviewed in this subsection were also carried out in a university setting. The need to expand the scope of research on English language teacher learning to include different contexts is key to the consolidation and maturation of the field of SLTE.
**Intensive Introductory TESL Training Courses**

In the world of ELT, professional preparation programs in ELT abound (Garshick, 2002). However, the importance of intensive introductory TESL training courses cannot be underestimated. According to Barduhn and Johnson, “Many teachers start work in ELT, typically in privately run and privately funded language schools, after a four-week preservice course” (2009, p.62). As a very popular avenue of entry into the ELT profession, the one-month teacher training courses attract thousands of candidates annually (Ferguson & Donno, 2003). However, despite the popularity and relevance of this relatively large-scale training activity, there is a dearth of published research into the phenomenon (Ferguson & Donno, 2003, Borg, 2005).

Of the few existing published studies on intensive introductory TESL training courses (Richards, Ho & Giblin, 1996; Ferguson & Donno, 2003; Carrier, 2003; Thomson, 2004; Thaine, 2004; Borg, 2005 and Brandt, 2006, 2007, 2008; Farrell, 2009; Copland, 2009, 2011; Morton & Gray, 2010), two in particular merit further investigation here as they focus specifically on English language teacher learning.

Borg (2005) studied the development of one trainee teacher examining how her strong held beliefs about teaching interacted with her teacher learning during the course. Borg pointed out that growth in the trainee teacher’s understanding as she shifted her perspective on grammar from a learner’s point of view to that of a teacher. While some of her beliefs were elaborated and deepened during the course, others showed great resistance to change. Borg found that the trainee teacher’s strong held beliefs about teaching and language learning were essentially anti-didactic and were a consequence of her schooling experiences. Borg concluded by stating that the trainee teacher’s beliefs showed a complex mixture of change, partial change or adaptation, and resistance to change.
Morton and Gray (2010) focused on how student teachers built personal practical knowledge and identity through becoming members of a community of practice of English language teachers. They investigated ‘lesson planning conferences’, i.e., a teacher educator and a group of student teachers working on one student teacher’s lesson, during a one-month teacher training certificate program. The authors argued that lesson planning conferences allowed a “co-production of meaning through dialogic mediation and discursive problem-solving activity… in the area of knowledge of instruction” (p.315). They conclude by claiming that “shared lesson planning is a promising strategy for the construction of novice language teachers’ personal practical knowledge and professional identities” (p. 297).

Thus, the studies presented reveal that although there is a dearth of research investigating teacher learning in intensive introductory TESL courses, this context has the potential to provide further understanding into English language teacher learning. In addition, these studies lend support to Borg’s call for a more systematic approach to program-based research in various teacher education contexts (2006). Lastly, these studies begin to address the aforementioned gap in the literature, that is, the lack of research in contexts other than university settings.

In the next chapter, I present and integrate three different lenses in order to develop a conceptual framework for this study.
Chapter 3

Conceptual Framework

In an attempt to understand the phenomenon of English language teacher learning in an intensive introductory TESL training course, I integrated three different lenses with a view to developing a more holistic conceptual framework to capture the complexities and intricacies of teacher learning in this context. The first lens, a sociocultural view of SLTE, provided the foundation for the analysis of teacher learning, while the second, a holistic orientation to curriculum, presented the basis for the examination of the research context, i.e., the intensive introductory TESL training course. The last lens augmented this conceptual framework by incorporating two concepts borrowed from Cummins’ pedagogical framework, that is, the concepts of interpersonal space and identity negotiation. Thus, the integration of these three lenses allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon of English teacher learning in an intensive introductory TESL training course.

A Sociocultural View of Second Language Teacher Education

The sociocultural view is based on an interpretative epistemological stance which stands in sharp contrast to the cognitive learning theories of the positivist epistemological perspective (Johnson, 2009). It argues that,

How an individual learns something, what is learned, and how it is used will depend on the sum of the individual’s prior experiences, the sociocultural contexts in which the learning takes place, and what the individual wants, needs, and/or is expected to do with that knowledge (Johnson, 2009, p.2).
Therefore, human learning is viewed as “a dynamic social activity that is situated in physical and social contexts, and is distributed across persons, tools, and activities” (Johnson, 2009, p.1).

According to Johnson, a sociocultural perspective of SLTE sees teachers as learners of teaching. This perspective considers the understanding of the cognitive and social process teachers go through as they learn to teach the foundation of SLTE (2009). Thus, English language teacher learning is viewed as normative and life-long, and constructed out of the experiences teachers go through first as learners in classroom and schools, then as learners of teaching in their professional teaching programs, and ultimately as teachers in their workplace (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson & Golombek, 2003; Johnson, 2009).

Learning to teach, therefore, grows out of the “process of reshaping existing knowledge, beliefs, and practices rather than imposing new theories, methods, or materials on teachers” (Johnson & Golombek, 2003, p. 730). It is assumed that teachers’ knowledge is not just abstracted from theory, codified in textbooks, and constructed through principled ways of examining phenomena, but also emerges out of a dialogic and transformative process of reconsidering and reorganizing lived experiences through the theoretical constructs and discourses that are publicly recognized and valued within the communities of practice that hold power (Johnson, 2006).

As a result, English language teacher learning is described as “socially negotiated and contingent on knowledge of self, students, subject matter, curricula, and setting” (Johnson, 2006). Teachers’ knowledge, thinking, and understanding emerge through the engagement in social activities of learning and teaching in specific contexts (Johnson, 2009). These activities in
turn shape teachers’ thinking and form the foundation of their reasoning (Johnson & Golombek, 2003).

Johnson and Golombek argue that a sociocultural view of English language teacher learning allows teacher educators to understand the relevant aspects of the teacher learning cognitive process as well as “to see how various tools work to create a mediational space in which teachers can externalize their current understandings and then reconceptualize and recontextualize their understandings” (2003, p. 735). Therefore, a sociocultural perspective of English language teacher learning offers a theoretical lens through which the teacher learning process can be fully understood.

However, a thorough understanding of the research context, i.e., an intensive introductory TESL training course in Southern Ontario, was also necessary. For this reason, an examination of issues pertinent to curriculum is carried out below.

**Holistic Orientation to Curriculum**

Aiming for a more integrated approach to curriculum, Miller and Seller (1985, 1990) argue for the integration of theory and practice in order to produce an orientation to curriculum that is consistent with the teacher’s personal world view. They define curriculum as “an explicitly and implicitly intentional set of interactions designed to facilitate learning and development and to impose meaning on experience” (1990, p.3), and referred to the “basic beliefs about what schools should do and how students learn as orientations to curriculum, curriculum positions or metaorientations” (1990, p.4).

In order to gain a clear understanding of the assumptions and beliefs underlying the curriculum, they proposed three basic curriculum positions, i.e., transmission, transaction,
transformation – henceforth 3Ts. These orientations sought to avoid “the mere technical procedures that are divorced from the belief structures on which they [curriculum practices] are based on” (1990, p. xi).

Adapting the 3Ts to holistic education, Miller (2007, 2010) suggests a holistic orientation to curriculum, in which the 3Ts are used as an inclusive approach to teaching. He focuses on how teachers can use and integrate the 3Ts to create what he calls ‘whole teaching’ in order to create a flow and rhythm in the classroom.

According to Miller (2007, 2010), transmission-oriented teaching sees knowledge as fixed rather than as process. Knowledge is broken down into smaller units such that students are able to master them. Transmission teaching tends to be imitative and repetitive and is common when students are learning a skill. Skills and knowledge are transmitted to students in one-way flow, and they have little or no opportunity to reflect on or analyse information. Students are, therefore, expected to receive and accumulate knowledge and skills in order to master the material (see figure 1).

Transactive teaching emphasises dialogue between teacher and student, even though this interaction is mainly cognitive – analysis is emphasised over synthesis and thinking over feeling (Miller, 2007, 2010). Students are considered problem solvers, rational and able to express intelligent behaviour. Contrary to transmission teaching, knowledge is not seen as fixed, but rather as changeable and able to be manipulated. John Dewey’s (1969/1938) problem-solving scientific method is considered the basis for the transaction teaching. Vygotsky’s, Piaget’s and Bruner’s constructivist teaching is also connected to this orientation because of their strong cognitive focus, which is anchored in understanding how children learn and make meaning (Miller, 2010) (see figure 2).
Transformative teaching aims to develop the whole person since “students are not reduced to a set of learning competencies or thinking skills but is seen as a whole being” (Miller, 2007, p.11). It is acknowledged that intellectual development has to occur together with emotional, social, physical, and moral development (Miller and Seller, 1990). Teaching is viewed as a way to encourage students to make various types of connections since these connections make learning personal and meaningful to students (Miller, 2007) (see figure 3).

Miller argues that educators should try to integrate these three positions so as to explore holistic learning (2007). Therefore, this holistic orientation provides an inclusive framework to view the curriculum of the intensive introductory TESL training course. As English language teacher learning is a complex and intricate phenomenon, a careful examination of its curriculum and how it affects trainee teachers in the course is paramount.
Figure 1. Transmission Position. From *The Holistic Curriculum* (p. 10), by Miller, J., 2007, Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Copyright 2007 by University of Toronto Press. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

Figure 2. Transaction Position. From *The Holistic Curriculum* (p. 11), by Miller, J., 2007, Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Copyright 2007 by University of Toronto Press. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

Cummins’ Pedagogical Framework

In his book *Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment in a Diverse Society* (2001), Cummins lays out a pedagogical framework which views the interactions between teachers and students as the most important factor in determining student success or failure in school. He claims that human relationships are at the heart of schooling and that the student-teacher interactions are pivotal to student success, more than any teaching method. These interactions are essential to culturally diverse students’ academic success.

According to Cummins’ framework, once students’ identities are affirmed and extended by their interactions with teachers, their academic effort and participation in instruction are likely to increase, which in turn is likely to generate further academic effort. It, therefore, creates a virtuous circle, whereby the more students learn, the more students want to learn and the more effort they will apply to their learning. On the other hand, when teacher-student interactions devaluate students’ identities, students are assured their academic effort is fruitless. In order to oppose to further devaluation, they mentally withdraw from their academic lives, which creates a vicious circle – further devaluation of identity, further lack of effort, further withdrawal, further devaluation and so forth.

Cummins names these teacher-student interactions *micro-interactions*. These micro-interactions “form an interpersonal or an interactional space within which the acquisition of knowledge and formation of identity is negotiated […] As such, the micro-interactions constitute the most immediate determinant of student academic success or failure” (2001, p.19). Therefore, it is within this interpersonal space that teacher-student interactions occur, generating knowledge and identity negotiation and greatly influencing whether students succeed or fail academically.
Moreover, Cummins claims that these interactions between teachers and students can be analysed through the two lenses of teaching-learning relationship and identity negotiation. The former is described as teacher’s strategies and techniques to impart knowledge while the latter as the messages conveyed to students about who they are and who they are capable of becoming in the teacher’s eyes.

Hence, Cummins’ concepts of interpersonal space and identity negotiation augment the first two lenses of this framework by focussing on the human component, that is, the interactions between students and teachers.

**Integrated Conceptual Framework**

As mentioned at the outset, in order to develop an integrated conceptual framework able to capture the complexities and intricacies of the teacher learning phenomenon in an intensive introductory TESL training course, three complementary lenses were employed, i.e., a sociocultural perspective of SLTE, an holistic orientation to curriculum, and the concepts of interpersonal space and identity negotiation.

A sociocultural perspective of SLTE brought to this framework a perspective of English language teacher learning which views learning to teach as a cognitive and social process of reshaping existing knowledge, beliefs, and practices (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, 2003). Teachers are considered as learners of teaching and their knowledge as built out of their past experiences as learners in schools, as learners of teaching in their preparation programs, and ultimately as teachers in their jobs (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson & Golombek, 2003; Johnson, 2009).
This view, therefore, allowed for a more thorough consideration of the trainee teachers’ learning process during the intensive introductory TESL training program because their past learning experiences in school, their past teaching experiences in other contexts, and their prior knowledge and beliefs were viewed as constituents of their learning.

In addition, the sociocultural perspective of SLTE emphasised that the context in which English language teacher learning occurs is of paramount relevance. Trainee teachers learn how to teach through the engagement in activities in a specific context. As a result, an understanding of the assumptions and beliefs underpinning the context in which the teacher learning process took place was necessary.

Thus, with a view to providing the conceptual framework with such understanding, a second lens, i.e., a holistic orientation to curriculum, was adopted. It presented itself as a useful and thorough orientation as it uses three basic curriculum positions, 3Ts, to develop a clear understanding of the underlying assumptions and beliefs supporting curriculum choices (Miller & Seller, 1990). The 3Ts lens, therefore, contributed to this conceptual framework in that it provided a better understanding of the research context, i.e., an intensive introductory TESL training course, and also the necessary backdrop for the examination of teacher learning in this context.

The third lens, Cummins’ interpersonal space and identity negotiation concepts, brought the human component, i.e., the interactions between students and teachers, to the center of the framework. The use of the interpersonal space as a place in which interactions between teacher educators and trainee teachers generate knowledge and identity negotiation is not only in line with the sociocultural view of SLTE, but also highlights the importance of a dialogic space in which hindrances to the teacher learning process can be addressed.
Moreover, the identity negotiation, which takes place between teacher educator and trainee teachers through the interpersonal space, is invaluable to affirm and extend trainee teachers’ identities by addressing the conflicts they go through during the process of learning to be an English language teacher.

Therefore, the conceptual framework integrates the lenses of a sociocultural view of SLTE, a holistic orientation to curriculum, and Cummins’ concepts of interpersonal space and identity negotiation in order to support the analysis of the phenomenon of English language teacher learning in an intensive introductory TESL training course (see figures 4 and 5).

*Figure 4. The Three Lenses of the Integrated Conceptual Framework*
In the next chapter, I discuss the research methodology for this research study by outlining the research orientation and explaining how the case study methodology is suitable for my research questions. I then describe the data collection, participants, and research context. I conclude with the researcher’s background.
Chapter 4

Research Methodology

Research Orientation

According to Merriam, a fundamental consideration to take into account in a research project is the researcher’s philosophical orientation – “what do you believe about the nature of reality, about knowledge, and about the production of knowledge?” (1998a, p. 3). This research adopts a qualitative orientation, grounded in an interpretivist stance or worldview. Such a stance assumes that multiple realities are constructed socially by individuals, and knowledge stems from understanding the meaning of a process or experience and is to be gained from an inductive, hypothesis- or theory- generating mode of inquiry (Merriam, 1998).

Since qualitative research seeks to understand the meaning and significance of human actions (Richards, K., 2003), and is based on “the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (Merriam, 2002, p. 3), this mode of inquiry is well suited to the present research as it endeavours to shed light on the phenomenon of English language teacher learning. According to Patton (1985), qualitative research:

is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting...” (Cited in Merriam, 1998a, p.6)

In addition, this research adopts a sociocultural perspective of English language teacher learning, grounded in an interpretivist epistemological stance, which “focuses on what teachers know, honors what they know, and helps to clarify and resolve dilemmas they face” (Johnson, 2009, p.9). As it aims to explore and understand the teacher learning process in an intensive
introductory TESL training course, the sociocultural lens befits the purpose of this investigation as it is “interested in uncovering what they [teachers] already know and are able to do, and how they make sense of their work within the contexts in which they teach” (Johnson, 2009, p.9).

**Case Study**

Within the qualitative domain, case study methodology presented itself as the most appropriate research design to investigate English language teacher learning since it “is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” and is interested “in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation” (Merriam, 1998a, p. 19). Therefore, an intensive, deep description and understanding of the process of English language teacher learning was ideal in order to address the research questions in this study.

Moreover, this research meets the four deciding factors put forward by Merriam (1988) in order to consider case study methodology the most appropriate research design for a research project, i.e., the nature of the research questions, the amount of control, the desired end product and a bounded system. According to Merriam (1988), the decision to choose a case study research design depends on whether “how” and “why” questions are suitable for the study (Yin, 2011), whether a bounded system is clearly identified, whether the end product is a holistic, intensive description and interpretation of a contemporary phenomenon, and on whether the researcher has little control over the process. In this regard, Yin also states that when questions are “being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control, the case study approach has a distinct advantage and is the preferred method (2011, p.13).
Furthermore, the case study in this research was also delineated by what Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) called temporal and geographic boundaries. The case, i.e., English language teacher learning, was bounded temporally and geographically as the research was carried out in one specific TESL training course in Southern Ontario.

The present case study had as its object or “case” the phenomenon of English language teacher learning. It was designed as a holistic interpretive single-case study (fig. 1). As Yin points out, the holistic design is advantageous when “the relevant theory underlining the case study is itself of a holistic nature” (Yin, 2011, p.50). Since a holistic conceptual framework was adopted, the holistic design is not only beneficial but also complementary to the single-case design.

![Holistic Single Case Study](image)

*Figure 6. Holistic Single Case Study.*

In addition, as the aim of this research is to explore the factors that mediate English language teacher learning and uncover how they interact with one another to facilitate and/or hinder trainee teachers’ success, an interpretive case study is well suited since it “gathers as much information about the problem as possible with the intent of interpreting or theorizing about the phenomenon” (Merriam, 1988, p. 28).
Moreover, the research problem led to the selection of a non-probability purposeful sampling (Patton, 1980). Criteria for selecting a TESL program were established to guide the process and choose one TESL training course in Southern Ontario.

In order to raise the status and perceived rigor of the research as well as reduce the researcher’s bias and improve credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Denzin, 1978; Johnson, D., 1992; Brown & Rogers, 2002), the data were triangulated in terms of time, participants and data collection methods. Data were collected before, during, and after the course. Data were also collected from different participants, i.e., trainee teachers, teacher educator, the administrator and the practicum supervisors, and using a variety of data collection instruments.

**Data Collection**

I employed three data collection techniques, i.e., interviews, observation and documents analysis, in order to achieve breadth and depth of data collection and understand “the case in its totality” (Merriam, 1998a, p. 134). As I adopted a qualitative case study methodology, depth and detail of data were pivotal to reach the intense, holistic description and analysis of the case so as to answer the research questions.

**Interviews**

In-depth interviews were the primary method used for collecting data in this research. As some factors that mediate English language teacher learning such as prior learning experiences and beliefs are not directly observable, a key challenge is “to identify data collection strategies through which these phenomena can be elicited” (Borg, 2006, p. 167). Thus, long interviews can
provide a more authentic, emic view of the participant’s feelings and perceptions and can also “take us into the mental world of the individual and glimpse the categories of logic by which he or she sees the world” (McCracken, 1988, p. 9). Kagan also observes that “it is usually best to access a teacher's beliefs indirectly, for example, through extended interviews” (1990, p. 420).

Therefore, I adopted a semi-structured interview format in order to gather rich information while maintaining flexibility which allows for in-depth discussions of the most relevant issues. I also employed a validity check at the end of each interview, i.e., participants were invited to add anything else they would like to share, add or correct from the interview record (McCracken, 1988).

On the first three days of the course, I conducted semi-structured interviews of approximately 30-60 minutes in length with the three trainee teacher participants. The content of this first interview focussed on their background experiences as learners and as teachers, their reasons for taking the course, and their expectations. Once the course was over, I conducted a second semi-structured interview of approximately the same length with the three trainee teachers. It sought to gather further data to answer the research questions as well as confirm and/or clarify data that emerged from the observations, the post-lesson reflections and the diary. Some key points from the first interview were also discussed.

The teacher educator’s, the practicum supervisors’ and the administrator’s interviews were also conducted in a semi-structured format to complement and/or support the data gathered using other instruments as well as provide a different perspective of the same phenomenon. I used interview guides (see Appendices E, F, G and H) to conduct all of the interviews so as to ask questions in a systematic and consistent order, but at the same time, allow for freedom to digress (Berg, 2003).
**Observations**

Observations of the teacher educator’s classroom teaching, trainee teachers’ practicum and feedback sessions were carried out throughout the course. The main purpose of these observations was to gather evidence to answer the two research questions. As Mackey and Gass point out, “observations are useful in that they provide the researcher with the opportunity to collect large amounts of rich data on the participants’ behaviour and actions within a particular context” (2008, p.175). An audio recorder and a tripod with a camcorder were used to record the teaching practice and feedback sessions, while the teacher educator’s sessions were audio recorded. I also took field notes throughout the course.

**Post-lesson reflections, lesson plans, final assignment and exam**

The post-lesson reflections, lesson plans, final assignment and exam data were also collected throughout the course (see Appendices I and J). As they were part of the trainee teachers’ coursework, I had access to them once they were completed and submitted to the teacher educator. I collected the reflection pieces and lessons plans after each practicum, and the final assignment and exam once the course was over. Data amassed from these documents lend “contextual richness and help to ground an inquiry in the milieu of the writer” (Guba and Lincon, 1981. In Merriam, 1988, p. 109). As these documents were an important part of the course, their analyses helped “the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem” (Merriam, 1988, p. 118).
Diary

I also collected data from diaries. Trainee teachers were given a small notebook to be used as their diaries and asked to keep it throughout the course. Data from the diary aim to “yield insights into the ... learning process that may be inaccessible from the researcher’s perspective alone” (Makey & Gass, 2003, p. 178). It provided a complementary source of data (see Appendix L).

Participants

The participants in this study were selected from an intensive introductory TESL training course in Southern Ontario. Their selection was made using a non-probability purposeful or purposive sampling. According to Denzin and Lincon, “[m]any qualitative researchers employ ... purposive, and not random, sampling methods. They seek out groups, settings and individuals where ... the processes being studied are most likely to occur” (1994, p. 202). As the aim of this research was to explore the influence of trainee teacher characteristics, teaching and learning experiences, and beliefs on their teacher learning, the selection of trainee teachers from very different backgrounds was paramount.

From my experience as a teacher educator in a similar context of this research, I find that differences in age and teaching experience significantly affect trainee teachers learning process. Based on this experience, I established criteria in order to guide the selection process – to investigate a group of three trainee teachers who were at very different ages and levels of teaching experience, taking an internationally recognised intensive introductory TESL course, and planning to teach overseas in different countries. As Silverman points out, “purposive
sampling demands that we think critically about the parameters of the population we are studying and choose our sample case carefully on this basis” (2010, p.141).

The selection process started with the non-probability purposeful choice of an intensive introductory TESL training course. The criteria above were followed and an intensive introductory TESL training course in Southern Ontario was selected. Although TESL programs are typically composed of not more than 10 or 12 trainee teachers, the TESL course selected for this study was unusually small due to the time of the year. The selection of trainee teachers was divided into three stages. First, I contacted the administrator and the head of the department of teacher training and asked for their assistance in recruiting the trainee teachers enrolled in the TESL course chosen (see Appendices A and B). Then, the head of the department of teacher training contacted the trainee teachers via email and informed them about the possibility of taking part in this research study. She also assisted me in recruiting the teacher educator and the practicum supervisors (see Appendix C). Finally, I introduced myself and the study to the entire group of trainee teachers on the first day of class and invited them to participate in this research (see Appendix D). Three trainee teachers agreed to do so.
Table 1
Participants’ Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Plans to teach overseas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becky</td>
<td>55+</td>
<td>BA – Early childhood education + BEd(^3) – primary school</td>
<td>35 years teaching kindergarten, ESL elementary, and ESL high school</td>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melinda</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>BA – Sociology major and English History minor + BEd – Secondary school English and History</td>
<td>2 months during her BEd program</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>2 College Degrees – Community and Justice Service, and Policing</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Context**

The context of the research was an intensive introductory TESL training course offered by a private career college in Southern Ontario. The 4-week course spanned part of August and September 2012 after which there were two practicums to be completed. This TESL program is recognised by the TESL Canada Federation, and the TESL certificate granted is one of the most important requirements to obtain the TESL Canada Standard One Professional Certificate. In addition, its TESL certificate is recognised worldwide as it complies with international standards, which require 100 hours of in-class training and a 6-hour practicum. This TESL institute has offered its TESL program in Ontario for over 16 years. The program content is delivered by one teacher educator and the assessment of the practicums by practicum supervisors. The latter are

\(^3\) Bachelor of Education
experienced ESL teachers who give feedback on trainee teachers’ practicums using an assessment rubric. In addition to the practicums, trainee teachers are graded as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>TESL Training Course Assessment Criteria</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Five Lesson Plans (including 3 peer teaching)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observation Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practicum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to pass the course, trainee teachers need to achieve 60% of their final exam as well as pass four of the five teaching practicums. Certificates are awarded with a mention of High Distinction for an average of 93% or above.

The TESL program was selected through a non-probability purposeful sampling, using the criteria highlighted in the section on participants, that is, an internationally recognised intensive introductory TESL course, which had at least a group of three trainee teachers of different ages and levels of teaching experience, and planning to teach overseas in different countries.

_The Researcher_

My passionate and long-standing interest in language learning and teaching comes from my personal history. I was born in Brazil, where I learned to speak and teach English. Although
I had been exposed to English since Grade 1, my real language learning took place when I was a young adult. I was very conscious of my language learning process and this fact awakened my passion for how languages are learned. From that moment on, such passion rapidly grew inside me, and as a result, I decided to become an English teacher. I did so and taught in Brazil for over four years. Throughout my teacher learning journey, I pursued my passion for second language acquisition furthering my education through internationally recognised TESL certificates and diplomas.

When I immigrated to Canada, I had the opportunity to become a teacher educator in an intensive introductory TESL training course in Toronto and also to start my MA in Second Language Education. This marriage between theory and practice has fueled my passion for language learning and teaching and given me the opportunity to not only study but also see teacher learning occur during my teaching. It has made me even more interested in my trainee teachers’ experiences as well as how they come to know what they know as they progress through the program. My genuine concern for my trainee teachers’ successful learning and development during the course motivated me to pursue further studies which have led to this research study. I truly hope that my study can contribute in some way to help to achieve a better understanding of how trainee teachers successfully learn during such intensive introductory TESL training programs.

In the next chapter, I provide a more detailed picture of the intensive introductory TESL training course, outlining trainee teachers’ routine during the course.
Chapter 5

The Intensive Introductory TESL Training Course

So, our schedule is here and I divided our day into periods. Our first period is from 8:30 to 9:45 and then we get a fifteen-minute break, and then 10 to 11:15 and then lunch is from 11:15 to 12:00 o’clock. You can have lunch in here or downstairs in the basement, you saw there are a few microwaves and a refrigerator, or go out for a lunch since it’s still nice outside. And then, 12 to 1:15 and then another fifteen-minute break, and then our last period is 1:30 to 2:50. So we’re pretty much done 2:50 everyday, from Monday to Friday, unless you’re teaching that day. So, the class will be teaching will start at 3:30 either Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday (Juliana, Lesson #1).

The teacher’s educator introduction to the schedule illustrates how intense the introductory TESL training program in this research was. In her first lesson, after an ice-breaker activity to introduce herself and the trainee teachers to one another, the teacher educator (Juliana) explained the schedule to the trainee teachers. Juliana then proceeded with a detailed explanation of the timetable and the assessment criteria for the course. After this, trainee teachers were introduced to various concepts of classroom management. During that day, their timetable encompassed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Icebreaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory discussions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Binder and Textbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Classroom Participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After a very intense first day of class, trainee teachers seemed to have been content with it. At the end of the lesson, the teacher educator finished her lesson saying, “lots of things we did today, ladies. I hope it wasn’t too much, too overwhelming. I’ll see you tomorrow”, which was followed by Kate’s and Becky’s answers respectively, “That’s perfect, thank you!”, “Thanks!” (Lesson #1).

The intensity of the first day of class only increased throughout the course. The course content was mainly delivered in a lecture format. It was also particularly common for Juliana to assign substantial amounts of worksheet exercises to cover language content, i.e., grammar, pronunciation. Sporadically, student-centred classroom activities such as lesson planning work would be carried out as well. Trainee teachers were expected to take notes related to a considerable amount of material during the lectures. They would also read about the subject in class before the teacher educator’s lecture. To quote Juliana:
I’ll give you a couple of minutes to read though the study [one stage of their lesson plan].

Ok. The deductive approach is very teacher-centred. It’s all about you presenting the language. You don’t want to do that, unless you’re certain 100% they don’t know. So, we use the inductive to see how they do or don’t know... (Lesson #3)

Trainee teachers also asked for clarification during the lectures. During the aforesaid lecture, Becky asked:

  Becky: Is there another word for context? I have trouble with that...

  Juliana: Sentence or ...

  Becky: Environment? Like when you talk about the context in which...

  Juliana: Story.

  Becky: Ok. Story.

  Juliana: You have to put your words into a story.

  Becky: Ok. Story.

  Juliana: Or, one sentence.

  Becky: But often people will say, what’s the context of that?

  Juliana: You mean the environment or situation?

  Becky: Yeah. So, situation might be another word?

  Juliana: No, not situation because it could be just about jobs

  Becky: Ok.

    As the teacher educator had an extremely large amount of content to deliver within a very short timeframe, it appeared she increasingly made use of lectures to be able to go over the entire syllabus. In my field notes, I recorded, “Juliana is falling behind in her schedule... It’s a very
ambitious schedule, though. I feel she’s lecturing more... She’s probably trying to catch up with the content” (Field notes, Week 1).

Although Kate and Melinda were keenly attentive during the lectures, taking careful notes, Becky felt deeply disturbed by this technique. In her words:

We’re doing a lot of what you’re not supposed to do – paper work. When I used to be in Teacher’s College years ago, I don’t think… the style we’re been taught… it requires a lot of patience, so it could be more interesting.

It’s just a lot of straight stuff you have to learn. It’s like, you know, reading the yellow pages of the dictionary; it’s just stuff you have to go to, and doesn’t it have to be engaging and fun for us? But maybe it could be. Like, how does the learner, whether you’re 4, 40, or 50, how do you retain information? And what makes you interested in the subject? Is there a way, a technique for any brain to absorb? And, they say, you only pay attention for 20 minutes or something and then your brain goes somewhere else. So we’re there for 75 minutes and we’re doing the same paper and pencil and talk work, and when you think about it, that’s so true. I think I hit the nail on the head. (Interview #1)

Despite this fact, Becky decided not to show her discontentment. To quote Becky, “so let’s see where it’s going to go... so whatever she says, even if the joke isn’t funny, I’ll laugh anyway, I thought about that, too” (Interview #1). Indeed, had it not been for Becky’s interviews and comments, one would not have noticed the tension she was experiencing. At the beginning of every class, the atmosphere in the classroom was very positive. Kate, Melinda and Becky would usually start their day in a very relaxed manner, chatting about various everyday topics:

Kate [with the newspaper in her hands]: Oh my gosh, look at the mayor... What’s his name?
Becky: Ford. It’s just unbelievable... he’s always doing something he’s not supposed to instead of working...

Melinda: Yeah... I can’t believe he was elected...

Becky: First, it was the finger; then he was caught reading while driving on the Gardiner...

Kate: I can’t believe how people still put up with him... (Lesson #6)

Although the course was delivered in a teacher-centred fashion, trainee teachers had Fridays, from 12 to 2:50 pm, to work on their lesson plans. This part of the lesson was student-centred, which provided trainee teachers with the opportunity to ask the teacher educator questions and clarify their doubts. The teacher educator worked as a facilitator, helping trainee teachers to plan their lessons. The importance of these moments for trainee teachers is clearly seen in Melinda’s comments, “I appreciate this aspect of the course that is not all taking notes and lecture style” (Diary, 29/08/12).

During these lesson planning sessions, the teacher educator would provide a lesson plan template to guide trainee teachers through the lesson stages (see Figure 7). Juliana would also provide an example lesson such that trainee teachers would know what to expect (see Appendix I). Following the lesson stages was extremely important for trainee teachers as they were assessed on how well they did so not only in their lesson plans but also in their practicums (see Figure 8).

Each trainee teacher’s practicum was a 75-minute lesson followed by a feedback session of usually 45 minutes. These lessons were scheduled by the teacher educator and advertised on the internet in the world’s largest network of local grops. Lessons were offered as free English classes and any person could register to attend. The classes were composed of a maximum of 12
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ESA Lesson Plan (Cover-Page) Template: Vocabulary and Speaking</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class Start Time:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class End Time:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skill(s):</strong> Vocabulary (Main aim) and Speaking (sub-aim)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Objectives:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note what you’d like your learners to achieve in your lesson. Keep the objectives practical and realistic. Typically, a teacher will set 3 to 4 learning objectives in a 75 minute class. Your main aim and sub aim must be identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Teaching Objectives:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimize TTT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give clear instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept check</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary and Pronunciation:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Words presented in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parts of speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of syllables and word stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anticipated Problems / Knowledge:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note what could be problematic in your vocabulary and speaking class. Also note what you think your learners are already capable of or know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solutions:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note solutions to the above anticipated problems and knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Materials:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note any material that you intend on using in the class. This includes handouts, pictures, name tags, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INTRODUCTION:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
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</table>

**ENGAGE:**

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<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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**STUDY:**

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<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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</table>

**CONTROLLED ACTIVATE:**

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<th>Purpose</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**FREER ACTIVATE:**

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<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**WRAP-UP:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**BACK-UP TASK:**

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<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**FILLER:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Figure 7. Lesson Plan Template*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NEEDS IMPROVEMENT</th>
<th>DEVELOPING</th>
<th>ACCOMPLISHED</th>
<th>DISTINGUISHED</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELEVENCE</td>
<td>Engage did not take place and/or was not relevant to the lesson.</td>
<td>Engage was somewhat relevant to the lesson, but lacked clarity.</td>
<td>Engage was relevant to the lesson and students seemed interested in the topic.</td>
<td>Engage was very relevant and the students enthusiastically participated.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGAGE (PART 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THINK, PAIR, SHARE</td>
<td>Students were not provided with an opportunity to THINK, PAIR, SHARE during the engage.</td>
<td>Students were provided with too much time to THINK, PAIR, SHARE during the engage and began talking about other topics and got off task and/or one of the steps was missing.</td>
<td>Students were provided with an appropriate amount of time to THINK, PAIR, SHARE during the engage.</td>
<td>Students were provided with an appropriate amount of time to THINK, PAIR, SHARE and remained engaged throughout this stage.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STT</td>
<td>Students did not get any/or only got a very limited chance to talk. There was between 0% - 20% STT vs. TTT.</td>
<td>Students talked for small amount of time. There was between 21% - 60% STT vs. TTT.</td>
<td>Students talked for the majority of the time. There was between 61% - 79% STT vs. TTT.</td>
<td>Students talked for a large majority of the time. There was 80% or more STT vs. TTT.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTRUCTIONS</td>
<td>Either no or limited and/or very confusing instructions were given.</td>
<td>Instructions lacked clarity and/or teacher had to repeat instructions throughout the study.</td>
<td>Instructions were mostly clear and students were able to understand what was required of them.</td>
<td>Instructions were very clear and concise. Teacher concept checked to make sure students understood task(s).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

START TIME: __________

END TIME: ____________

TOTAL TIME: __________

TOTAL STAGE EVALUATION __________

---

*Figure 8. Practicum Lesson Evaluation – Sample Page*
adult ESL students from a myriad of countries who wanted to learn or improve their English skills for a variety of reasons. The most common nationalities were Korean, Japanese, Colombian, Spanish, French, Thai, and Mexican. As the lessons were free, there were new students in each practicum, although a few attended all of the lessons.

Trainee teachers taught five different lessons. Starting from the second week of the course, they had to teach a different lesson each week. They taught vocabulary, listening/reading, grammar, writing and pronunciation lessons respectively. Immediately after teaching their practicum, they were asked to reflect on their lessons and complete a post-lesson reflection. In this post-lesson reflection, they answered questions about the most and least successful parts of the lesson, about what they learned from the lesson and what and how they would do it differently if they were to teach it again (see Figure 9).

Once trainee teachers finished their post-lesson reflection, the practicum supervisor would start the feedback session. The practicum supervisor would first read the trainee teachers’ reflection and then ask them about the most and least successful parts of their lessons, which was usually followed by his detailed critiques. Trainee teachers were allowed to ask questions and also ask for clarification; however, the practicum supervisor was responsible for leading the discussion, which was usually guided by his notes on the lesson evaluation (see Appendix B). Overall, the practicum supervisors would try to balance their feedback and include encouraging comments, even though most of the session was spent on the least successful aspects and how to improve them. At the end of the session, trainee teachers were given a copy of the lesson evaluation with the practicum supervisor’s comments.

On the last day of the course, trainee teachers had to submit their final assignment, i.e., an essay on one of the topics studied in the course, and sit the final exam. Trainee teachers had three
**TESL Program**

**Practice Teaching Self-Evaluation**

What was the most successful part of your lesson? Why do you feel this way?

What was the least successful part of the lesson? Why do you feel this way?

What did you learn from this (above question). How could it have been handled differently?

Did you meet the structural / language aims of the lesson. In retrospect, were there any stages of the lesson that you now feel were not relevant to the overall aim(s)?

Check which of the below areas you feel needs improvement:

- Clarifying and achieving aims
- Giving instructions
- Reducing TTT
- Eliciting / Concept Checking
- Board Work

How will you improve on these areas during your next lesson?

When you think about your lesson, do any questions come to mind? If so, jot them down and be sure to ask your practicum observer.

*Figure 9. Post-lesson Reflection*
and a half hours to complete the final exam. The exam was divided into two parts: the first part assessed the theory learned in the course and took place from 9:00 am to 11:00 am. Trainee teachers had then had a 15-minute break and started the second part of the exam. In this second part, they had to plan a lesson on the topic provided in an hour and a half. After the exam, Kate, Melinda and Becky were completely exhausted. They all complained about its length and the amount of content in their final interviews. Two weeks after they completed their last practicum, they were notified about their results – they were all extremely relieved and happy to know they had passed the course.

In the next chapter, I present the findings pertinent to my first research question, that is, the factors that mediated trainee teacher’s learning process in an intensive introductory TESL training course.
Chapter 6

Factors that Mediate English Teacher Learning

Data collected from interviews, lesson plan evaluations, post-lesson reflections, diaries, informal conversations, and classroom observations revealed that trainee teacher’s learning process was mediated by four major factors, i.e., their prior learning experiences and beliefs, their prior teaching experiences, their TESL classroom learning and their TESL practicum experiences. These factors are schematically shown and discussed in more detailed below.

Figure 10. English Language Teacher Learning
Prior Learning Experiences and Beliefs

Trainee teachers’ prior learning experiences and beliefs mediated their learning as they engaged in a process of reshaping those experiences and beliefs and applied them to their new conceptualisation of teaching during the course. This mediation can be seen in their efforts to provide an engaging and comfortable classroom atmosphere for their students, in their efforts to develop a good rapport and motivate them as well as in their efforts to be sensitive to their individual needs.

All the three trainee teachers unanimously believe that a comfortable classroom environment is conducive to learning. They also believe that teachers should be caring, approachable and sensitive to the learners’ needs, while learners should be active, eager to learn and work hard to get the things done.

Becky made it clear throughout her first interview and during classroom activities that students need a comfortable and relaxed environment to learn. She emphasized the importance of an informal and casual atmosphere. In her words, “the informality where people are relaxed and can make a mistake and it doesn’t matter and just keep going - that’s the best way to learn” (Interview #1). Likewise, Kate expressed how important it is for students to feel comfortable and have a good relationship with the teachers, “you want to feel comfortable. That’s just a good rapport going on with the teacher and students, and that’s one of the best things” (Interview #1). In addition, Melinda highlighted the relevance of a comfortable and supportive atmosphere to her learning experiences, “we had a family environment in the school, and, yeah, I always felt really comfortable with my teachers; I felt like they supported me” (Interview #1).

Trainee teachers used these prior learning experiences and beliefs to mediate their learning process during the course. Evidence of this mediation is revealed in Kate’s post-lesson
reflection when she wrote about the most successful part of her lesson, “I think the students felt comfortable in the classroom” (Post-lesson Reflection #1). She also had as a point of excellence in her lesson evaluation, her rapport, enthusiasm and patience, “excellent rapport with ss [students] and great enthusiasm and patience with ss” (Lesson Evaluation #2). By the same token, Becky’s attention to learners’ individual needs was highlighted in her lesson evaluation as a point of excellence, “good job monitoring students and paying attention to their individual needs” (Lesson Evaluation #2). She was always ready and talking to her students at least 30 minutes before the beginning of her lessons. In her words, “I really like to talk to students and get to know them. This is the best part of teaching for me”. She continued, “I really wanted them to feel comfortable and safe today, and I think I did that today” (Informal Conversation after Practicum #1).

Prior learning experiences and beliefs mediate learning as can also be observed in Melinda’s attention to developing a good rapport with her students. One of her student’s comments on her lesson is a clear example of it, “she’s very kind” (Student’s Evaluation – see Appendix K). In addition, Melinda’s efforts to motivate, support and address students’ individual needs were also highlighted as points of excellence in her lesson evaluation, “excellent rapport with ss”; “good praising of students”; “good modification of your CA [controlled activate – i.e., a stage in her lesson] b/c [because of] so many ss”; “very creative lesson” (Lesson Evaluation, # 1).

Prior Teaching Experiences

Trainee teachers’ prior teaching experience was also an important factor that mediated their learning during the course. Although Kate had no previous experience teaching prior to her
practicums in the course, Becky and Melinda had both taught before. Becky has an extensive background in teaching, ranging from kindergarten to high school students, including English language learners (ELLs), with more than 35 years in a classroom, while Melinda is a recent graduate from a BEd program, during which she completed 2 months of practice teaching in two secondary schools.

Becky’s teaching experiences mediated her learning process extensively. As she had taught kindergarten and elementary school for most of her career, Becky referred to her adult ELLs as “kids” throughout the course, “if kids can see that you’ve got all that…” (Interview #1); “these kids are just lovely; I love teaching them” (Practicum Feedback #2); “you know, at the end of the day, you want the kids to learn” (Classroom Observation, 25/09/12). Becky also constantly referred to her prior teaching experiences to explain the reasons for her actions when talking to her practicum supervisors during the feedback sessions after her classes. For instance, when her practicum supervisor commented on her teacher-centredness in the first stage of her lesson, she explained, “yeah, you know, I’m an elementary teacher, that’s so... good point”. She also referred to her background when commenting on students’ reactions, “sometimes, I’ve noticed teachers they’re not really aware of every single one in the classroom, because I’m an elementary teacher. This girl sitting here...” (Practicum Feedback #1).

Another important example of how Becky’s teaching experiences mediated her learning was during her second practicum feedback. Becky had difficulty understanding how to ask concept checking questions (CCQs) – a technique to ensure ESL students understand the concept of a language structure – from the first week of the course and during her practicum. She also had difficulty understanding her practicum supervisor’s comments regarding the use of CCQs in language lessons; however, as soon as she remembered a technique she had used before in her
teaching, i.e., the 5 Ws [what?, when?, why?, where?, how?], she grasped the notion of the concept checking questions:

I have never heard of concept checking before. They don’t teach that stuff in Teacher’s College. So, when I was taught concept checking, one way of teaching would be to say, I’m thinking, you know, ask the 5 Ws questions, and that’s fattens it up! Ok. Absolutely, how can they not get it if you ask them the 5 Ws questions?! Aha! And ask each other the 5 questions! Great!

Similarly, Melinda’s prior teaching experience also mediated her learning during the course. As Melinda had taught before, she felt more relaxed when she was around her students. To quote her, “as soon as I walked in and the students said hi to me I felt a little more relaxed” (Diary, 29/08/12). She also wrote, “it wasn’t until I went upstairs at 3 pm that I started to feel more relaxed” (Diary, 04/09/12). As Melinda had her classes as a trainee teacher on the first floor until 2:50 pm, she confessed that she only felt more relaxed when she went to her practicum classroom on the second floor at 3 pm. In addition, Melinda showed a good teaching presence in the classroom and dealt with unexpected problems well. Her confidence and ability to respond to unpredictable issues stemmed from her experience of teaching teenagers in high school. As she put it, “teaching a bunch of teenagers that don’t really want to be in the class is huge. Eighty percent of your teaching is classroom management. If you want to teach something, you really need to learn classroom management” (Informal Conversation after Practicum #2).

Melinda also felt that her prior teaching experience mediated her learning of common classroom issues significantly. In her second interview, she explained how her prior teaching experience helped her during the course:
My experience helped me in terms of understanding why things are done, a lot of just like, the dynamics of the classroom, like, forgetting the material, forgetting grammar itself, the teaching, just the idea of how your classroom is structured, remembered your students’ names, um, things along, like, managing your actual classroom and interaction with students, that’s to me I was able to draw on my experience from Teacher’s College (Interview #2).

TESL Classroom Learning

Throughout the course, all three trainee teachers revealed how much they were learning in their role as student. Despite the intensity of the program, Becky, Melinda and Kate expressed several times how concepts such as verb tenses, functions, vowels, consonants, back up [activities used when teachers finish their material but still have time left], fillers [activities used to occupy students who finish first], and so on were new for them.

In her diary, Melinda wrote, “I learned so much today even though it was only Day 1” (Diary, 20/08/12). On Day 4, she continued, “we had another grammar tutorial today. This one was very intense but I am learning so much” (Diary, 23/08/12). By the same token, Kate wrote in her diary, “doing the grammar worksheets was a great refresher. I feel like I’m having to re-learn some of it myself” (Diary, 21/08/12). On the next day, she commented, “it’s so interesting learning about how English is taught in different countries” (Diary, 22/08/12). Becky also commented on how much she was learning, “Oh, it’s amazing. They’re targeting everything, like the fillers and backups. Do you know how important that stuff is? I mean it’s everything” (Interview #1).

The content learned in the classroom mediated trainee teachers’ learning of how to teach English. In spite of the fact that trainee teachers are English native speakers, and therefore, able
to use the English language without problems, the knowledge gained about the language, that is, its grammar, phonology, lexicon, etc, provided them with the language awareness they needed in order to teach English. In the same way, the methodology trainee teachers learned in the course mediated their understanding of what it means to teach English to adult ESL learners. Melinda’s comments on her diary are a clear example of how the use of the knowledge gained in the classroom mediated her learning of how to teach English:

I taught my grammar lesson today. Overall, I think it was okay… I struggled a bit with the study stage… Other than that stage, I think the other stages went really well, especially the Controlled Activate; they had fun with the ‘hot seat’ game (Diary, 21/09/12)

Melinda evaluated how successful her lesson was in terms of the specific stages of the method she had learned in class. She used the knowledge gained in the course (e.g., a method that breaks down a lesson into four stages: engage, study, controlled activate and freer activate) to assess the success of her teaching. In like manner, Kate assessed the “failure” of her lesson based on her inability to correctly follow the stages proposed by this method, “did my teaching tonight & TANKED!! I went all “deer in the headlights” and then mixed up the controlled activate and the freer activate” (As in the original. Diary, 13/09/12).

Becky also used the concepts learned in the course to talk about her lessons. In class, she learned concepts such as teacher talking time (TTT) and student talking time (STT) as well as CCQs. These concepts constantly emerged during her practicum feedback sessions, “I was very aware of my TTT today” (Practicum Feedback #2); “I think I had a lot of STT today during the engage (Practicum feedback #3)”; “yeah, I realised I didn’t concept checking only at the end of the lesson...” (Practicum Feedback #1).
TESL Practicum Experiences

Practicum experiences during the course encompassed peer teaching and a practicum which involved teaching ESL to adults. The peer teaching lessons worked as a dry-run for the practicum as trainee teachers had the opportunity to teach their first three lessons to their peers before teaching them to adult ESL students. The peer teaching lessons were followed by oral feedback from peers and a more formal assessment from the teacher educator, after which trainee teachers were supposed to make the necessary changes for their practicum lessons.

Peer Teaching

Data collected from the diaries and the second interview revealed that the peer teaching lessons mediated Melinda’s and Kate’s learning process. These lessons mediated their learning by providing an opportunity to rehearse their performance and receive feedback before the actual assessed practicum. Kate’s comments on peer teaching are an example of this, “it was just good to kind of do a practice round on someone else before coming up here” (Interview #2). She also noted in her diary, “the feedback sheet is a huge help” (Diary, 27/08/12).

Melinda also expressed how the peer teaching helped her, “it prepared me in the way, like, my stages and making sure, like, technically, everything was ok” (Interview #2). She also commented on her first peer teaching in her diary, “I enjoyed the positive feedback I received from Kate and Becky. It gave me confidence and reassured me. I also appreciated their suggestion. I know now what I can fix before I teach my lesson on Thursday” (Diary, 27/08/12).

Trainee teachers, therefore, had the opportunity to use the peer teaching as a mediational means in their learning process. Teaching their lessons to their peers before teaching it to adult
ESL students provided them with a chance to put into practice what they had learned in theory and receive feedback on this process.

**Practicum**

Trainee teachers’ practicums were one of the most important meditational factors to their learning of how to teach English during the course. Their understanding of what it means to teach English was mediated by the actual execution of what they had learned and planned to do during their practicum. Concepts learned in class such as TTT, CCQs, grading language to students’ level became increasingly clearer as they taught during their practicum and reflected on their lessons with their practicum supervisors. Teaching during their practicum gave them the opportunity to reshape their prior understanding of teaching and apply it to their new conceptualisation of teaching English. Becky’s understanding of her TTT in her lessons is a good example of this process. In her first practicum, she realised she was controlling students’ interactions in the first stage of her lesson instead of being a facilitator, and as a consequence, her TTT was higher than it should be. When prompted by the practicum supervisor about it, Becky reflected:

so, rather than me being like I’m leading, you know, I’m leading you here, I’m leading you there [...] Once they start to kind of answer all the questions, let them continue, don’t try to orchestrate the lesson myself. Oh, hello! Yeah, stop backing, almost sitting down and saying go ahead (Practicum Feedback #1).

In addition, Becky’s reflection on her diary showed her willingness to reduce her TTT, “Nathan evaluated my lesson – said too much teacher talk. OK. – I will try not to talk a lot” (Diary, 29/08/12).
In her second lesson, her practicum supervisor said her TTT was still high in the first stage of her lesson and also made some suggestions about how to deal with the problem. She then replied, “oh, that changes my whole thing when you say that. I get it. [...] Ok. So I literally walk around and listen” (Practicum Feedback #2). Although Becky had tried to decrease her TTT in her second lesson, her conceptualisation of low TTT was still based on her prior teaching experience and, therefore, different from what she was been taught during the course.

However, when Becky reflected on her fourth lesson, she showed her evolving awareness of her teacher talk, “I told myself, speak less, speak less, speak less, because I have to remind myself...” (Practicum Feedback #3). Her efforts were praised by the practicum supervisor, who gave her an “accomplished” for the criterion related to student STT vs. TTT, and also rewarded her with a comment “low TTT” (Lesson Evaluation #4).

In her fifth and last lesson, Becky seemed to have internalised the concept of TTT in the first stage of her lesson. She was praised again by her practicum supervisor and received a “distinguished” for the STT vs. TTT criterion (Lesson Evaluation #5).

By the same token, Melinda’s and Kate’s practicum also mediated their conceptualisation of teaching English. Melinda had struggled with the idea of giving simple instructions since her first practicum, “I’ve never thought that giving instructions would be so hard” (Informal Conversation after Practicum #1). After that, she showed she was aware of the problems in her instructions. In her second and third post-lesson reflections, she answered the question about what she would improve for the future, “give more clear/concise instructions”; and “less complex instructions” (Post-lesson Reflections # 2 and 3). In her fourth and fifth lessons, Melinda showed progress in giving clearer instructions and received “accomplished” for this criterion (Lesson Evaluations # 4 and 5).
Kate also had difficulty with her instructions. In her first lesson, her practicum supervisor commented on her lesson evaluation, “instructions could be clearer” (Lesson Evaluation #1). Kate was also aware of this fact as she wrote on her post-lesson reflection, “I will practice instructions at home” (Post-lesson Reflection #1). After teaching her second lesson, Kate reflected, “I will also remind myself to give clearer instructions – I’ll write them out on post it notes for my next teaching” (Post-lesson Reflection, #2). From her third lesson on, Kate showed great progress in her instructions. She only received “distinguished” for this criterion in her fourth and fifth lesson (Lesson Evaluations #4 and 5).

The practicum, therefore, mediated trainee teachers’ understanding of teaching English by reshaping their prior conceptualisations of teaching such that they could apply this new conceptualisation to their lessons.

In conclusion, trainee teachers’ learning during the course was mediated by their prior learning experiences and beliefs, prior teaching experiences, TESL classroom learning and TESL practicum experiences insofar as they were able to draw on their existing experiences, beliefs, concepts and practices to reconceptualise what they learned in the course and apply it to their teaching during the program.

The literature in the SLTE field corroborates the research findings revealed in this study. Findings akin to how Becky’s, Kate’s and Melinda’s prior learning experiences and beliefs mediated their teacher learning during the program are extensively portrayed in the literature. Bailey et al. (1996) and Farrell (1999) studies are examples of this as they found that several factors related to the student teachers’ prior learning experiences and beliefs influenced their perception of English language teaching.
Richards, Ho and Giblin’s (1996) findings are consistent with those of this research as well. They found that trainee teachers’ prior teaching experiences, classroom learning and practicum during the program played a decisive role in their teacher learning during an intensive introductory TESL course. As with Becky, Kate and Melinda in their teacher learning journey, the authors found that “[b]y the end of the course the trainees had completely internalized the discourse and metalanguage of the course and were able to talk spontaneously and thoughtfully about their own and other’s lessons” (p.248). They also concluded that trainee teachers deconstruct the model of teaching they were taught “in the light of their teaching experiences and reconstruct it drawing on their own beliefs and assumptions about themselves, about teachers, about teaching, and about learners” (p.258).

By the same token, Golombek (1998) pointed out that:

[her] study of L2 teachers’ personal practical knowledge coincides with the findings of studies illustrating that the way L2 teachers understand and respond to their classrooms is mediated by their experiences as teachers, learners, and persons outside the classroom; personal and interpersonal factors; and values, as well as their professional knowledge (p.459).

Therefore, the literature substantiates the findings of this study, i.e., the mediation of Becky’s, Kate’s and Melinda’s teacher learning through the use of their prior learning and teaching experiences and beliefs, TESL classroom learning and TESL practicum.

Last but not least, this research findings are in line with the current views of teacher learning in SLTE presented in the literature as they consider teachers to be “individuals who enter teacher education programs with prior experiences, personal values, and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and shape what they do in their classrooms” (Freeman &
Johnson, 1998, p. 401). They are also supported by many studies which provided evidence of how trainee teachers’ prior experiences, beliefs, and classroom learning and practice influence the way these teachers learn how to teach (Holt Reynolds, 1992; Bailey et al., 1996; Freeman, 1992; Johnson, 1992, 1994; Numrich, 1996; Richards, Ho and Giblin, 1996; Golombek, 1998; Borg, 2006; and others).

In the next chapter, I examine how the aforesaid mediational factors interacted with one another, creating opportunities for trainee teachers’ success and/or causing difficulty during the course.
Chapter 7: Interaction Amongst Mediational Factors: Benefit or Hindrance to English Teacher Learning?

In the previous chapter, I analysed the key factors that mediated teacher learning in an intensive introductory TESL training course. However, it is imperative to mention that the process of learning how to teach should not be seen as a static and isolated process. Learning to teach, as any other learning process, is complex and encompasses a myriad of intertwined factors that are in constant interaction with one another. Therefore, in order to capture the phenomenon of English language teacher learning, it is essential that I examine the interactions amongst these mediational factors.

Nonetheless, it is also worth noting that due to the scope of this research, such examination is limited to the interaction amongst mediational factors that facilitated and/or hindered trainee teachers’ success in the course. Data were collected from interviews with trainee teachers, the teacher educator, the practicum supervisors, and the administrator, as well as from the final course exam, lesson plans, lesson plan evaluations, post-lesson reflections, diaries, informal conversations, and classroom observations. These data revealed three key interactions amongst the mediational factors discussed in the previous chapter that facilitated and/or hindered trainee teachers’ success in the course. These interactions are analysed in more detail below.

**Prior Teaching Experiences and TESL Practicum**

A close examination of trainee teachers’ classroom teaching during the course revealed that their prior teaching experience or lack thereof was a key factor influencing their practicum. The major finding was the fact that trainee teachers had to deconstruct their prior teaching experience in order to teach successfully during the course.
The triangulated data all pointed to this same finding. It seemed clear for the participants in this research that trainee teachers would have to deconstruct what they learned as a result of their prior teaching experience in order to “unlearn” certain ideas and behaviours. This “unlearning” included certain teaching behaviours or habits that clashed with those promoted in the intensive course in order to be successful teaching in the new context in which they were expected to teach English to adult ESL students.

Becky, with more than 35 years teaching experience, constantly mentioned her prior teaching experience as being the cause of the difficulties she experienced in her practicum. When her practicum supervisor pointed out that Becky’s lesson was teacher-centred, she replied, “oh, I have to watch this. I have to unlearn some stuff. I know you’re right” (Practicum Feedback #1). Becky felt that her prior teaching experiences was hindering her success in her practicums as she had to “unlearn” certain teaching behaviours or habits. Still talking about her teacher-centredness, Becky continued:

Yeah, this is a big, big thing for me to keep putting back on them [students], back on them [students]... but you know, when you see someone going like, huh, my instinct is to say, do you understand? Because I can read people sometimes and I think ..., because I’m an elementary teacher (Practicum Feedback #1)

Becky felt that as an elementary teacher her job was to control children’s interaction, reading their faces and asking questions. However, she realised that as an English language teacher her lessons should not be so teacher-centred. As a result, she became aware that “putting back on students”, that is, relinquishing her control over their interaction, was extremely difficult for her.
Therefore, it is clear from Becky’s reflection above that there is a conflict between what she knows and is accustomed to doing as an elementary teacher and what she was required to do in the course. More examples of these conflicts can be seen throughout her practicums. In her second practicum feedback, Becky replied to the practicum supervisor’s comments on her lesson planning:

Yeah, I know, but I didn’t even think that, you know, I had to put it there too. You know, because I’ve been teaching for so long I just do these things instinctively. I don’t think about... now write down that’s what you’re doing. I don’t think like that, I mean, I know I should but... (Practicum Feedback #2)

In her fourth practicum, Becky replied to her practicum supervisor:

What you’re saying to me, and it’s kind of a paradigm shift to my brain, they like to be corrected. I mean, I do correct, but... in a regular school, they go like oh gosh I’m really doing badly, something like this..., but here you don’t want to be too picky, but you want to spend equal time... (Practicum Feedback #4)

Becky experienced enormous difficulty trying to “adjust” her prior teaching experience to the way she was expected to teach in the program. Her struggle was also reflected in the way she felt during the course. In her diary, she wrote, “what am I feeling – 30 years teaching in China, India, Calgary, Quebec – I don’t know” (Diary, 24/08/2010).

Similarly, Melinda also experienced difficulties in her practicum due to her prior teaching experience. In an informal conversation before her third practicum feedback, she attributed some of her problems to her experience teaching high school students. In her words:

It’s hard, though, because, I mean, for me, my problem is like in Teacher’s College I learned how to teach. I didn’t need to worry about how much I spoke or how fast I did it,
but then having to reduce my TTT here, so trying to figure all that out, because I still feel like grammar is something that should be taught, but how do I do that? By using the students. It’s where for me I have to untrain myself from the way I was taught in Teacher’s College (Informal Conversation after Practicum #3).

Melinda, like Becky, felt that she had to “untrain” herself because her prior teaching experience was hindering her progress in the practicum. She continued her reflection, “in Teacher’s College they teach you how to teach, and I feel that I’m doing too much teaching when I should be facilitating. So I’m finding it hard” (Informal Conversation after Practicum #3).

Thus, Melinda was certain that her experience in Teacher’s College was a hindrance to her teaching in the course. She was also “finding it hard” to adjust to her new reality. Another clear example of her struggle to reshape her past teaching experience to the requirements of the course was her board work. To quote her:

When I taught I never liked writing and speaking. It was always one or the other, never both, or I had Power Point. So I was always facing them, and I rarely ever used the board... So, a huge thing that’s happening right now is, how do I use the board but still face them and speak clearly? (Practicum Feedback #4)

Hence, it seems clear that both Melinda and Becky considered their prior teaching experiences a hindrance to their development in the course. Their experience was perceived as an inconvenient burden that they had to bear or, in their words, “untrain”/“undo”. This view was also shared by the teacher educator, the practicum supervisors, and the course administrator. In her interview, the teacher educator revealed:
I find that trainees who don’t have any teaching experience do really well. Not just one or two cases and I’ve seen it over the years and several courses that I feel they’ve got nothing to undo and relearn, which takes time from their practice (Interview #1).

The teacher educator openly stated that prior teaching experience is a hindrance to trainee teachers in the course. In addition, she attributed trainee teachers’ success to a lack of teaching experience. This phenomenon also took place in the course and is validated by the lesson evaluations of the three trainee teachers. Kate, who had no prior teaching experience, was more successful in her lessons, and received more “distinguished” and “accomplished” criteria than Melinda, who, in turn, received more “distinguished” and “accomplished” criteria than Becky.

Therefore, the data collected from the three trainee teachers in the course seem to suggest that the more teaching experiences trainee teachers have, the more possibilities of conflicts between their prior teaching experiences and their teaching in the program, and thus the more difficult it is for them to adjust to the requirements of the course. Consequently, the more difficult it is for experienced trainee teachers to be successful in the practicum.
Success in the Practicum

Difficulty in the Practicum

Prior Teaching Experiences and TESL Classroom Learning

A variety of subjects were taught to trainee teachers during the course, e.g., lesson planning, phonology, teaching techniques. Akin to their practicum, their TESL classroom learning also interacted with their prior teaching experience or lack thereof, facilitating and/or hindering their success. However, the tentative relationship seen above, that is, the less teaching experiences, the more success, was not verified.

Triangulated data collected from trainee teachers’ interviews, informal conversations, diaries, post-lesson reflections, final course grades, lesson evaluations, observations, and interviews with the teacher educator, practicum supervisors and administrator revealed that trainee teachers’ prior teaching experience both facilitated and hindered success in their TESL
classroom learning. The data seem to suggest that when there was a conflict between trainee teacher’s prior teaching experience and the course instruction, learning was hindered; however, when no conflict existed, learning was facilitated. A more detailed analysis of Becky’s, Melinda’s, and Kate’s classroom learning illustrates this phenomenon.

Becky’s extensive experience teaching elementary school children made it difficult for her to understand the pronunciation concepts taught during the course. Her experience teaching children to read using phonics conflicted with the pronunciation concepts she tried to learn during the course, hindering her understanding and progress. When phonemes (English sounds as opposed to its letters) were first introduced, Becky commented:

What’s wrong with just teaching the short A and long A, just so, that’s how they learn how to speak English? If I were to teach the short A, which is, there’s only 6 short As, I mean, there’s 6, the long vowels and the short vowels, and that’s, if you teach the long and the short, then you can teach the word, the sound of the word. So why... I mean... It just seems a lot easier to teach them the long and short vowels (Lesson #16).

Becky did not understand why she had to use phonemes to teach ESL students as, in her opinion, the phonics method (the short and long vowels) was much easier. Throughout the lesson, she continued to ask questions and was not satisfied with the answers.

In addition, as a requirement of the course, Becky had to teach pronunciation as her last lesson, i.e., contrast two difficult phonemes for ESL students. She was worried about it and confided during an informal conversation that she would have difficulty with her lesson. Her concerns were indeed confirmed as she received her lowest grade amongst the five lesson plans she had to submit as a requirement of the course (Lesson Plan #5).
Moreover, after she had received a low pass for her pronunciation practicum, with many “needs improvement” criteria in her lesson evaluation (Lesson Evaluation #5), Becky confessed to me:

I, um, this other girl, Kate, she’s never taught before and I was thinking, well, I’ve taught for 30 years, and it’s harder for me to get a handle on what it is that we’re talking about because my mind is filled with how to teach sounds, how to teach Jelly phonics. You know Jelly phonics? I love it. I love doing the S for the snake, you know, and they’re learning the actions and the sounds... (Informal Conversation after Practicum #5)

As a result, it is clear that Becky’s prior teaching experiences was hindering her learning of pronunciation concepts. She herself was aware that it was harder for her to learn it than it was for Kate, who had no teaching experience. This fact was also corroborated by her grade in the pronunciation section of the final exam as she only obtained 16% of the points in the section. In this regard, Becky again confessed, “I don’t think I passed the exam. I don’t think I did because I didn’t understand all those questions, but I said to myself, learn everything else, leave the phonemes. I don’t even know if I passed this thing” (Interview #2). Thus, the conflict between Becky’s prior teaching experiences and what she was being taught in the course hindered her understanding and led her to close herself to learning it. As she said, “learn everything else, leave the phonemes” (Interview #2).

On the other hand, Melinda’s prior teaching experience positively influenced her classroom learning. As she had just finished Teacher’s College when she took the course, her short teaching experience mediated her learning of concepts, facilitating her success in the coursework. Melinda had the highest grade in her final exam, i.e., 85%, and the highest total course grade, with 91.25% on the coursework.
An example of how Melinda’s prior teaching experience mediated her TESL learning, facilitating her success can be seen in her diary, when she mentioned:

We learned about lesson planning in class today. I was waiting for this class. I was anxious to know the difference between lesson plans for teaching high school for instance and a lesson plan for an ESL class. […] It is also much more effective than the way I was taught in Teacher’s College where they just gave us a template and that was it (Diary, 22/08/12).

Thus, Melinda seemed to have built up her knowledge of ESL lesson planning from her prior teaching experience as she said the lesson plan for the ESL class was more effective than the one she learned in Teacher’s College. She was eager to compare past and present experiences to discover the differences and learn from them. Melinda also talked about her experience with lesson planning in her second interview:

I had a little bit more freedom in Teacher’s College – here is the material, plan the lesson. And that could be more difficult in a sense that you need to plan from the scratch … […] I appreciate the structure here, though, because I’m off organisation and if I can be told how to do something and when to do things, it works for me (Interview #2).

As opposed to what happened with Becky, there was not a conflict between Melinda’s prior teaching experience and what she was learning in class. On the contrary, her prior teaching experience mediated her TESL learning as her previous lesson planning background knowledge formed the foundation from which she constructed her new knowledge; new knowledge which, according to her, was easier because it was more structured. Her final grade in the lesson planning section of the final exam was also a confirmation of this phenomenon as she obtained
83%, the highest grade amongst the three trainees. In addition, Melinda also obtained 92.5% in the lesson plan component of the coursework.

Hence, trainee teachers’ prior teaching experiences mediated their TESL classroom learning, both facilitating and hindering their success in their coursework. Becky and Melinda’s experiences suggest that when there is a conflict between trainee teachers’ prior teaching experiences and TESL classroom learning, trainee teachers’ success is hindered. However, when their prior teaching is consistent with their TESL classroom learning, it facilitates their success.
Trainee teachers’ prior learning experiences and beliefs also played an important part in their learning in the TESL course. Their prior experiences as learners and their beliefs about the teacher’s and student’s roles mediated their TESL learning by driving their behaviour in the classroom, which both facilitated and hindered their success in the coursework. Becky’s conduct in the course provides an example of how a conflict between her prior learning experiences and beliefs and her TESL classroom learning hindered her success.

In her first interview, Becky highlighted that students need a comfortable and relaxed learning environment, with an informal and casual atmosphere. She also emphasised that a teacher should have a great sense of humour. Talking about her best teacher at university, Becky enthusiastically shared, “she had great sense of humour… and she talked very kind of personally… very kind of casual, but we really accomplished a lot” (Lesson #1). In addition, Becky also said that, “if you don’t like the teacher it is very hard”. She continued describing how
an ideal teacher should be, “somebody who cares about the students... , makes the classes interesting, is compassionate, but can control the classroom, cover what you have to cover...” (Interview #1).

Therefore, Becky was certain that a teacher should provide a comfortable and casual learning environment and exercise her sense of humour, care and compassion to make classes interesting. However, Becky did not feel that the teacher educator had the qualities and behaviour Becky believed she should have. From the time of her first interview, Becky openly manifested her discontent:

In class, I’m thinking, oh my gosh, this is boring, this is boring, this is boring, but also professional, nobody let’s on, and they’re like, oh my gosh, it’s like learning a novel.
Between you and me, I think the classes were going to be more interesting, more interesting, more interesting, yeah (Interview #1).

Becky expected a more casual and informal learning environment, where she would be comfortable to express herself. However, there was a conflict between what she believed and what she encountered in the classroom. As lessons went by, this conflict escalated in Becky’s view. In her diary, she confided:

It seems like a stressful class – when I ask a question I didn’t feel comfortable – trying to figure. Am I a threat to the teacher because I am a Certified Ontario Teacher of Elementary and Secondary, trained as a Principal? didn’t understand – no sense of humour at all – feel uncomfortable in this arrangement. didn’t feel comfortable to ask questions. What am I feeling – 30 yrs teaching China, India, Calgary Quebec – don’t I know (Diary, 24/08/12).
As Becky’s beliefs were not being confirmed and supported during her TESL classroom learning, she began to seek the reasons for this conflict. As she said, she “figure[d]” that it was because the teacher educator was feeling threatened by her experience and knowledge. To quote her:

I tell you what, really, it’s like when you go for an interview for a job and the principal is 34 years old and I’m at my age and they know you have a principal training, that could be a threat to them (Interview #1).

This feeling of being a “threat” to the teacher educator hindered Becky’s learning in class as she felt uncomfortable asking questions and expressing her doubts. In her diary, she wrote, “I feel uncomfortable asking questions because I didn’t feel comfortable in the class (Diary, 06/09/12). She also shared her discomfort in her second interview, “it was uncomfortable, very stressful, and very uncomfortable. I used to write to myself, just stay put, don’t go, don’t be concerned. I used to write, look like I was writing notes” (Interview #2).

Becky’s behaviour of not asking questions was also in conflict with what she believed her role in the classroom to be. During the interview, Becky drew on her prior learning experiences and increasingly emphasised the importance of asking questions in the classroom:

I think the teacher should give the students the right to ask any question they want. No question is too silly, too foolish, or whatever. I’m here and I often tell my students, if you don’t ask me a question, how do I know you’re listening? I expect a question from everybody, because I remember as a student being intimidated, and all thinking that I’m stupid, and that no question is too stupid and just feel free to ask me any question at all, and in that way I know you’re paying attention, and let them know that I’m there with
them, I’m there for them, and it’s not like, I’m here, you’re there, and develop a kind of a rapport in a relationship. I think it’s relational teaching (Interview #1)

In addition, when asked about the qualities of an ideal learner, Becky used her experiences in the course to answer the question:

It would be somebody who pays attention, like I’m trying to be in the class today. I’m trying to really follow whatever thing she says. Thank her for her lessons. An ideal learner would be somebody who’s attentive, who asks questions, gets their work done, um, shows that they’re interested in what the teacher’s saying. Yeah, so it’s fully engaged with what the teacher’s saying, puts her hands up on and answers the question (Interview #1).

Therefore, Becky’s prior learning experiences and beliefs were in direct conflict with her behaviour in the classroom. Besides being uncomfortable to ask questions, Becky also believed that as a learner she should get the work done and follow whatever the teacher says. This belief was also affirmed when Becky was commenting on one lesson during the course:

You’re never going to see a bored look on my face. You’re never going to see ‘not this again’ look on my face, even though you’re looking for clues like students seem to be bored. You’re never going to because basically I know how to play the game (Interview #1).

Thus, Becky’s prior learning experiences and beliefs clashed with the reality of her classroom, leading her to behave in a way which was detrimental to her learning and, therefore, hindering her success. Becky’s strong feelings after her last practicum is a testimony to this phenomenon:
I so much feel like relieved. I, um, it’s funny. I went to my chiropractor because I got back problems, and told him I wasn’t being myself. I said, I feel like I haven’t been myself for four weeks. And he said, do you know what? He said, he kind of explained to me that [with tears in her eyes] my spirit had shut down. Isn’t that interesting? And I started to cry. And I said, you’re right (Interview #2).

She then continued, “I wasn’t myself. I had to kind of agree with things that I didn’t agree with and go along with things that I didn’t really understand, and I didn’t feel that I wrote things down” (Interview #2).

Therefore, it is clear that Becky’s prior learning experiences and beliefs were in conflict with the reality of her classroom. This clash led Becky to behave in a way which was detrimental to her learning in the course. By not seeking clarification for her questions and not showing the teacher educator she was not satisfied with the lessons, or in Becky’s words, “playing the game”, she closed herself to learning. This fact affected not only her performance in the classroom, but also in the practicum.

On the other hand, Melinda’s and Kate’s prior learning experiences and beliefs did not clash with the reality of the TESL course. They believed that teachers should be caring, supportive, calm, and approachable, while learners should be active and eager to learn. Their willingness to learn can be seen in Kate’s diary. After her first day of class, she wrote, “This class sets the personal bar for what kind of an ESL teacher I want to be – it’s all or nothing from this point in” (Diary, 20/08/12). By the same token, Melinda’s writing is an example of how excited Melinda and Kate were to learn, “I had a lot of expectations going in on the first day. I was eager and excited to learn. This is exactly what happened” (Diary, 20/08/12).
In addition, both Melinda’s and Kate’s beliefs about teachers were confirmed in the course as they were extremely satisfied with the teacher educator and their lessons, clearly stating their contentment in their diaries and second interviews. To quote from Kate, “Juliana [teacher educator] is so patient and clear when she explains everything. She understands it’s been a while and we’re a tad rusty with everything” (Diary, 21/08/12). In her second interview, Kate also manifested her admiration for the teacher educator, “Juliana just gave us a light at the end of the tunnel [...] She always kept our spirits up, so engaging with us, like, it’s not something you see often, but it’s a privilege when you do get it” (Interview #2).

Kate continued to show her satisfaction:

Juliana has this talent for making things that would normally be so boring interesting. And she’s got a great sense of humour too, like, to put a spin on things so that it grabs your attention. And, like, how she organises things, it was so straightforward and, like, looking back in my binder I see why we did things in the sequence we did. It was so organised. That’s incredible, I think. Juliana was, I mean, she was wonderful (Interview #2).

Likewise, Melinda expressed her contentment with the lessons, “The activities we played today in class were fun and interactive so it made it seem much easier. I was a lot more relaxed” (Diary, 29/08/12).

Additionally, both Kate and Melinda stated how much they learned in the course. As Melinda pointed out,

I learned so much. It’s so different from Teacher’s College because it was kind of stretched out and I didn’t always feel I was learning anything different in Teacher’s College but this, I don’t know if it was because it went so fast, or it was so much, like, I
feel that every step of the way was something new and I had to put my 100, yeah...
(Interview #2).

Similarly, Kate provided the reasons why she had learned so much:

Everything’s just been positive and I think because there’s the positive reinforcement to
go with it too, and there’s, like, you and Juliana [teacher educator], and Nathan, and
Christopher, and Verne [practicum supervisors], they just want to see all the TESL
students just get better and grow (Interview #2).

Thus, it is also clear that neither Melinda’s nor Kate’s prior learning experiences and
beliefs were in conflict with their reality in the course. On the contrary, the validation of their
teaching and learning beliefs, together with a very positive view of the teacher educator,
practicum supervisors, and the course as a whole opened up Melinda and Kate to learning. As a
result, their prior learning experiences and beliefs successfully mediated their learning in that
such experiences and beliefs underpinned their TESL classroom learning and, therefore,
facilitated their success.

The stark contrast between Becky’s, Melinda’s and Kate’s experiences and results in the
course show how the intricacies of who trainee teachers are, their prior experiences, their
knowledge and beliefs mediated their teacher learning process, facilitating and/or hindering their
success. During the learning process, those intricacies, or mediational means, interacted creating
conflict or consistency, which, in turn, hindered and/or facilitated trainee teachers’ success in the
course.
Therefore, trainee teachers learned how to teach from their previous experiences as learners and teachers, and learners in the TESL course. Their prior experiences, knowledge and beliefs mediated their TESL learning as those experiences, knowledge and beliefs were reshaped...
and applied to their new conceptualisation of teaching English. During this process, those mediational means (i.e., prior experiences, knowledge, beliefs) interacted with one another creating conflict or consistency, facilitating and/or hindering their success in the course.

This conflicting nature of teachers’ mediational means during the program is also corroborated by Golombek’s and Tsang’s studies. In her research, Golombek identified the instructional tensions teachers faced during their teaching and cited Freeman (2003) to define these tensions as “competing demands within their [the teachers'] teaching” that represent “divergences among different forces or elements in the teacher's understanding of the school context, the subject matter, or the students” (1998, p. 452). Similarly, Tsang found that “teacher’s personal practical knowledge may be competing among themselves in a way similar to the tension effected by competing instructional goals” (2004, p. 194).

In addition, the conflict between Becky’s prior learning experiences and beliefs and her classroom reality is also consistent with the findings of Johnson’s 1994 study. Johnson found that “ESL teachers’ beliefs may be based largely on images from their formal language learning experiences, and in all likelihood, will represent their dominant model of action during the practicum teaching experience” (p. 450). She suggested that trainee teachers’ beliefs may account for the ineffective instructional practices trainee teachers show during their program.

Childs’ study also substantiates the present research findings. In the same way that “Mark’s supervising professor played a key role in mediating his conceptualization of L2 teaching” (2011, p. 76), the teacher educator (Juliana) was instrumental in mediating Kate’s and Melinda’s teacher learning process during the program. Kate’s and Melinda’s success in their classroom learning was facilitated by the consistency between their prior learning experiences and beliefs and their TESL classroom learning, while the opposite was true in Becky’s case.
Thus, Becky’s learning and/or success in the course was hindered because she did not have “the emotional support provided through open, healthy relationships between and among the novice teacher, teaching peers and teacher educators” (Childs, 2011, p. 85).

In the next chapter, I draw on the conceptual framework in order to interpret the major findings of this research with a view to shedding light on some issues of paramount importance for the field. I then discuss the limitations and implications of this study and provide some concluding remarks.
Chapter 8

Discussion

Major Findings

In order to answer the two research questions – 1) What factors mediate trainee teachers’ learning process in an intensive introductory TESL training course? and 2) How do these factors interact with one another to facilitate and/or hinder trainee teachers’ success in the course? – I followed Becky’s, Kate’s and Melinda’s teacher learning journey during their intensive introductory TESL training course. I collected and triangulated data from interviews with them, informal conversations, diaries, post-lesson reflections, lesson plans, lesson evaluations, observations, final course grades, as well as interviews with the teacher educator, the practicum supervisors and the administrator. The results pointed to four major factors that mediated trainee teachers’ learning and to three major interactions amongst these factors that facilitated and/or hindered their success in the course.

The findings showed that Becky’s, Kate’s and Melinda’s prior learning experiences and beliefs, prior teaching experience, TESL classroom learning, and practicum experiences were the four major factors mediating their learning as English language teachers. By tapping into these mediational factors to make sense of their learning, Becky, Kate and Melinda reconceptualised what they were learning and applied this reconceptualisation to their practicum in the course.

Kate’s and Melinda’s use of the terminology learned in the course to assess how successful their lessons were as well as Becky’s reference to her adult ESL students as ‘kids’, are the most illustrative examples of this process of mediation.

The findings also showed that three particular interactions amongst the mediational factors were able to facilitate and/or hinder Becky’s, Kate’s and Melinda’s success in the course:
1) trainee teachers’ prior teaching experiences and their TESL practicum, 2) their prior teaching experiences and their TESL classroom learning, and 3) their prior learning experiences and beliefs and their TESL classroom learning. When these interactions resulted in conflicts, learning and success were hindered; however, when consistency amongst these factors was verified, learning and success were facilitated. This finding is perhaps the most significant in this research.

Becky’s prior teaching experiences hindered her progress during her TESL practicum while her prior teaching experience and her prior learning experiences and beliefs hindered her TESL classroom learning. Becky faced innumerable conflicts during the process of learning to be an English language teacher as her extensive elementary school teaching background created more opportunities for clashes between her prior knowledge and her learning in the course.

On the contrary, Kate’s lack of prior teaching experience facilitated her learning and success. As a “blank slate”, Kate did not have any previous teaching experience that could have conflicted with her TESL practicum, which, therefore, allowed her to learn what was taught without hindrance. As a learner with experience in other contexts, though, Kate’s experiences and beliefs were consistent with the teaching in the TESL program, which facilitated her learning and success.

By the same token, Melinda’s TESL classroom learning was facilitated by her prior learning experiences and beliefs as they were consistent with her classroom learning in the program. Additionally, Melinda’s prior teaching experience also facilitated her TESL classroom learning as her teaching background was congruous with her English language teacher learning. However, when her prior teaching experience and her TESL practicum interacted, conflicts occurred, resulting in hindrance to her progress during the practicum.
Miller’s holistic orientation to curriculum provides a useful lens to view the findings. The analysis of the curriculum of the intensive introductory TESL training course sheds light on these findings, providing a better understanding of what hindered or facilitated the success of trainee teachers during the program.

According to Miller and Seller, curriculum is viewed as “an explicitly and implicitly intentional set of interactions designed to facilitate learning and development and to impose meaning on experience” (Miller & Seller, 1990, p.3). Thus, the ‘intentional set of interactions’ the teacher educator carried out in order to deliver the intensive introductory TESL training course is of primary relevance to the analysis of the degree of success experienced by trainee teachers in the course.

The content of the TESL program was delivered by the teacher educator, Juliana, using lectures and student-centred activities. Most of the content was taught in a lecture format, whereby Juliana would either provide the input herself or provide a text or activity as input followed by her lecture. Trainee teachers would either listen and take notes or read and then listen to Juliana’s comments on their reading. Occasionally, student-centred activities such as project work were carried out.

Thus, according to the three orientations to curriculum put forward by Miller and Seller (1990) and Miller (2007), the orientation to curriculum that best describes the curriculum of the intensive introductory TESL training course in this research is a transmission position. However, it is important to highlight that although the transmission orientation was dominant, some instances of a more transactive orientation were also seen. Therefore, the curriculum of the TESL program can be described as follow:
This curriculum, therefore, considers English language teacher learning as a one-way flow of acquisition and accumulation of knowledge and skills, whereby the teacher educator virtually provides all the input trainee teachers need to succeed in the course. Inquiry-based learning with an emphasis on cognitive interactions between teacher educator and trainee teachers is stressed, is only minimally present.

Thus, this TESL curriculum does not promote the development of the trainee teacher as a whole person (transformation), and only minimally provides opportunities for inquiry-based learning (transaction). There are very few chances for trainee teachers to draw on their prior experiences, knowledge and skills. This TESL course curriculum, therefore, is less likely to act as a positive mediating factor in the teacher learning process of trainee teachers. In addition, this curriculum does not provide sufficient opportunities for trainee teachers to address conflicts between their prior experiences, knowledge and skills and their learning in the course, thus minimising their chances to succeed in the program.

Consequently, this TESL curriculum creates more opportunities of learning and success for trainee teachers with prior learning experiences and beliefs that are compatible with the TESL program as well as for trainee teachers who do not have prior teaching experience. While
the lack of prior teaching experience eliminates the possibility of conflicts, the consistency of prior learning experiences and beliefs facilitate teacher learning.

However, when conflicts do occur, trainee teachers are forced to deconstruct and “unlearn” their prior teaching behaviour to be able to be successful in the course. Becky’s and Melinda’s experiences are evidence of this.

Becky’s extensive teaching experience conflicted with the TESL curriculum, making her question what she was being taught. As the curriculum was mostly based on a one-way flow of information, with little or no opportunity to analyse the content that was presented, there was virtually no opportunity to resolve Becky’s conflicts. Becky had to “forget” what she knew and accept the transmission of “new” knowledge and skills to succeed. The same happened with Melinda as she had to “unlearn” some of her teaching behaviours acquired when teaching high school students.

Thus, in order to provide trainee teachers from diverse backgrounds with equal opportunities to succeed in the intensive introductory TESL training course, a more inclusive holistic curriculum, consistent with a sociocultural view of English language teacher learning, should be adopted.

According to Miller (2007) educators should try to integrate the three curriculum positions, i.e., transmission, transaction, transformation, to create a holistic stance. Thus, an inclusive holistic TESL curriculum would integrate these three curriculum orientations in order to cater for trainee teachers’ diverse backgrounds. In addition, this integration should take into consideration the needs of all trainee teachers to provide them with equal opportunities for success in the course.
An inclusive holistic orientation to the TESL curriculum is, therefore, one in which the teacher educator, taking into consideration her trainee teachers’ needs and backgrounds, draws not only on the transmission of knowledge and skills, but also on cognitive inquiry-based learning as well as on the emotional, social, physical, and moral development of the whole teacher learner.

Such a TESL curriculum is also consistent with a sociocultural view of English language teacher learning where trainee teachers learn how to teach from their previous experiences as learners and teachers, and learners in the TESL course rather than having new theories, methods, or materials imposed on teachers (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson & Golombek, 2003; Johnson, 2009).
Hence, an inclusive holistic TESL curriculum would allow trainee teachers to learn from their previous and current experiences as learners and teachers as they reshape these experiences, knowledge and beliefs and apply them to their new conceptualisation of teaching. An inclusive holistic curriculum would, therefore, provide equal opportunities for success.

However, it is the teacher educator who has the ability and responsibility to identify the conflicts trainee teachers experience during the course in order to help them resolve these. The relationship between the teacher educator and trainee teachers during the course should be conceived as a powerful tool, which can lead to the creation of a dialogic space in which the complexities and the intricacies of trainee teachers’ identities, their conflicting prior experiences and beliefs can be addressed.

The importance of this student-teacher relationship is central in Cummins’ pedagogical framework (2001). He claims that the interactions between teachers and students are the most important factor in determining student success or failure in school. According to Cummins, the student-teacher interactions create an interpersonal space “within which the acquisition of knowledge and formation of identity is negotiated” (2001, p.19).

Therefore, the student-teacher relationship can offer a dialogic space, or an interpersonal space, in which the teacher educator and trainee teachers interact in order to address the unique attributes and experiences each trainee teacher brings to their learning process. Teacher educators can identify and help trainee teachers resolve their conflicts, facilitating their learning and success in the course. In addition, it creates a space where the teacher educator and trainee teachers can negotiate their identities, that is, where the teacher educator can communicate to trainee teachers “who they are in the teacher’s eyes and who they are capable of becoming” (Cummins, 2001, p. 21).
The paramount importance of this interpersonal space to trainee teachers’ learning is evident in Becky’s, Kate’s and Melinda’s teacher learning journey. Their completely opposite perception of their TESL training elucidates how crucial the teacher educator-trainee teacher relationship was during their teacher learning process. While Kate and Melinda were completely satisfied with the course and the teacher educator, Becky faced many problems during the program.

Throughout the program, Becky struggled with her feelings towards the teacher educator and the course. In her interview, Becky clearly expressed her struggles being in a classroom where she thought she did not have a place, “it’s a very strange place to be in that class, in some ways. I’m just not sure how I’m feeling”. She continued, “so, when you don’t fit in but you’re mature enough not to say anything, but you want to know, so let’s see where it’s going to go...” (Interview #1). In addition, Becky’s feeling of being a threat to the teacher educator made her uncomfortable and stressed. As she believed that she should “play the game”, or, “do whatever she [teacher educator] says” (Interview #1), she closed herself to learning.

Thus, it is clear that Becky felt her relationship with the teacher educator was an uncomfortable and stressful one. It is also evident that this relationship did not create a dialogic space in which the teacher educator could identify Becky’s emotional struggles and help her address them. As a result, Becky closed herself to learning, which hindered her learning and success in the course.

Becky’s relationship with the teacher educator, therefore, reveals the importance of creating an interpersonal space, in which the teacher educator can identify and help trainee teachers’ address their conflicts during the TESL training course. It also reveals how important it is for the teacher educator to utilise this interpersonal space to negotiate her identity with her
trainee teachers in order to clarify any misunderstanding and/or preconceptions both parts bring to the course.

Thus, the interpretation of the research findings revealed that viewing English language teacher learning through a sociocultural lens allows for a more thorough understanding of trainee teachers’ learning process since it accounts for mediational factors such as trainee teachers’ prior experiences and beliefs. Moreover, the findings also revealed that the adoption of an inclusive holistic curriculum can allow for more equal opportunities for learning and success in the intensive introductory TESL training course. Last, Becky’s, Kate’s and Melinda’s experiences in the course revealed the importance of an interpersonal space, in which teacher learning conflicts are resolved and identities are negotiated.
Figure 16. A Comprehensive View of English Language Teacher Learning Process in an Intensive Introductory TESL Training Course
Limitations

The first limitation of this study was that of the researcher bias. As a teacher educator who teaches a similar intensive introductory TESL course, my background and experience influenced my perspective as a researcher. Despite the fact that I collected data from a myriad of sources to triangulate them with a view to reducing my bias, I was prone to identify conflicts in trainee teachers’ learning process. My experience as a teacher educator has shown that trainee teachers usually experience conflicts in their learning process.

A further limitation was the potential effect that a small number of trainee teachers in the course could have produced on their interactions during their classroom learning. The small size of the class could have led to more intense interactions amongst trainee teachers and the teacher educator, influencing their relationship during the course. Although the researcher was actively participating in the course as an assistant teacher educator, these intense interactions could have influenced the trainee teacher’s learning process.

Hence, the recommendations I provide below reflect my perspective of what would be the most appropriate ways to address the implications drawn from this study. It is important to note that these recommendations may not be suited to different TESL training courses in various contexts.

Implications

The findings in this study corroborate the growing body of literature in SLTE which considers teacher learning as emerging from the student teachers’ experiences as learners in schools, as learners of teaching, and as teachers in their classrooms (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson & Golombek, 2003; Johnson, 2009). The findings also revealed the importance of an
inclusive holistic TESL curriculum and the relationship between teacher educator-trainee teachers during the intensive introductory TESL training course. Thus, I explain the implications of these findings below, providing recommendations for the intensive introductory TESL training program.

**Implications for the administrator, teacher educator and practicum supervisors**

As suggested in the discussion of the findings, the curriculum of the TESL program did not offer enough opportunities for the experienced trainee teachers to address their conflicts. In addition, the teacher educator did not engage in a dialogic relationship with one of the trainee teacher, preventing the creation of an interpersonal space. As a result, the teacher educator could not help the trainee teacher resolve her conflicts and negotiate her identity as an ESL teacher. Thus, some implications can be drawn for the short introductory TESL training course.

One implication is that the curriculum of the TESL program would provide all trainee teachers with equal opportunities for learning and success if it were more inclusive and holistic. The findings suggested that the limited scope of the TESL curriculum, i.e., a dominant transmission position, did not offer such equal opportunities. Thus, a review of the underlying assumptions and beliefs of the TESL curriculum with a view to expanding its scope to become more inclusive and holistic would be recommended. In this way, it is believed that the TESL curriculum would better serve the needs of trainee teachers from diverse backgrounds and, therefore, provide them with equal chances to learn and succeed in the program.

A second implication is that the administrator, the teacher educator and the practicum supervisors are key to successfully implementing any changes in the TESL program. Therefore, raising their awareness of the current views of English language teacher learning in SLTE is a
crucial step in the implementation of an inclusive holistic TESL curriculum. In order to do so, professional development initiatives such as workshops, teacher support groups and analysis of critical incidents (Richards & Farrell, 2005) would be recommended.

Finally, the relationship between the teacher educator and trainee teachers during the program is of paramount importance for the success of trainee teachers in the intensive TESL training course. As such, the teacher educator needs to be able to establish this relationship to create an interpersonal space in which conflicts are addressed and identities are negotiated. Thus, the teacher educator would have to adopt the role of being responsible for generating an interpersonal space, as part of her teaching philosophy. It would then be recommended that the teacher educator adopt different teaching techniques such as individual tutorials with a view to establishing this interpersonal space.

**Implications for trainee teachers**

The findings revealed that trainee teachers’ learning process was mediated by their prior learning experiences and beliefs, prior teaching experience, and TESL classroom learning and practicum. They also showed that the interaction of these mediational factors facilitated and/or hindered trainee teachers’ success during the course depending on the presence of conflicts and/or consistencies in their learning.

An implication of these findings is that trainee teachers who are aware that their prior experiences and beliefs and prior teaching experience mediate their English language teacher learning can make use of this knowledge to successfully identify and address possible conflicts arising during the course. As TESL programs such as the one in this research are highly intense, the more aware trainee teachers are about their learning process, the more they are likely to
benefit from it. Therefore, raising trainee teachers’ awareness of how they learn to teach during their programs would be advised. Awareness-raising activities such as guided discovery tasks are an effective way to do so.

**Concluding Remarks**

This qualitative case study research has shed light on trainee teachers’ learning process during an intensive introductory TESL training course. It has identified four factors that mediated their learning and also pointed to three interactions amongst these mediational factors that facilitated and/or hindered trainee teachers’ learning and success during the course.

Implications of these findings include broadening the scope of the TESL curriculum by accommodating other curriculum orientations to have a more inclusive and holistic curriculum. It is also suggested that the administrator, teacher educator and practicum supervisors participate in professional development initiatives in order to bring the TESL program in line with current SLTE views of English language teacher learning. Lastly, it is also advised that more time during the program be spent on individual meetings between the teacher educator and trainee teachers to foster the interpersonal space generated by the teacher educator-trainee teacher relationship.

However, further research into English language teacher learning is necessary, particularly in the context of intensive introductory TESL training programs. Every year, thousands of new teachers are certified upon completion of such programs and enter the ELT profession. Despite this fact, there are few studies carried out in intensive TESL training programs.

In conclusion, this study adds to the limited research in the context of intensive TESL training programs and highlights the important role of the relationship between the teacher
educator and trainee teachers as well as the TESL program curriculum for trainee teachers’
learning and success. Moreover, this study emphasizes the need to conceptualize English
language teacher learning as a unique, complex and intricate phenomenon, where their prior
experiences, knowledge and beliefs shape their learning during the intensive TESL program.
Finally, my hope is that this study will promote reflection on the way intensive introductory
TESL training courses are delivered across contexts.
References


Appendix A – Administrator Letter and Consent Form

Dear Administrator,                                                                                                         July, XX XXXX

My name is Danielle Freitas and I am an MA candidate at OISE/University of Toronto, Canada. I
would like to ask for administrative consent to allow me to recruit the teacher educator, the practicum
teacher observers, and all trainee teachers enrolled XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX for participation in
my research, "Learning to Teach in an Intensive Introductory TESL Training Course: a Case Study
of Second Language Teacher Learning."

The purpose of the research is to examine the factors that influence teacher learning and how these
factors can facilitate or hinder success during an intensive introductory TESOL training course. My
main research questions are: “1) What factors mediate trainee teachers’ learning process in an
intensive introductory TESL training course? and 2) How do these factors interact with one another
facilitating and/or hindering trainee teachers’ success in the course?”

I hope to conduct this study from XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. With your consent, I would invite the head
of the teacher training department, the teacher educator, the practicum teacher observers, and the
trainee teachers to become involved in this study. I would like to meet Ms. XXXXXXXXXXX at the
beginning of XXXXXX to discuss the recruitment process of the teacher educator, the practicum
teacher observers, and the trainee teachers.

This study would include the following data collection activities:

- Interviews will be conducted with all the trainee teachers who volunteer to take part in the
  study one week before the beginning of the course. The content of this first interview will
  focus on trainee teachers’ background experiences as learners and as teachers if any, their
  reasons for taking the course, and their expectations.

- Interviews will also be conducted with Ms. XXXXXXXXXXXXX, the teacher educator and the
  practicum supervisors. These interviews seek to complement/support the trainee teachers’
  interviews and will be audio recorded if the participants consent to it. The interviews will
  occur on the XXXXXXXXXXXXX premises at the participants’ convenience.

- Observations of the trainees’ lessons, teaching practices and feedback sessions will be
  carried out throughout the course. The main purpose of these observations is to gather
evidence to answer the two research questions. If you and the participants consent to it, I will video record the input sessions, teaching practices and feedback sessions, and take field notes.

- Post-lesson reflections and the diary data will also be collected throughout the course. As the post-lesson reflections are part of the coursework, I will photocopy them in order to use these reflection pieces as a complementary source of data. Data from diaries will also be collected at the end of each week.

- A second interview will be conducted with the three focal trainee teachers once the course ends. It will aim to confirm/clarify data that will emerge from the observations, the post-lesson reflections and the diary.

Only my thesis supervisor and I will have access to the data. The data will be stored in a computer and in a locked cabinet, which only I have access to, at my home in XXXXXXXX for three years. All data, audiotapes, videotapes, post-lesson reflection, diaries, survey-questionnaires, and notes will be destroyed three years after the completion of the data collection. I will keep all the identification about the institution, the teacher educator, and trainee teachers confidential, by using code numbers in transcribing, analyzing and presenting the data.

Participation in my study is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time for any reason without any negative consequences. I will destroy unanalyzed data of the participants who decline to participate in this study. I will ensure that there will be no conflict of interest in this research. Data collected from the trainee teachers will not be shared with the teacher educator, the practicum supervisors, and the head of the teacher training department. By the same token, data collected from the head of the teacher training department, the teacher educator, and the practicum supervisors will not be revealed to anyone in the study. By protecting all participants’ confidentiality, there will not be any risk associated with assessment of the participating trainee teachers.

I will provide refreshments during the interviews to compensate for the time spent participating in this study. I will also provide a gift certificate to the three focal participants. In addition, as a teacher educator myself, I will be available to help trainee teachers to the extent to which the head of the department and the teacher educators allow me to do so.

I will send a copy of the research summary report to all interested parties, including the administrator, the head of the teacher training department, the teacher educators and the
participating trainee teachers in XXXXXXX. I hope my findings will be useful for the teacher training department, the teacher educator and the practicum supervisors as they will shed light on the learning processes trainee teachers go through during the course. In addition, I hope the findings can generate some discussion and reflection on the goals, objectives and philosophies of the course, which can potentially lead to discovering new ways to improve the course.

If you agree with the above and allow me to recruit the teacher educator, the practicum teacher observers, and the trainee teachers at your institution, please sign the enclosed consent form and keep a copy for yourself.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact me at XXXXXXXXXXXXX or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné, at XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX with any questions or concerns you may have. Further, you may contact the Ethics Review Office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or by phone at (416) 946-3273. A consent form is attached for your review. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the rights of participants, please do not hesitate to contact the University of Toronto Ethics Review Office.

Sincerely,
Danielle Freitas
M.A. candidate, Second Language Education Program
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Comparative International Development Education
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Thesis Supervisor:
Professor Antoinette Gagné
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Comparative International Development Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto
Phone:
Email:
Administrative Consent Form

Title of the Research: Learning to Teach in an Intensive Introductory TESL Training Course: a Case Study of Second Language Teacher Learning.

Name of the Researcher: Danielle Freitas

Institutional Affiliation: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

I, ____________________________, have read and understood the details of this research in the information letter written by Danielle Freitas on XXXXXXXXXX. I agree to allow Danielle Freitas to recruit the teacher educator, the practicum supervisors, and trainee teachers to conduct her study.

Signature ____________________________________________
Date _______________________________
Appendix B – Head of the Department of Teacher Training Letter and Consent Form

Dear XXXXXXXXXXX,                                                                                                      July, XX XXXX

I am an MA candidate at OISE/University of Toronto, Canada. I am writing to you to formally request permission to conduct research in the XXXXXXX at your school and also ask your assistance to recruit the participants for this study. I hope to conduct this study XXXXXXXX. With your consent, the teacher educator, the practicum supervisors, and the trainee teachers would be involved in this study. I would like to schedule an appointment with you at the beginning of XXXXXXXXX to discuss the recruitment process for the teacher educator, the practicum supervisors, and the trainee teachers.

The purpose of the research is to examine the factors that influence teacher learning and how these factors can facilitate or hinder success during an intensive introductory TESOL training course. My main research questions are: “1) What factors mediate trainee teachers’ learning process in an intensive introductory TESL training course? and 2) How do these factors interact with one another facilitating and/or hindering trainee teachers’ success in the course?”

This study would include the following data collection activities:

- Interviews will be conducted with all the trainee teachers who volunteer to take part in the study one week before the beginning of the course. The content of this first interview will focus on trainee teachers’ background experiences as learners and as teachers if any, their reasons for taking the course, and their expectations.

- Interviews will also be conducted with the teacher educator, the practicum teacher observers, and with you, upon your consent. These interviews seek to complement/support the trainee teachers’ interviews and will be audio recorded if the participants consent to it. The interviews will occur on the XXXXXXXXXXXX premises at the participants’ convenience.

- Observations of the trainee teachers’ lessons, teaching practices and feedback sessions will be carried out throughout the course. The main purpose of these observations is to gather evidence to answer the two research questions. If you and the participants consent to it, I will video record the trainee teachers’ lessons, teaching practices and feedback sessions, and take field notes.
Post-lesson reflections and the diary data will also be collected throughout the course. As the post-lesson reflections are part of the coursework, I will photocopy them in order to use these reflection pieces as a complementary source of data. Data from diaries will also be collected at the end of each week.

A second interview will be conducted with the three focal trainee teachers once the course ends. It will aim to confirm/clarify data that will emerge from the observations, the post-lesson reflections and the diary.

Only my thesis supervisor and I will have access to the data. The data will be stored in a computer and in a locked cabinet, which only I have access to, at my home in XXXXXXXX for three years. All data, audiotapes, videotapes, post-lesson reflection, diaries, survey-questionnaires, and notes will be destroyed three years after the completion of the data collection. I will keep all the identification about the institution, the teacher educator, and trainee teachers confidential, by using code numbers in transcribing, analyzing and presenting the data.

Participation in my study is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time for any reason without any negative consequences. I will destroy unanalyzed data of the participants who decline to participate in this study. I will ensure that there will be no conflict of interest in this research. Data collected from the trainee teachers will not be shared with the teacher educator, the practicum supervisors, and the head of the teacher training department. By the same token, data collected from the head of the teacher training department, the teacher educator, and the practicum supervisors will not be revealed to anyone in the study. By protecting all participants’ confidentiality, there will not be any risk associated with assessment of the participating trainee teachers.

I will provide refreshments during the interviews to compensate for the time spent participating in this study. I will also provide a gift certificate to the three focal participants. In addition, as a teacher educator myself, I will be available to help trainee teachers to the extent to which the head of the department and the teacher educator allow me to do so.

I would also like to invite you to take part in this study. Your participation would involve taking part in a one-to-one, in-person interview that will last approximately 30 to 40 minutes. The interview will take place at a time that is convenient for you. It will be tape-recorded and transcribed. Interview questions will focus primarily on questions about the goals and objectives of the TESOL program. It is hoped that the interview format will allow you to express your ideas in a more comfortable and thorough way.
Multiple measures will be taken to protect your privacy and confidentiality. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym. The pseudonym will be used instead of your real name in all written reports resulting from the interview. Only my faculty supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné, and I will have access to the primary data. All data, including audiocassettes and interview transcripts will be stored in a safe place and destroyed after three years from the completion of the study.

Please be assured that you are not required to participate in the interview. However, your participation would be greatly appreciated and would add greatly to the study. If you choose to participate in the interview, you are under no obligation to answer all questions. Furthermore, you may withdraw from the study at any time.

I will send a copy of the research summary report to all interested parties, including the administrator, the teacher educator, the practicum supervisors, the participating trainee teachers and you, in XXXXXXXX. I hope my findings will be useful for your teacher training department, the teacher educator and the practicum supervisors as they will shed light on the learning processes trainee teachers go through during the course. In addition, I hope the findings can generate some discussion and reflection on the goals, objectives and philosophies of the course, which can potentially lead to discovering new ways to improve the course.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign the enclosed consent forms and keep a copy for yourself.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact me at XXXXXXXXXX or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné, at XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX with any questions or concerns you may have. Further, you may contact the Ethics Review Office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or by phone at (416) 946-3273. A consent form is attached for your review. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the rights of participants, please do not hesitate to contact the University of Toronto Ethics Review Office.

Sincerely,
Danielle Freitas
M.A. candidate, Second Language Education Program
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Comparative International Development Education
Ontario Institute of Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, Canada
Head of the Teacher Training Department Consent Form

Title of the Research:  
Learning to Teach in an Intensive Introductory TESL Training Course:  
a Case Study of Second Language Teacher Learning.

Name of the Researcher:  Danielle Freitas

Institutional Affiliation:  Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

I, __________________________________________, have read and understood the details of this research in the recruitment/participation letter written by Danielle Freitas on XXXXXXXXXXXX. I agree to allow Danielle Freitas to recruit teacher educators and trainee teachers to conduct her study.

I, __________________________________________ also agree to participate in her study.

Signature __________________________________________

Date ________________________________________________
Appendix C – Teacher Educator and Practicum Supervisors Letter and Consent Form

Dear Teacher Educator and Practicum Supervisors, July, XX XXXX

My name is Danielle Freitas and I am an MA candidate at OISE/University of Toronto, Canada, working under the supervision of Dr. Antoinette Gagné. I am conducting research on second language teacher education and the purpose of my study is to examine the factors that influence teacher learning and how these factors can facilitate or hinder success during an intensive introductory TESOL training course. My main research questions are: “1) What factors mediate trainee teachers’ learning process in an intensive introductory TESL training course? and 2) How do these factors interact with one another facilitating and/or hindering trainee teachers’ success in the course?”

I would like to invite you to take part in this study. Your participation would involve taking part in a one-to-one, in-person interview that will last approximately 30 to 40 minutes. The interview will take place at a time that is convenient for you. It will be audio recorded and transcribed. Interview questions will focus primarily on your experiences with trainee teachers’ learning during the TESOL course. It is hoped that the interview format will allow you to express your ideas in a more comfortable and thorough way.

Multiple measures will be taken to protect your privacy and confidentiality. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym. The pseudonym will be used instead of your real name in all written reports resulting from the interview. Only my faculty supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné, and I will have access to the primary data. All data, including audiocassettes and interview transcripts will be stored in a safe place and destroyed after three years from the completion of the study.

Please be assured that you are not required to participate in the interview. However, your participation would be greatly appreciated and would add greatly to the study. If you choose to participate in the interview, you are under no obligation to answer all questions. Furthermore, you may withdraw from the study at any time.

I hope my findings will be useful for you and your teacher training department as they will shed light on the learning processes trainee teachers go through during the course. I also hope the findings can generate some discussion and reflection on the goals, objectives and philosophies of the course, which can potentially lead to discovering new ways to improve the course. In addition, as a
teacher educator myself, I will be available to help and provide any support you need during the course. I will send a copy of the research summary report to you and all interested parties, including the administrator, the head of the teacher training department, and the participating trainee teachers, in XXXXXXXX.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign the enclosed consent forms and keep a copy for yourself.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact me at XXXXXXXXXX or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné, at XXXXXXXXXX with any questions or concerns you may have. Further, you may contact the Ethics Review Office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or by phone at (416) 946-3273. A consent form is attached for your review. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the rights of participants, please do not hesitate to contact the University of Toronto Ethics Review Office.

Sincerely,

Danielle Freitas
M.A. candidate, Second Language Education Program
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Comparative International Development Education
Ontario Institute of Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, Canada
252 Bloor Street West, 10th Floor, Office 10-279
Phone:
Email:

Thesis Supervisor:
Professor Antoinette Gagné
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Comparative International Development Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto
Phone:
Email:
Teacher Educator and Practicum Supervisors Consent Form

Title of the Research: Learning to Teach in an Intensive Introductory TESL Training Course: a Case Study of Second Language Teacher Learning.

Name of the Researcher: Danielle Freitas

Institutional Affiliation: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

I, ________________________________, have read and understood the details of this research in the information letter written by Danielle Freitas on XXXXXX. I agree to participate in her study, “Learning to Teach in an Intensive Introductory TESL Training Course: a Case Study of Second Language Teacher Learning.”

Signature ________________________________

Date ________________________________
Appendix D – Trainee Teacher Letter and Consent Form

Dear Trainee Teacher

My name is Danielle Freitas and I am an MA candidate at OISE/University of Toronto, Canada, working under the supervision of Dr. Antoinette Gagné. I am conducting research on second language teacher education and the purpose of my study is to examine the factors that influence teacher learning and how these factors can facilitate or hinder success during an intensive introductory TESOL training course. My main research questions are: “1) What factors mediate trainee teachers’ learning process in an intensive introductory TESL training course? and 2) How do these factors interact with one another facilitating and/or hindering trainee teachers’ success in the course?”

I would like to invite you to be a focal participant in this study. Your participation would involve the following:

- Being observed during your lessons, teaching practices and feedback sessions throughout the course. The main purpose of these observations is to gather evidence to answer the two research questions. If you consent to it, I will video record your lessons, teaching practices and feedback sessions.

- Keep a diary about your learning experiences during the course. I will collect your writings at the end of each week.

- Providing your post-lesson reflections after each teaching practice. I will photocopy them in order to use these reflection pieces as a complementary source of data.

- Participating in a second one-to-one, in-person interview that will last approximately 30 to 40 minutes once the course ends. The interview will take place at a time that is convenient for you. It will be audio recorded and transcribed. Interview questions will focus primarily on your learning experiences during the course.

Multiple measures will be taken to protect your privacy and confidentiality. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym. The pseudonym will be used instead of your real name in all written reports resulting from the interview. Only my faculty supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné, and I will have access
to the primary data. All data, including audiocassettes and interview transcripts will be stored in a safe place and destroyed after three years from the completion of the study.

Please be assured that you are not required to participate in the interview. However, your participation would be greatly appreciated and would add greatly to the study. If you choose to participate in the interview, you are under no obligation to answer all questions. Furthermore, you may withdraw from the study at any time.

I hope my findings will be useful for you as they will shed light on the learning processes you go through during the course. You will also have the opportunity to reflect and become aware of the factors that mediate your teacher learning. This can potentially lead you to use of these factors to achieve success in the course. In addition, as a teacher educator myself, I will be available to help and provide support to the extent to which your teacher educator allow me to do so. I will send a copy of the research summary report to you and all interested parties in Xxxxx.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign the enclosed consent forms and keep a copy for yourself.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact me at Xxxxxxxxxxxx or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Antoinette Gagné, at Xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx with any questions or concerns you may have. Further, you may contact the Ethics Review Office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or by phone at (416) 946-3273. A consent form is attached for your review. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the rights of participants, please do not hesitate to contact the University of Toronto Ethics Review Office.

Sincerely,
Danielle Freitas
M.A. candidate, Second Language Education Program
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Comparative International Development Education
Ontario Institute of Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, Canada
252 Bloor Street West, 10th Floor, Office 10-279
Phone:
Email:

Thesis Supervisor:
Trainee Teacher Consent Form

Title of the Research: Learning to Teach in an Intensive Introductory TESL Training Course: a Case Study of Second Language Teacher Learning.

Name of the Researcher: Danielle Freitas

Institutional Affiliation: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

I, __________________________________________, have read and understood the details of this research in the information letter written by Danielle Freitas on XXXXXXXX. I agree to participate in her study, “Learning to Teach in an Intensive Introductory TESL Training Course: a Case Study of Second Language Teacher Learning.”

[ ] In addition, I agree to have my lessons, teaching practices and feedback sessions video recorded.

Signature __________________________________________

Date _________________________________________________
Appendix E – Trainee Teacher Interview Guide

Hi! My name is Danielle Freitas and I am an MA candidate at OISE/University of Toronto, Canada, working under the supervision of Dr. Antoinette Gagné. I am conducting research on second language teacher learning and I would like to ask you some questions about your experiences as a learner and as a teacher, if any.

**Question 1:** Please tell me a little bit about yourself.
- How old are you?
- Where are you from?
- What is your first language?
- What other languages do you speak?
- Have you lived in other countries, besides your country of birth before coming to Canada? If so, which ones were they?

**Question 2:** Tell me about your past experiences as a learner.
- What’s your educational background?
- Can you describe your experiences in school?
- Overall, how would you evaluate your learning experiences?

**Question 3:** Tell me about your past experiences as a L2 learner.
- How did you learn your second/foreign language?
- If so, where did you study it? For how long?
- What activities did you like the best?
- Which ones did you like the least?
- What were your English teachers like?
- Overall, how would you evaluate your language experiences?

**Question 4:** Tell me a bit more about your L2 teaching experiences.
- How did you become interested in second language (L2) teaching?
- How did you decide to become an English language teacher?
- Was there a particular person/teacher/experience that influenced your decision?

If participant has (L2) teaching experience:
How experienced a teacher do you consider yourself to be? What makes you say that?
How do you think this the Cert course will influence your teaching?

**Question 5:** Tell me about your expectations for this Cert. course.
- Why did you choose this Cert. course?
- What do you expect to learn in the course?
- How useful do you think this course will be for your future as a L2 teacher? Why?

**Question 6:** Tell me about what qualities the ideal language teacher would possess in your opinion?
- Please elaborate (quality by quality)

**Question 7:** Tell me about what qualities the ideal language learner would possess in your opinion?
- How do you believe we learn a second language?
- What beliefs do you have about L2 language learning?

**Question 8:** Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences as (language) learner or teacher?

Thank participant, ask if there is anything they would like to add and that, if they would like to add or change their responses, they are welcome to do so.
Appendix F – Head of the Department of Teacher Training Interview Guide

Hi! My name is Danielle Freitas and I am an MA candidate at OISE/University of Toronto, Canada, working under the supervision of Dr. Antoinette Gagné. I am conducting research on second language teacher learning and I would like to ask you some questions about the Cert course.

Question 1: Please tell me a little bit about yourself.
  ➢ Country of origin
  ➢ Language and culture
  ➢ Previous education
  ➢ Teaching experience
  ➢ ESL qualifications
  ➢ Teacher Training Experience
  ➢ Head of the Teacher Training department experience

Question 2: Could you tell me a little bit more about the TESL courses here at XXXXXXXXXXXX?
  ➢ What does a typical course look like?
    o Trainee teachers
    o Lessons
    o Practicum
    o Methodology
    o Assessment

  ➢ In your experience, what does a successful trainee teacher look like? What does a weak one look like?
    o Age
    o Teaching experience
    o Educational Background
    o Language learning/teaching beliefs

Question 3: Could you tell me a little bit more about trainee teachers’ plans once they finish the courses here at XXXXXXXXXXXX?
  ➢ What is the most common reason why trainee teachers take the course? Where is the most common destination for them to teach English?
 Does the Cert Course have a good reputation overseas? Do trainee teachers usually obtain English teaching jobs with this Cert Course?
 In your opinion, are trainee teachers prepared to teach overseas? Why? Why not?
 Do you know of any difficulty trainee teachers face when teaching English abroad? Could you elaborate on it, please?

Thank participant, ask if there is anything they would like to add and that, if they would like to add or change their responses, they are welcome to do so.
Appendix G - Teacher Educator Interview Guide

Hi! My name is Danielle Freitas and I am an MA candidate at OISE/University of Toronto, Canada, working under the supervision of Dr. Antoinette Gagné. I am conducting research on second language teacher learning and I would like to ask you some questions about the Cert course.

Question 1: Please tell me a little bit about yourself.
   - Country of origin
   - Language and culture
   - Previous education
   - Teaching experience
   - ESL qualifications
   - Teacher Training Experience

Question 2: Could you tell me a little bit more about the TESL courses here at XXXXXXXXXXXXX?
   - What does a typical course look like?
     - Trainee teachers
     - Lessons
     - Practicum
     - Methodology
     - Assessment
   - In your experience, what does a successful trainee teacher look like? What does a weak one look like?
     - Age
     - Teaching experience
     - Educational Background
     - Language learning/teaching beliefs

Question 3: Could you tell me a little bit more about [trainee teachers’ name] experiences during the course?
   - Was she a typical trainee? Why? Why not?
   - In your opinion, will she be a successful trainee or a weak one? Why? Why not?
   - How was her progress during your lessons? Did you notice anything in particular?
➢ Are you aware of any changes to her beliefs about learning and teaching during the course? If so, do you know what these changes are?
➢ Are you aware of any changes to her practice? If so, do you know what these are?
➢ Would you be able to say whether the changes in her practice were related to the knowledge gained in the course? Why and how so?
➢ Have you noticed any critical incident in class where her previous experiences were in conflict with what you were teaching? Could you elaborate on it, please?

Thank participant, ask if there is anything they would like to add and that, if they would like to add or change their responses, they are welcome to do so.
Appendix H – Practicum Supervisor Interview Guide

Hi! My name is Danielle Freitas and I am an MA candidate at OISE/University of Toronto, Canada, working under the supervision of Dr. Antoinette Gagné. I am conducting research on second language teacher learning and I would like to ask you some questions about the Cert course.

**Question 1:** Please tell me a little bit about yourself.
- Country of origin
- Language and culture
- Previous education
- Teaching experience
- ESL qualifications
- Teacher Training Supervising Experience

**Question 2:** Could you tell me a little bit more about the TESL courses here at XXXXXXXXXXXXX?
- What does a typical course look like?
  - Trainee teachers
  - Lessons
  - Practicum
  - Methodology
  - Assessment

- In your experience, what does a successful trainee teacher look like? What does a weak one look like?
  - Age
  - Teaching experience
  - Educational Background
  - Language learning/teaching beliefs

**Question 3:** Could you tell me a little bit more about [trainee teachers’ name] experiences during the course?
- Was she a typical trainee? Why? Why not?
- In your opinion, will she be a successful trainee or a weak one? Why? Why not?
- How was her progress during the practicum? Did you notice anything in particular?
➢ Are you aware of any changes to her beliefs about learning and teaching during the course? If so, do you know what these changes are?
➢ Have you observed any changes to her practice? If so, do you know what these are?
➢ Would you be able to say whether the changes in her practice were related to the knowledge gained in the course? Why and how so?
➢ Have you noticed any critical incident in class where her previous experiences were in conflict with what you were teaching? Could you elaborate on it, please?

Thank participant, ask if there is anything they would like to add and that, if they would like to add or change their responses, they are welcome to do so.
Lesson Plan Cover Page: Pronunciation

Date: Monday, March 28, 2011
Class Start Time: 3:15 pm
Class End Time: 4:30 pm
Skills: Pronunciation and Speaking
Theme: Sightseeing

Learning Objectives:
1. Students will speak freely about the sightseeing theme.
2. Students will be introduced to the three –ed ending verb sounds using the deductive approach.
3. Students will be able to practice the –ed ending verb sounds while playing the “Running Dictation”.
4. Students will be able to experiment with the –ed ending verb sounds while doing some role play.

Personal Teaching Objectives:
- Minimize TTT
- Give clear and simple instructions
- Prompting students
- Concept check
- Error correct

Anticipated Problems/Knowledge:
1. Students have problems pronouncing the different past tense sounds.
2. Students have a difficult time identifying the different sounds (voiced and unvoiced).

Solutions:
1. Write down verb with phoneme ending so they are able to see it.
2. Explain how to identify (vibration in throat) voiced and unvoiced sounds.

Materials:
- White erase markers
- Sightseeing worksheet (x 12) – Study
- Running Dictation sentences – Controlled Activate
### INTRODUCTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Welcome the students to the class. Introduce myself by telling the class my name and where I’m from. | 2-5 minutes | Teacher-Students: introductions being done in group setting | • To introduce everyone.  
• To learn the students’ names.  
• To create a welcoming and comfortable learning environment. |

### ENGAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Group the students into pairs or groups of three and ask them to discuss the questions. After giving the students time to exchange their answers in their groups, I will select some of the pairs/groups to share their answers with the rest of the class. This will then allow me to introduce the theme and the lesson. | 10-12 minutes  
• 7-9 minutes to answer discussion questions in groups  
• 3-5 minutes to share discussion questions with the rest of the class | Teacher-Students: giving instructions  
Student-Student: discussion questions in groups  
Students-Students: sharing discussion questions with the rest of the class | • To stimulate students into talking freely about sightseeing.  
• To assess the group’s level, fluency, accuracy and dynamics.  
• To assess whether the lesson plan needs modification. |

Engage Discussion Questions:
1. What is the most interesting city to visit in your country? Why?
2. What are popular tourist destinations in your country?
3. Have you been to any of them?
4. Which would you recommend if you could only recommend one? Why?

### STUDY

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Before distributing part 1 of the worksheet, give instructions for the    | 20-25 minutes  
• 10-12 minutes to work on | Teacher-Students: giving instructions  
Student-Student: | • To introduce – ed ending pronunciation |
activity. In pairs, the students will work on part 1. After allotted time, I will elicit the answers and teach the rules to the –ed ending pronunciation. Then, individually, the students will be asked to listen as I say words (part 2), they will have to identify the odd one out of the –ed ending verbs. I will then elicit the answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONROLLED ACTIVATE</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Procedure</strong></td>
<td>15-20 minutes</td>
<td>Teacher-Students: giving instructions, Student-Student: dictations</td>
<td>To allow the students time to practice and understand –ed ending pronunciation. To ensure that the students are understanding –ed ending pronunciation through concept checking and error correcting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timing</strong></td>
<td>5 minutes for the first set of students to dictate their sentence, 6 minutes for the first set of students to dictate their sentence, 5 minutes for the students to verify their dictations with original sentence</td>
<td>Teacher-Students: giving instructions, Student-Student: dictations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction</strong></td>
<td>7-9 minutes to work on</td>
<td>Teacher-Students: giving instructions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>FREER ACTIVATE</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Procedure</strong></td>
<td>15-20 minutes</td>
<td>Teacher-Students: giving instructions</td>
<td>To allow students to speak freely and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timing</strong></td>
<td>7-9 minutes to work on</td>
<td>Teacher-Students: giving instructions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher-Students: giving instructions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
about going sightseeing in Toronto. They will have to use 4 –ed ending verbs for each sound category (a total of 12 verbs). After allotted time the students will present their dialogues.

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<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| In pairs, one student will be a tour guide in their hometown and the other will be the tourist. They are to create a dialogue. | 15-20 minutes | Teacher-Students: giving instructions  
Student-Student: create a dialogue | • To allow students to speak freely and naturally about the theme while using –ed ending verbs  
• To error correct |

**BACK UP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Teacher-Students: giving instructions  
Student-Student: working on dialogues | naturally about the theme while using –ed ending verbs  
• To error correct |

**FILLER**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| If students finish activity/ies early, I will have the students come up with 5 more –ed ending verbs and categorize them by their sound. | 3-5 minutes | Teacher-Students: giving instructions  
Student-Student: finding –ed ending verbs | • To give the students an opportunity to become more familiar with –ed ending verb sounds |
Teacher's Notes

Three Different Pronunciations for Words Ending with "-ed"
For English past tense pronunciation of regular verbs, the "-ed" ending has the following three distinct pronunciations:
/t/ /d/ /əd/

How to Determine When to Use each of these Pronunciations:
Rule #1:
If the verb ends in a voiceless sound: f, k, p, s, ʧ (ch), ʃ (sh), θ (th), 'ed' is pronounced /t/.

Rule #2:
If the verb ends in a voiced sound: b, g, ʒ (j), l, m, n, n̩, r, ð (th), v, z, + vowels, 'ed' is pronounced /d/.

Rule #3:
If the verb ends in /t/ or /d/, 'ed' is pronounced /əd/.
This is the only ending that is pronounced with an additional syllable.

Concept checking questions
/t/ sound:
Why is worked pronounced with /t/ at the end?
Why is worked not pronounced with /əd/?
What is another example of for this sound?

/d/ sound:
Why is learned pronounced with /d/ at the end?
Why is learned not pronounced with /əd/?
What is another example of for this sound?

/əd/ sound:
Why is decided pronounced with /əd/ at the end?
Why is decided not pronounced with /t/ or /d/?
What is another example of for this sound?

PART 1
Read the text below and look for all the words that end in ‘ed’. Read each sentence to your partner and depending on the ed-ending sound, write the word in the appropriate column.

Last week, my friends and I decided to go sightseeing in Toronto. We arranged to meet in the morning at Dupont subway station. Once everyone arrived, we walked to Casa Loma. The group was very excited and interested to visit the city's only castle. There was so much to learn and we asked a lot of questions. Before leaving, we stopped at the gift shop to buy some souvenirs. After we completed the tour, we were hungry and
went to a nearby restaurant for lunch. We all ordered burgers and fries and discussed where we were going next. It was not an easy decision but we finally agreed on going to the Bata Shoe museum. We learned how and where the first shoes were made. We really enjoyed seeing shoes donated by Elton John and the Spice Girls. The last place on our list was the CN Tower, of course. We made it just in time to see the sunset from the observation deck. All of us were amazed to see how the city lights came one. It was an amazing site, we looked at the city from up there for what seemed to be hours. We ended the day by going to dinner at the 360 Restaurant. It was a full day, we visited three of the most know attractions in Toronto.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/t/</th>
<th>/d/</th>
<th>/id/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>asked</td>
<td>arranged</td>
<td>decided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walked</td>
<td>arrived</td>
<td>excited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discussed</td>
<td>ordered</td>
<td>interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amazed</td>
<td>agreed</td>
<td>completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looked</td>
<td>learned</td>
<td>donated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stopped</td>
<td>enjoyed</td>
<td>ended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>seemed</td>
<td>visited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PART 2
Now it's time to listen. See if you can identify which one is not like the others.

1. loved, rubbed (/d/), laughed (/t/)
2. stopped, mixed (/t/), ended (/id/)
3. repeated, added (/id/), called (/d/)
4. studied, pointed (/id/), boxed (/t/)
5. stayed, married (/d/), presented (/id/)
6. dished, liked (/t/), continued (/id/)
7. watched, walked (/t/), waited (/id/)
8. believed, enjoyed (/d/), worked (/t/)
9. created, depended (/id/), dressed (/t/)
10. played, paged (/d/), parted (/id/)
Running Dictation

We watched the sun go down from the top of the CN Tower.

John and I waited for tour bus near the Rogers Centre.

Susan and Judy loved shopping at the Eaton Centre.

Tom and Steve walked around for hours in downtown Toronto.
Last week, my friends and I decided to go sightseeing in Toronto. We arranged to meet in the morning at Dupont subway station. Once everyone arrived, we walked to Casa Loma. The group was very excited and interested to visit the city’s only castle. There was so much to learn and we asked a lot of questions. Before leaving, we stopped at the gift shop to buy some souvenirs. After we completed the tour, we were hungry and went to a nearby restaurant for lunch. We all ordered burgers and fries and discussed where we were going next. It was not an easy decision but we finally agreed on going to the Bata Shoe museum. We learned how and where the first shoes were made. We really enjoyed seeing shoes donated by Elton John and the Spice Girls. The last place on our list was the CN Tower, of course. We made it just in time to see the sunset from the observation deck. All of us were amazed to see how the city lights came one. It was an amazing site, we looked at the city from up there for what seemed to be hours. We ended the day by going to dinner at the 360 Restaurant. It was a full day, we visited three of the most know attractions in Toronto.
PART 2

Now it’s time to listen. See if you can identify which one is not like the others.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
## Appendix J – Lesson Evaluation: Sample Page with Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDY (Part 2)</th>
<th>PRELIMINA RY</th>
<th>EMPI RICAL</th>
<th>CONCEPT CHECKING</th>
<th>CONCEPT CHECKING</th>
<th>DEVELOPING</th>
<th>IMPROVEMENT</th>
<th>NEEDS IMPROVEMENT</th>
<th>ACCOMPLISHED</th>
<th>DISTINGUISHED</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher did not attempt to elicit anything from the students.</td>
<td>Teacher attempted to elicit, but only with limited success.</td>
<td>Teacher successfully elicited most answers. Some prompting was done when a student didn't know the answer.</td>
<td>Teacher successfully elicited all answers in a variety of ways.</td>
<td>Teacher did not ensure students could pronounce the target pronunciation sounds correctly.</td>
<td>Teacher attempted to ensure students could pronounce the target pronunciation sounds correctly, but individualized confirmation and pronunciation correction did not occur.</td>
<td>Teacher checked individual student’s pronunciation and worked on correcting mispronunciations with moderate success.</td>
<td>Teacher checked individual student’s pronunciation and worked on correcting mispronunciations with success.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>DS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher did not monitor and/or did not make feedback available to students.</td>
<td>Teacher attempted to monitor, but monitoring was somewhat ineffective.</td>
<td>Teacher monitored throughout stage and helped students who needed it. Teacher made notes of errors or areas of concern to be addressed later in this stage.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students did not get any or only got a very limited chance to talk. There was between 0% - 25% SIT vs. TTT.</td>
<td>Students talked for the majority of the time. There was between 51% - 75% SIT vs. TTT.</td>
<td>Students talked for a large majority of the time. There was 76% or more SIT vs. TTT.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>DS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes:</td>
<td>Notes:</td>
<td>Notes:</td>
<td>Notes:</td>
<td>Notes:</td>
<td>Notes:</td>
<td>Notes:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>AC</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TOTAL STAGE EVALUATION

**AC**
Appendix K – Sample Student Evaluation

Thank you for taking the time to evaluate today's lesson. This is anonymous; do not write your name. Please give this to the Supervisor when you're done.

Part I: Please put a check mark in the best column

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Definitely Yes</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not Really</th>
<th>Definitely No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you enjoy today's lesson?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you understand today's lesson?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you understand the teacher's instructions?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the teacher answer your questions properly?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you learn something from today's lesson?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you attend this teacher's class again?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part II: Short Answer

What 3 things did you like best about today's lesson?
- SHE IS VERY NICE

What 3 things did you like least about today's lesson?
- N/A

What advice can you give this teacher that will help improve his/her next lesson?
- N/A
Day 2
Aug 21/12
Today my excitement turned to fear a little bit. We started talking about grammar. I had not learned grammar since grade school, it was difficult to wrap my head around the grammar rules we learned about. I was a little anxious after that. I was definitely a shock I didn’t realize how much I didn’t know about grammar until then. I know how to use some of these grammar concepts but had no idea what the rule or functions for some of it. This is definitely going to be a learning experience.
Appendix M – Copyright Permission

INVOICE/CONTRACT

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11 December 2012

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These figures will appear in your MA thesis, written as part of your studies at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education – University of Toronto and to be published in T-Space ([https://tspac.library.utoronto.ca/](https://tspac.library.utoronto.ca/)) in Spring 2013.

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