

Expectations and Needs Analysis of M.A. TESOL Students in the USA

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This study aims at analyzing the needs of M.A. TESOL(Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) students at Michigan State University and New York University, especially focusing on those of the students who are expected to teach English as a foreign language setting. A survey questionnaire was used to ask participants to list their expectations and needs and to evaluate their M.A.TESOL programs in terms of meeting their expectations. Respondents expressed concerns regarding the extent to which their programs are meeting their needs and made suggestions they believed would help make the programs better. Students at both schools showed dissatisfaction in the course variety and the difficulties in understanding teaching approaches, methods, and the applications in real use.

Keywords: [needs analysis/curriculum/TESOL program/요구분석/교과과정분석]

1. Introduction

In the field of language teaching, needs analysis is conducted to learn students' needs for language learning. Needs analysis is a useful tool to identify styles, goals, and motivations of language learners. Without learning students' urgent needs, it is difficult to develop and choose appropriate teaching techniques and materials suitable for language learners. In addition, language teaching can be evaluated in terms of satisfying students' needs. According to Brown (1995), in his model of language curriculum, needs analysis is a starting point in

developing a curriculum and an important component for curriculum evaluation. In this light, this study is designed to conduct needs analysis for future language teachers who enrolled in a TESOL program in America. The research question of the study is to exam what the students expected from the program and what they thought they needed to be prepared to teach in the setting they wanted. This question made it possible to investigate if these expectations and needs vary according to the settings in which they want to teach. Also, the study investigates whether the M. A. TESOL programs in the U.S. are meeting the expectations and needs of their students well enough in terms of training professionals for EFL (English as Foreign Language) settings.

Goals of this research are:

1. To identify the motivations of students who are attending M.A. TESOL programs: Related to their career background or future career plans, if there were any specific reasons of choosing TESOL than other programs, or of preferring that particular school to other schools.
2. To survey if the students in the two programs think the programs they are attending are providing them with necessary courses, and if the students think the courses they are taking are necessary or are run in a useful manner in relation to what they expect their programs to be like.
3. To see if there is any different needs depending on the students' nationality, or language background or their future plans and if two programs are satisfying students' needs.

In this study, the two terms, "expectations" and "needs" are used because, before students actually study TESOL, what they have in mind and expect can be somewhat vague and different from what they narrow down in detail as they actually study in TESOL programs. Expectations related to their past career were asked; if they had taught ESL or EFL before, they might have had some difficulties, which could have motivated them to major in TESOL and they must have expected to learn something in the program. Needs were what they have specified since they started to study in either program: things that they have found relevant and necessary to qualify themselves as efficient teachers in the

environment they wanted to teach in since they started the TESOL programs.

2. Methods

In order to answer the research question, the study surveyed MA TESOL students at Michigan State University and New York University. In the survey, students were asked to provide general information such as their gender, age, majors for B.A. degree, first languages, and any other languages they can speak. In the case of NYU students, the indication of the level that they are specializing in was also required because the NYU TESOL program has three subspecialties under one roof: the elementary, secondary and college level.

Jun Liu (1999) performed research on the political, professional meaning of “nonnative speaker” label and she asked if the nonnative speaking professionals were effective and beneficial in teaching English only to the nonnative speaking professionals themselves, but not to the employers, supervisors, or students who have experienced nonnative speaking professionals. Following her study, they were asked if they think their being a native or nonnative speaker of English influences the setting or the environment in which they could teach English. This question was asked to find any different expectations or needs between native speaking and nonnative speaking TESOL majors. If the motivation to major in TESOL was rooted in their past career was asked or if there was any other reason than the past career was also asked. Also, their future plans were asked because it was necessary to see if the probable language environment that the TESOL majors would teach could have influences on their having different needs. These were the initial guidelines to lead the participants to think about the reasons they have chosen TESOL as their major in graduate courses and about the expectations they had, etc. After each question, students were asked to evaluate if they thought the program they are in or have been attending is meeting their expectations or needs well enough.

The last question was, if they were not fully satisfied with the program in terms of meeting their expectations or needs, to ask for suggestions to make the

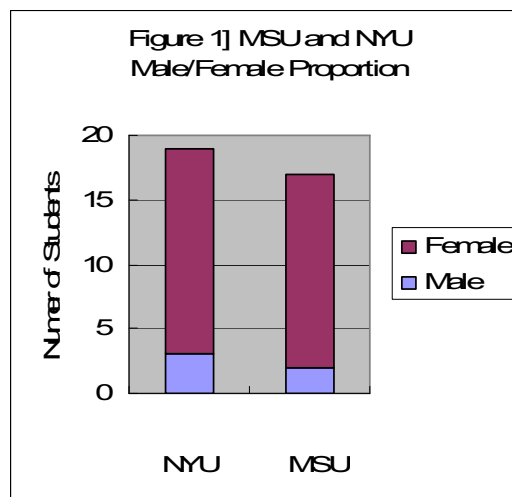
TESOL programs more beneficial for the students who have the same dissatisfactions. The questionnaire is attached at the end of this article as Appendix A. Because just surveying students can produce biased results, this study added objective facts, which would be obtained by reviewing the curricula of the two programs.

3. Result

3.1. Survey Analysis

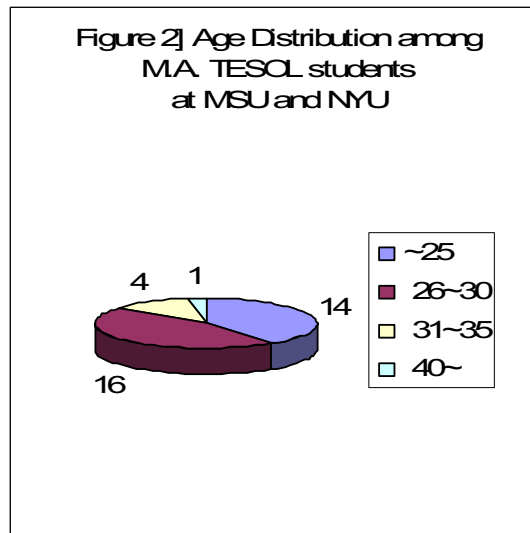
The survey questionnaires were distributed among the second year students at MSU, but this consistency of limiting the participants to the second year students couldn't be kept at NYU. The problem this inconsistency could have caused will be discussed later.

Figure 1
Male/Female Proportion



The general information part from the survey provided interesting findings about the TESOL population at MSU and NYU although this survey couldn't be a representation of the entire TESOL demography due to the partial participation of students at both schools. Figure 1 shows that the number of male students is very small at both schools: out of 19 participants at NYU, three students were male students and 2 out of 17 at MSU. Figure 2 shows that 83.3% of the participants were in their 20s.

Figure 2
Age Distribution



The majors for participants' Bachelor's degrees were not limited to English or Language teaching related fields but also including various majors such as history, social work, business management, etc. The most interesting major among those was zoology; the participant with this major stated that he had quite a few immigrant students whose English proficiency was not as good as other native speaking students in his science class and that made him interested in teaching the students with the language barrier. Figure 3 shows the

proportion of different majors that participants had in their undergraduate years. Still, it was shown that about 64% of the participants had either English or language related majors for the B.A. degrees (15 out of 35 had B.As in English and 8 in language related fields), indicating the majority of M.A. TESOL students had language related roots in the past.

Figure 3
Majors in Undergraduate Years

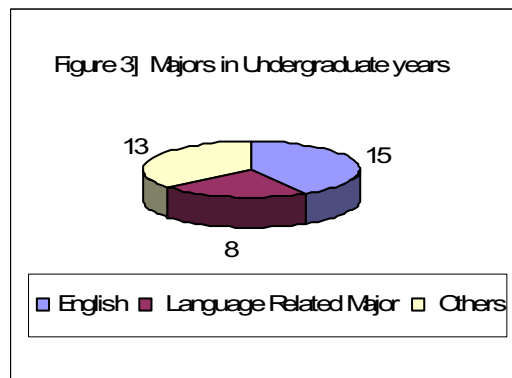
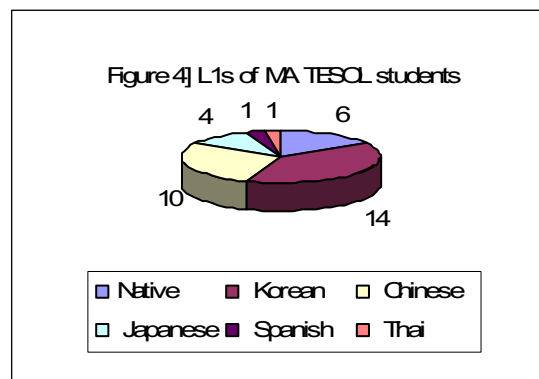


Figure 4
L1s of M.A. TESOL Students



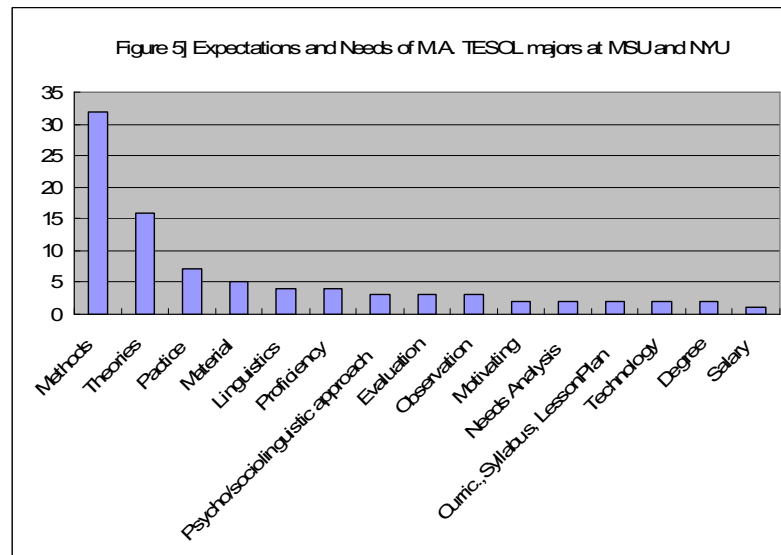
Another interesting finding is the ratio of non-native speakers to native speakers. Despite the common sense that native speakers are the ones who speak better English, the majority of M.A. TESOL majors were Asians. As Figure 4 shows, native speakers are only 6 out of 36 participants and among the rest 30, 29 participants are from Asia (14 from Korea, 10 from China, 4 from Japan, 1 from Thailand) and only one from Spain. Indicating the rising boom of English education in Asian countries. Also, 18 out of 36 participants, that is, 50% said they could speak languages other than their first languages and English (in the case that English is not their first language).

After the general information, the expectations and needs were combined into one category to be analyzed. Throughout two schools, the most wanted were the methods and theories that would help students to become more efficient and skillful teachers. In this part, what they mentioned as their expectations and needs were very impressive: of course, the methods, theories, practice, material development and use, linguistic background, and English proficiency, that is, language teaching related issues were mainly discussed, however, the participants were also concerned with motivating students or analyzing language learners' needs, which means that they do not just want to be competent but also sympathetic and considerate teachers. As high technology develops, computer assisted language learning (CALL) and media related teaching methods were also interesting to students. Still, the most honest and interesting answers were the degree pursuit and higher salary, which also could not be ignored in that the professionals with certified TESOL degrees are better paid especially in the EFL settings.

Interestingly, four respondents mentioned English proficiency as one of their expectations and needs and one of those four participants complained that the teachers were not voluntary to offer students with help and guidelines so that they can improve their English proficiency faster and participate in class discussions. This could be explained as the cultural difference investigated by Jin

and Cortazzi (1993). Jin and Cortazzi explained that Asian students expect more help and guidelines because they were brought up in a different culture that students respect their teachers as beings with absolute answers and expect them to know everything and lead students to the predetermined right way.

Figure 5
Expectations and Needs of M.A.TESOL Majors at MSU and NYU



Showing the most interest in method and theory learning, students found method and theory classes the most helpful in both programs, Figure 6 and 7 show what courses students at MSU and NYU find the most helpful. Students were allowed to list more than one course. Teaching L2: Theory and Practice was the course that students at NYU found most helpful while the equal number of students at MSU selected “Introduction to TESOL” and “Introduction to Second Language

Acquisition.” At NYU, students’ selecting the Bilingual and Multicultural Education course reflected their interest in the local community specific learning environment (New York, NY). Except for that Bilingual and Multicultural Education course and Jazz Chant Class by Carolyn Graham mentioned by one participant at NYU, almost all the courses mentioned and selected as helpful were common in both schools. Introduction to TESOL at MSU is a course that deals with similar topics to Teaching 2: Theory and practice at NYU, Practicum in TESOL at MSU to Practicum courses with several subsections at NYU, and Structures and Functions of English at MSU to Structure of American English at NYU.

Figure 6.
Helpful Courses at NYU

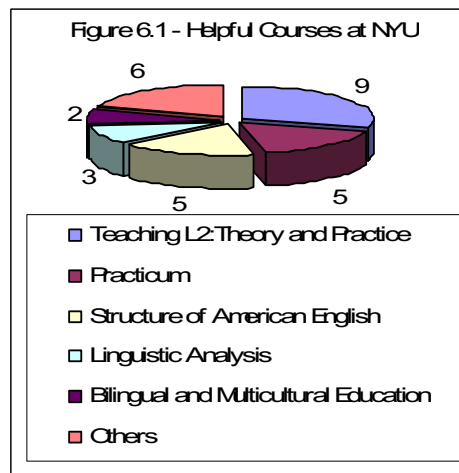
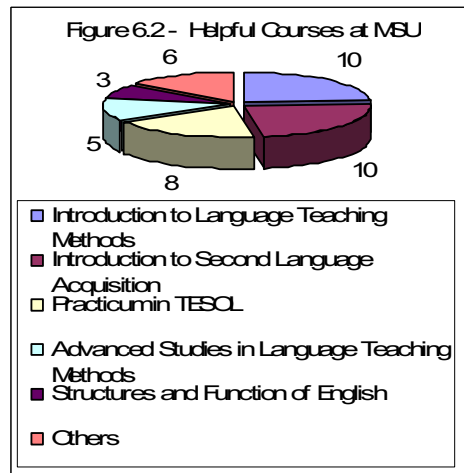


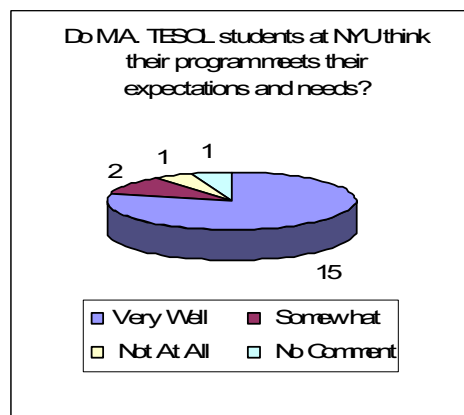
Figure 7
Helpful Courses at MSU



In the next part, students responded to the question if they thought their programs met their expectations and needs and the analysis is as follows. As you can see in Figure 8 and 9, students at MSU and NYU show a little different degrees of satisfaction. These criteria of satisfaction, 'very well (satisfying)', 'somewhat (satisfying)', and 'not at all (satisfying)', were built up according to the number of saying yes to the two questions regarding expectations and needs. If the respondents answered yes to both questions - if the program is meeting your expectations, if the program is providing you with your needs - that respondent was categorized into 'very well' since s/he recognized the program to be very well satisfying (or meeting his/her expectations and needs very well). If a respondent said yes only to one of the two questions, s/he was categorized into 'somewhat' and if no to both questions, that respondent was put into the category, 'not at all.'

Students at both schools showed considerable satisfaction with their programs. The apparent results seem to implicate less satisfaction in MSU population, however, the degree of satisfaction cannot be compared at this point because the consistency in terms of the amount of time that participants spent in their respective programs was not kept.

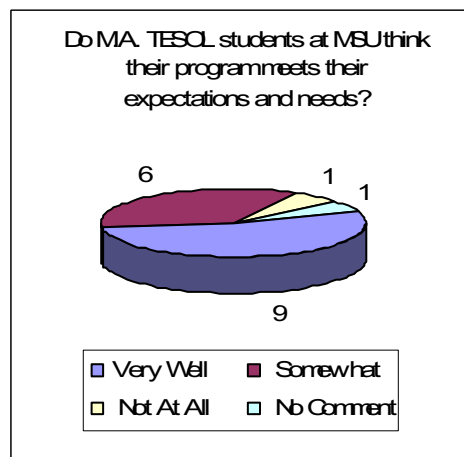
Figure 8
Students' Response at NYU



Since the participants were not 100% fully satisfied with their programs, they had suggestions to make their programs better fitting to their wants. Three suggestions were made in common at both schools: students at both schools asked for more variety in choosing courses; also, they expressed their concern about not being able to clearly understand teaching approaches, methods and their applications in real use that they have been taught; for the last, they suggested that method and theory classes be combined. Other suggestions were specified for each program, for instance, students at NYU wanted more psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic related classes, which students at MSU did not mention since they were provided with these courses. Also, students at NYU were dissatisfied with a rather little amount of time assigned for each class. One

respondent specified that they had only one 90-minute-class per week for each course and argued for the necessity to study each topic in depth. On the other hand, students at MSU insisted that they have a bigger number of faculty and suggested courses be offered every semester. Although students' opinions and suggestions about their programs were poignant and reasonable, it should not be based solely on the students' evaluation to determine if these programs are well preparing students to teach in the EFL setting. Thus, the objective review of curriculum at two schools will be presented in the next part.

Figure 9
Students Response at MSU



3.2. Curriculum Review

The curriculum of M.A. TESOL at New York University is divided into two tracks: K-12 level and College level. To get an M. A. degree of TESOL with the subspecialty of Elementary or Secondary level at NYU(K-12), one should take 44-45 credits. Table 1 and 2 show the required and elective courses at the NYU TESOL program. Foundation section takes up 15 credits. Compared to the

college level, the two courses in the last, 'Bilingual and Multicultural Education: Theory and Practice' and 'Intercultural Perspective in Multilingual Education' seem to be related to teaching the immigrant students who are in bilingual and multicultural situation. While college level adults have already established their cultural identity, teaching students at K-12 level growing up with more than one language is dealt with distinctively.

Another 9 credits should be earned in the specialization section. Classroom Practice, which is equivalent to practicum at MSU, is also included in the curriculum as two required courses; 'The Second Language Classroom: Elementary & Secondary Schools' and 'Teaching Second Language Across Content Areas.' In the Field Experiences section, 6 ~ 9 credits can be earned among four courses according to Table 1. Four to five credits can be earned in the other requirements section with one 4-credit required course and one 1-credit elective course and the last 3 credits can be chosen between 'Advanced Individual Project in Multicultural Education' and 'Culminating Seminar in Multilingual Education.'

Compared to K - 12 level, college level requires fewer credits: 34 credits total. 9 credits should be earned through the same foundation courses as the K-12 level except for the 'Bilingual and Multicultural education' and 'Intercultural Perspective in Multilingual Education.' Table 2 shows the course requirements and the variety of elective courses for college level specializing students. From Table 1 and Table 2, what is easily found is that despite the wide variety of courses offered in the NYU M.A. TESOL program, still courses focusing on the EFL teaching are rarely found. Even the course like 'Bilingual and Multicultural Education: Theory and Practice' is about the ESL setting, which one of the two languages is being used as a main medium of communication and the other also prevalently.

Table 1
Required Courses in NYU TESOL Curriculum

Title	Points
Foundation (15 credits)	
Teaching Second Languages: Theory and Practice	3
Structure of American English	3
Linguistics Analysis	3
Bilingual and Multicultural Education: Theory and Practice	3
Intercultural Perspective in Multilingual Education	3
Specialization (9 credits)	
Teaching Second Languages in a Technological Society	3
Language Evaluation and Assessment	3
Second Language Acquisition Research (required)	3
Utilizing Community Resources & Parental Involvement in Language Education Program	3
Linguistics, Literacy, & Bilingualism	3
Linguistics, Society and the Teacher	3
Classroom Practice (7 credits)	
The Second Language Classroom: Elementary & Secondary Schools	4
Teaching Second Language across content areas	3
Field Experiences (6-9 credits)	
Observation Seminar in Second Language Teaching	3
Field Experiences seminar: Teaching Foreign Languages	3
Supervised Student Teaching in Second Languages: K-6 (Required)	3
Supervised Student Teaching in Second Languages: 7-12 (Required)	3
Other Requirements (4-5 credits)	
Inquiries into Teaching and Learning III (Required for pre-service teachers and must be taken during the first year)	4
Drug and Alcohol Education	1
Terminal Experience (3 credits)	
Advanced Individual Project in Multicultural Education	3-6
Cumulating Seminar in Multilingual Education	3

Table 2
Elective Courses in NYU TESOL Curriculum

Title	Points
Foundation (9 credits)	
Teaching Second Languages: Theory and Practice	3
Linguistics Analysis	3
Structure of American English	3
Methods (3-9 credits)	
Teaching Second Languages in a Technological Society	3
Language Evaluation and Assessment	3
Teaching Second Language Across Content Areas	3
Language, Culture and Education (3-9 credits)	
Bilingual and Multicultural Education: Theory and Practice	
Intercultural Perspective in Multilingual Education	
Linguistics, Literacy and Bilingualism	
Linguistics, Society, and the Teacher	
Specialization Electives (3-6 credits)	
Workshop in Teaching Foreign Languages (Summer only)	1 - 6
Native Language Arts	3
Second Language Acquisition Research	3
Classroom Practice (4 credits)	
The Second Language Classroom: College and Adults	4
Field Experiences (3 - 6 credits)	
Observation Seminar in Second Language Teaching	3
Internship in Language Teaching	3 - 6
Terminal Experience (3 credits)	
Advanced Individual project in Multicultural Education	3 - 6
Culminating Seminar in Multilingual Education	3

The curriculum at MSU does not have any distinction like that of NYU. 30 hours of course work are required in the MSU TESOL curriculum. Table 3 shows the list of courses at the MSU TESOL program. Required courses are 'Introduction to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages,' 'Advanced studies in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages,' 'Introduction to Second Language Acquisition,' 'Methods of Research in Language Learning and Teaching,' 'Structures and Functions of English,' 'Special Topics in Language Teaching and Learning,' and 'Practicum in TESOL.' In addition to these seven required courses, three more elective courses should be taken. One course should be within the Linguistics field, one from Language in Context, and the last elective can be chosen in consultation with the advisor.

Table3
MSU TESOL Curriculum

Required Courses (3 credits x 7 = 21 credits)	Electives (3credits x 3 = 9 credits)
ENG 807: Introduction to TESOL ENG 808: Advanced studies in TESOL ENG 461: Introduction to Second Language Acquisition ENG 872: Methods of Research in Language Learning and Teaching ENG 841: Special Topics in Language Teaching and Learning ENG 846: Structure and Functions of English ENG 896: Practicum in TESOL	Linguistics LIN 424 Phonology LIN 434 Syntax LIN 437 Semantics and Pragmatics
	Language in Context ENG 843 Variation in English ANP 420 Language and Culture LIN 471 Sociolinguistics ENG 848 Discourse Analysis

4. Conclusions

Prior to summing up this research, it seems important to point out that the objective of this research was on the analysis of the expectations and needs of TESOL students, not on the evaluation of the two TESOL programs at NYU and MSU. Comparing two programs in terms of EFL teaching preparation, there is not a significant difference since both schools do not have any EFL specified courses offered. However, students who enrolled in both programs should already have known that the programs offered at NYU and MSU are targeting the future teachers who would be working in ESL settings. It is just that they might not have realized that how different methods and theories could be for ESL and EFL settings until they started to study at either program. Conducting this research, it became clear that the TESOL students who would later teach in EFL settings are feeling insufficiency in ESL teacher training programs. Even though it is the job of those who are already teaching in EFL settings, scholars outside the U.S. or at least in Asia are not very active in experimenting and conducting research on their own specific teaching (or learning) environment. There can be no such thing as too much emphasis on the importance of nonnative speaking TESOL professionals' active participation in EFL teaching and learning related research since the size of English teaching and learning population is significantly larger in EFL settings than in ESL settings.

Conducting this research, there were a few limitations during the process, by overcoming those shortcomings, this type of research, or this type of curiosity can give rise to further investigation on EFL teaching. The questionnaire should have either provided more guidelines to the students so that they could look at the question in the way the researcher intended (such as multiple choice questionnaire) or been followed by the further discussion through later contacts such as e-mailing or interviewing as in Liu's study (1999). Since the questionnaire was full of open-ended questions, it was difficult for both the participants and the researcher to answer and analyze them. Also, to avoid the unreliable result as in the satisfaction survey, keeping consistency in selecting participants should be strict in later studies. It was not very reasonable to compare the responses of those who were in their third semester with the

responses of those who had been in the U.S. and in the TESOL program less than four months - recalling that the majority of the participants at New York University were in their first semester. In this sense, this study could be used as a pilot study to provide some ideas about designing a questionnaire, furthering the discussion with participants, and recruiting participants for study.

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Appendix A

Survey Questionnaire

Your answers will be totally confidential and will be used only for this research purpose and nothing else. Please print to make your writing legible. Thank you for your time and help.

Personal Data: please circle one.

Sex: M F

Age: 25 and under, 26 ~ 30, 31 ~ 35, 35 ~ 40, 40 and over

Please mark your subdivision in your department: Elementary/ Secondary/
College level

Language and Educational background

Major for B.A. Degree: _____

First Language: _____

If English is L1, what variety of English do you speak? (e.g. Midwest U.S., Texas, New York, Canadian Australian, etc) _____

Do you speak any other language? If any, please write in the space and circle the phrase that corresponds to your overall proficiency in that language.

_____ : Near native - advanced - intermediate - low

_____ : Near native - advanced - intermediate - low

_____ : Near native - advanced - intermediate - low

_____ : Near native - advanced - intermediate - low

- Do you think your being a native speaker or a non-native speaker influences the setting or environment in which you can teach English? Please explain why or why not.

Career Background

Have you taught English as a second/foreign language? (Yes / No)

If yes, was it ESL, or EFL?

- If your answer to the previous question was no, have you had any career related to TESOL?

(Yes / No)

- If you answered yes to any of the two questions above from the career background section, please describe how your experience from the past career influenced you to choose and major in TESOL. If you answered no to both of them, please describe why you decided to major in TESOL.

Future Plan

Are you planning to teach ESL or EFL after graduation? (Yes / No)

If no, would you please describe your future plan? If yes, please describe the most probable language environment in which you might be teaching.

Evaluation of your current program

- What did you expect or need to learn by majoring in TESOL?

- Is your program meeting your needs well enough? If yes, please mention the courses you think are helpful to gain any skills or knowledge that you wanted to have. If no, please state why in the last question of this survey. (More space is available on top of the next page)

- What do you think you need to learn in TESOL related to your future career plan?

- Is your program providing you with a curriculum that matches your needs? If yes, please mention the courses you think are helpful to gain any skills or knowledge that might be necessary in your future career. If no, please state why in the next question.

- Did you find anything insufficient or lacking in the curriculum of the program that you are currently attending? Do you have any suggestions for your program to make it more beneficial? If you answered no to the last two questions, you can state the details here.

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