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## The benefits of intercultural interactions: a position paper on the effects of study abroad and intercultural competence on pre-service and active teachers of ESL

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The benefits of intercultural interactions: A position paper on the effects  
of study abroad and intercultural competence on pre-service and active  
teachers of ESL

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A thesis

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Cheney, Washington

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree

Master of Arts

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by

Bergen Lorraine McCurdy

THE EFFECTS OF INTERCULTURAL INTERACTIONS

Summer 2012

THESIS OF BERGEN MCCURDY APPROVED BY

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Dr. Tracey McHenry, GRADUATE STUDY COMMITTEE

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MASTER'S THESIS

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This thesis discusses a potential connection between immersion programs, second language acquisition, intercultural awareness, and the pre-service English as a Second Language instructors' ability to provide interculturally aware TESL education to their language learners. A review of the literature connected to intercultural awareness and second language acquisition contributes to the discussion of how the two topics are connected and how they combine to inform current United States' TESL programs and education.

## THE EFFECTS OF INTERCULTURAL INTERACTIONS

### Acknowledgements

I extend my gratitude to Dr. Tracey McHenry and Dr. LaVona L. Reeves for their professional support, encouragement, patience and guidance during the thesis process.

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## **Chapter 1: Preface, overview, introduction and operational definitions**

### **Preface**

#### **Language study prior to graduate study at EWU.**

I became aware of Eastern's TESL program while browsing the graduate programs offered on Eastern's Graduate Studies website. I was interested in the Teaching English as a Second Language program because I identify with the thrill of language learning. Since I began studying language, I have become more aware of the intricacies and complexities of my own language. Language for communication is fascinating. The interplay between languages and cultures is even more enjoyable for me. I find they provide a richness of commentary on human life. That is why I wish to have more capacity to work with the English language.

I looked into several other programs offered by the bigger schools in Washington State before deciding to apply for the MA-TESL at Eastern. The programs that I considered were mostly in the Education and English fields which are both my main areas of interest. However, I was also looking for something that would mesh with my earlier areas of study, German language and literature, which is why the Eastern Washington University program was ultimately more appealing than the others.

After graduating in May 2010 from the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, I had earned a Bachelor's of Arts in Foreign Language and Literature - German, as well as a music minor with classical Contra Bass. The moment I knew I really earned my Bachelor's degree was during the last week of my senior year. I was putting the final few hours of work into a full length Bachelor's thesis to be written in German. As I read through the various article references I had used, I became aware that I was reading literary German texts as efficiently as I am able to read them in English. At that moment, I realized I held in my hands a 15 page document clarifying my thesis about two pieces of classic German literature, and I had written that document entirely in German. I recognized myself as a scholar of German literature. After that experience, I feel that marshalling my thoughts and organizing research information to create a coherent thesis is achievable.

The description of the MA-TESL sounded like a continuation of my original language studies but with a welcome reversal. As I studied German, I noticed correlations between the German grammatical style and that of English. Looking at the English words, meanings and phrasing that I take for granted from the angle of a foreign language has become a provocative discovery for me.

**Language teaching experience prior to graduate study at EWU.**

The final fall quarter that I was enrolled at the University of Puget Sound, I took an education course—EDU 420 Teaching and Learning—which was a prerequisite for the Master's of Arts in Teaching program there. This course was eye opening to me and I found the different instructional methods and the classroom reform literature fascinating. I would say that the course helped me to realize I am not particularly interested in a traditional style classroom. This caused me to eventually decide against a regular teaching certificate or degree. However I remain interested in people, languages and culture. Earning a Teacher of English as a Second Language degree broadened my understanding of language. I have not only benefited from continuing to be involved in language learning through the program, I have also learned more about instructional pedagogy and recognize that there are several career paths available through the TESL program. I plan to be part of the process of making language learning accessible to other language learners in the United States.

**Cross-cultural experience in the U.S. prior to graduate study at EWU.**

There were many experiences wherein I interacted with other cultures while growing up in the Northwest. One notable experience for me was a trip to Kauai, HI when I was an adolescent. I and my younger cousin were accused of stealing candy at a grocery store run by locals. Originally, I was distraught and felt misunderstood and mistreated. As I got older, I realized the long-standing distrust of mainlanders and came to understand the scenario in a new light.

When I lived in my parent's home, I came in contact with many people from uncounted cultural and linguistic backgrounds. I understood those visits as stories and came to enjoy hearing about other viewpoints. While it is not always the case, I personally came to be open-minded about alternative ways of behaving and alternative solutions to situations and problems. While this is not necessarily considered intercultural competence, it is the beginnings of ethno-relativism and was also the beginning of my life-path.

**Cross-cultural Experience outside the U.S. prior to graduate study at EWU.**

During high school and my time at University of Puget Sound, I have had the privilege of exploring many different cultures. I was in the position of observing vastly varying qualities of life in each culture. Due to my parent's church affiliation, my family has been invited to stay in the homes of families in Italy, Greece, Russia, the Czech Republic, South Korea, and Kazakhstan. These homes have ranged in type from multi-millionaire mansions to abandoned goat sheds and there was always a wealth of cultural and communicational differences to be observed in each experience. I also had opportunity to visit Amsterdam, Mexico and western Canada for personal enjoyment.

The cross-cultural situation that undoubtedly had the greatest affect on my personal paradigm and contributed extensively to my study of language is my study abroad experience in Freiburg im Breisgau, a city in southwest Germany. I have been studying the German language since my junior year of high school. My interest in the language itself and especially what I learned of the culture and history only increased until the university level. By the time I was prepared to study the German language

at University Freiburg, German had become the focus of my undergraduate work. While in Germany, I lived in student apartments and had a Russian, a South Korean, and a German roommate. All of them spoke English, but they spoke German to communicate. I have remained in contact with the South Korean roommate, and it is exciting to share the important life-changes via email contact. During my time abroad, I visited Sweden, France and Switzerland. I spent a fair amount of time in the latter two countries and was able to use German to discuss politics, religion, history, and current events with locals.

### **Language study during the EWU graduate program.**

During my time at Eastern, I continued my German studies independently, and was able to prove to the program that my competency and continued progress in the German language would suffice to earn me a language study waiver. I listened to German language podcasts, read and wrote German emails, read German novels and communicated with German contacts while studying at Eastern.

I also furthered my comprehension of German language syntax. I learned to speak and use English by extensive reading as a young girl, but

I was part of the generations for whom grammar was not explicitly taught. Learning how English syntax functions in four grammar classes encouraged me to compare the way German syntax is used and helped my comprehension of both languages grow exponentially. This led to a presentation during an internship for the History of the English Language course where I was able to share my new understanding of the connections between English and German grammar with my peers through a mini-lecture.

**Cross-cultural experience in the U.S. during graduate study at EWU.**

During graduate study at Eastern, I spent time with many foreign students as a conversation hour leader and during my internships as well. I also had an internship opportunity with the Asia University America Program (AUAP) for a quarter during which I tutored and assisted with classwork, assisted with presentations and answered questions during class hours. The AUAP program is an immersion program where the students take sheltered classes so they have little experience with native speakers aside from their teachers and tutors. Most of my cross-cultural

experiences were associated with my language teaching experiences except for those in which I maintained my German language study outside of class time.

I also personally tutored a few Saudi Arabian students on my own time. These meetings provided excellent opportunities to improve my intercultural competence while remaining within the United States. These were informal oral discourse sessions that allowed the speaker to experience local language and more subject content than they may have experienced within their classroom settings.

### **Language teaching experience during graduate study at EWU**

#### **Internship in English 112.**

The English 112 internship was the first real opportunity for me to experience ESLs in a classroom environment. I enjoyed interacting with the two students who became my tutees and guides to recognizing student needs. The course was based around the concept of heroes and the life of one hero in particular, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. I thought that a biographical focused course made sense for students to access American history, politics, viewpoints and lifestyles. I was critical in assisting with many of the students' class projects and also guest taught a couple of lessons.



Being in front of the classroom and guiding the educational style and content was rewarding and only reinforced my desire to continue to improve my own pedagogical information and abilities.

### **Internship at Spokane College of English Language.**

The internship experience with Spokane College of English Language through Spokane Community College turned into a year-long commitment with personal tutoring, a substitute position, consistent classroom observation and three solo instruction experiences. I received expansive freedoms to create and present curricula to my students in Vocabulary to Grammar 1; Writing 1 and Listening, Speaking, Pronunciation and Discussion 2 four days a week in the afternoons. It was one of the more rewarding opportunities I've had to prove to myself that my education was invaluable and I also had the ability to reach international students.

### **Evolving language teaching philosophy.**

I also believes the continued pursuit of language themes is rewarding for my students as well as myself. The final fall quarter that I was enrolled at the University of Puget Sound, I took an education course—

EDU 420 Teaching and learning—which was a prerequisite for the MAT program there. This course was eye opening for me, and I found the different instructional methods and the classroom reform literature fascinating. The course helped me to realize I am not particularly interested in a traditional style classroom which also caused me to eventually decide against a regular teaching certificate or degree. However, I am ever interested in people, languages and culture. I would like to broaden my understanding of language. I have not only benefited from continuing to be involved in language learning through the EWU TESL program, I have also received an invaluable pedagogical education and recognizes that there are several career paths available through a TESL program. I hope to be part of the process of making language learning accessible to other language learners.

To this end, I have continued to further my understanding of rewarding pedagogical decisions. My internship, classroom and research experiences have only reasserted to me that a traditional lecture style classroom is not the welcoming or interactive environment that ESL students can thrive in. I hope to continue my own intercultural education and second language acquisition so that my future students have ample opportunity to improve theirs as well. I also believe that many

opportunities for critical reflection and discussion will help cement the learners' new information and cultural frames of reference for my students. Other useful tools are the self creation and the early reception of assessment tools. These help students to recognize what sorts of results are expected of them during their class time. Most of all, in my teaching career, I hope to reach out to my students as a full-time learner and help them to engage their own lives in increased ability and effective gains in knowledge.

## **Introduction**

### **Author's Methodology.**

This thesis is designed to be a position paper following a selected literature review. I chose a position paper due to my original research question: does study abroad make teachers of English as a second language more effective? The literature surrounding this topic pointed to two primary literature foci, and the content lent itself to a statement about the state of TESL education and some areas that might benefit from the review of literature. The research questions that I employed in my literature review are namely: Is intercultural competence an important

part of TESL education? How does intercultural competence affect TESL instructors and students? Should second language acquisition or an immersion experience be a TESL requirement? And what are the benefits of intercultural competence and second language acquisition? While the final question is too individualized to be properly covered, the literature shows a necessity for further research in the area. My conclusions pertaining to the other research questions should be adequately represented in the following content.

The two emerging themes of crucial importance for the field of English as a second language teachers' education are intercultural competence and the pre-instructional acquisition of some type of second language experience (Nieto & Booth, 2010; Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Herman, 2010; Byrnes, 2008; Zimmer-Loew, 2008; Lee, 2009). Linguistic diversity is of increasing importance because of the growing intercultural connections in the contemporary global state of education. Intercultural competence and second language acquisition have become two major foci of the TESL field, with the understanding that these two topics can help teachers of English as a second language become better able to navigate the dynamic fluctuation of global education. These foci may also help instructors attend to the needs of their students— both foreign

and American— who may be from widely varying linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In order to discuss the effects of these two concepts, the author will consider whether intercultural competence and the acquisition of some second language experience are vital to the success of TESL educators. This thesis is structured as a resource for concerned and interested readers and hopes to add a comprehensive review of the literature to the TESL discussion.

### **Context of the thesis.**

According to the Peterson Graduate School Search of the Testing and Education Reference Center, there are 310 Master's level programs for "English as a Second Language" worldwide. Of those programs, 296 are located in the United States. When English is taught in countries where English is not the first language, the programs are generally referred to as English as a foreign language courses (EFL). While the number just cited does not include ESL or EFL institutions and accredited programs, it does serve as an example of the way that ESL and EFL have grown since the advent of the field.

Searches for scholarship about TESL education return many results from Canada, France, Germany, China, and Japan as well as the United

States. Of these countries addressing TESL and EFL literature written in English, many refer to undergraduate learners as well as graduate learners. Sometimes they point to the necessity of ESL and EFL for children in comparison to adult English education. This thesis will consider literature from both ESL and EFL concentrations as pertinent to the subject matter. English is a worldwide commodity, and many English programs have an individualized way of presenting English to their participants.

**ESL in context with FLL.**

In view of recent economic stresses, some of the first programs facing budget reductions or more drastic cuts in America are the foreign language programs (FLL). While America enjoys great success as an economic and world power, its citizens and students have less expectation to learn foreign languages and learn them to fluency. With increasingly globalized economic and political relations, it is more important than ever for the future of America that its citizens embrace the languages and cultures of the people with which they trade and communicate.

This understanding of culture as multi-layered and complex can help clarify the academic discourse involving the terms intercultural and

cultural awareness and competence. Culture itself is a topic that has long been discussed, and it is difficult for two scholars of the same culture to come to mutual agreement about the details of its workings. Thus, it is crucial for instructors who may assist cross-cultural students, those attending academic programs in countries from which they did not originate, to develop a working personal comprehension of cultural awareness and intercultural competence. This need drives this thesis as it seeks to understand the differences between these terms, their importance to TESL education, and the role of study abroad programs in TESL education.

## **Definitions**

There are many terms used frequently in the literature review. Many of the terms are borrowed from or overlap with other disciplines (psychology, sociology, anthropology et cetera). In order to clarify my use of these terms, the following section presents my operational definitions: what I mean when I use these terms in this thesis. VanPatten and Benati's 2010 *Key Terms in Second Language Acquisition* is the main source for the operational definitions presented below. A collaborative effort, the book is a compilation of key terms, key issues and key references for the field of TESL. It also introduces the definitions in a way that is particularly concise

and clarifying. Definitions from other sources are included when needed by the content of the discussion.

**Acquisition (second language).**

A fundamental process of internalizing a linguistic system due to exposure to language input in communicative settings (Krashen, 1975). Acquisition is different from learning, according to Krashen, in that learning is a conscious effort to take in information from books and instructors as opposed to acquiring language based on a fundamental process that happens because of linguistic input outside of the classroom in communicative settings (VanPatten & Benati, 2010).

**Awareness.**

The consciousness of what a person is doing during a particular experience using three criteria: they show a change has taken place due to an experience, they report that they are aware of what they experience, and they describe their experience using an underlying rule (VanPatten & Benati, 2010)



There are two types of competence discussed in this thesis:

***Intercultural.***

“An awareness of culturally based frames of reference, forms, and communicative practices as being related both to specific cultures and also as emergent and hybrid in intercultural communication” (Baker, 2012, p. 66). The learner is therefore able to understand and use ‘socioculturally grounded’ types of cross-cultural communication such as frames of reference and successfully negotiate them as they emerge (Baker, 2012).

***Cultural.***

Learners show an awareness of the ‘conscious understanding’ of how culture interacts in their first and foreign languages with language learning and communication. They become conscious of the “culturally based norms, beliefs and behaviours of their own culture and other cultures” (Baker, 2012, p.65) which allows them to experience successful intercultural communication. The

learner evaluates the perspectives, practices and products in cultures and countries based on explicit criteria and develop knowledge skills and attitudes to communicate across diverse cultures (Baker, 2012).

### **Competence.**

The implicit and abstract knowledge observable in native speakers of a language because of the correct use of complex abstract constraints and principles of language that interact making sentences look as they should (Vanpatten & Benati, 2010)

There are three types of competence discussed in this thesis:

#### ***Communicative.***

The underlying knowledge that guides a speaker's linguistic choice which becomes a part of a speaker's ability to use a second language to communicate (Vanpatten & Benati, 2010, pp. 71-72)

#### ***Intercultural.***

“The linguistic treatment of sayings, expressions, different registers and

social varieties of language... the ability to deal with cultural differences,

intercultural situations, and the availability of knowledge about

sociocultural contexts” (Göbel & Helmke, 2010, p. 1572).

***Cultural.***

“set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (Diller & Moule, 2005, p. 12)

**Culturally responsive.**

“Using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay as cited by Rychly & Graves, 2002, p. 44). This ability is to contribute to “teaching practices that attend to the specific cultural characteristics that make students different from one another and from the teacher” (Rychly & Graves, 2012. p. 44). These practices are expected

to include concepts like values, traditions, and language but moving further into communications, learning styles, and relationship norms (Gay as cited by Rychly & Graves, 2002).

**ESL (English as a second language) versus EFL (English as a foreign language).**

This distinction is whether or not the language being taught is regularly spoken in the location at which the instruction is taking place (VanPatten & Benati, 2010).

**Immersion program.**

Immersion is defined as a method of foreign language instruction in which the

regular school curriculum is taught in the foreign language being learned. The

foreign language is the vehicle for content instruction; it is not the subject of

instruction (Met, 1993).

**'Intensive' language study.**

Language study programs designed to be implemented daily with hours allotted for language and cultural competence acquisition. This is in

contrast to a language study program in which the cultural component is lacking or the language study does not occur daily. For the purpose of this discussion, intensive language study is used to note a program in which students study language for a minimum of 4 hours per day.

**Intercultural sensitivity.**

“the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences... active desire to motivate themselves to understand, appreciate and accept differences among cultures” “attitudinal forerunner to successful intercultural encounters and a predictor of cultural competence” (Hammer et al. (2003) and Peng (2006) respectively as cited in Nieto & Booth, 2010). These two quotes refer to the general positive outlook towards intercultural experiences and the desire to focus on furthering cultural competences.

**Linguistic diversity.**

For the purpose of this discussion, linguistic diversity refers to the use of more than one language in the context of educational settings.

**Study abroad experience.**

Study abroad experience refers to a formal academic experience through credit

bearing programs or universities in a country other than the participants' own.

## **Overview of thesis**

Chapter 1 introduces the topic, the research question, and intended audience as well as a brief summary of the United States' standing in regards to teaching English as a second language (TESL) education. It also includes definitions for key terms used throughout this thesis. The definitions section is intended to add clarity to the large amount of relatively new terminology in the TESL literature. Chapter 2 begins a two-part review of the literature. This first literature review will cover the terms "cultural competence", "intercultural competence", and their connections. Chapter 3 presents the second section of the two-part literature review: Second Language Acquisition. Chapter 4 is a discussion of the two literature sections. It will consider the aspects of second language acquisition. Chapter 4 then discussed the connections between the two literature review subjects, the reasons for study and implications for TESL programs in the United States. Chapter 5 presents conclusions and implications for further research.

## **Chapter 2: Review of the literature—Section 1: Intercultural competence and cultural competence**

### **Culture in and of itself**

In order to discuss cultural communication, it is necessary to first consider culture itself. Another way of conceptualizing culture is Harris and Moran's three implicit levels: the technical, the formal, and the informal (Harris & Moran, 1987 as cited in Nieto & Booth, 2010). The **technical**

aspect of culture is the full characteristics of cultural influence that are presented by an individual in a particular social context. These are the behaviors, appearances and procedures that the person displays. The **formal** aspects of a culture are typically rituals with hidden or non-intuitive rationales. Examples include preferences regarding physical proximity (i.e. the distance between speaker and listener or position on public transportation), use of time and religious beliefs. These aspects are only partially observable to an onlooker from another culture. Finally, the **informal** level is the automatic reactions to actions and takes place unconsciously. The informal aspect can be seen in gender and age roles of particular cultures (Harris & Moran, 1987 as cited in Nieto & Booth, 2010).

### **History of the term intercultural competence**

Intercultural competence is a relatively new focus, a transitional term stemming from the associated terms “cultural competence” and “literary competence”. Intercultural competence, in connection with intercultural awareness, suggests a broader focus than either of the older terms in considering both the target culture and the culture of origin, as well as the ways they have been influenced by globalization (Larzén-



Oestermark, 2008; Zimmer-Loew, 2008; Byrnes, 2008).

As Nieto and Booth (2010) discuss, interaction between cultures may be determined on five levels: interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness (Nieto & Booth, 2010, p. 414). Many scholars have discussed the possibility that teachers with higher levels of intercultural interactions may have a higher level of intercultural competence, and that pre-instruction, the time during teacher instruction and internships but before acceptance of a professional teaching position, is a crucial time for the development of their intercultural competence (Nieto & Booth, 2010; Göbel & Helmke 2010; Zimmer-Loew, 2008; Byrnes, 2008). This observation drives this thesis research, as I seek to understand if this appears to be true.

### **Differences between intercultural competence and cultural competence**

Intercultural competence is understood to be different from cultural competence, the belief that in order to teach a language, the instructor must also teach the culture of the target language in a way that causes the students to comprehend the second culture. In this way, intercultural competence connects the student to the culture studied by way of

comparison, or 'de-centralization' (Herman, 2010; Larzén-Oestermark, 2008; Lee, 2009). When students are not only made aware of cultural dissimilarities but also caused to consider their own culture from an 'outside' perspective, they may be more capable of identifying with the second culture, thus strengthening and expanding their understanding of cross-cultural connections. If educators can be taught these types of intercultural instructional methods during pre-service instruction, it seems likely that they are thus better prepared to be effective ESL instructors due to their personal intercultural awareness.

### **Aspects of intercultural competence**

Because intercultural competence focuses on a comparative analysis of interaction between cultures, it requires a combination of teaching techniques that diverge from the traditional teaching style. This traditional style may be described as a primarily European method of formal lecture settings where the students' participation in discussion and presentation is deliberately minimized. The traditional classroom is a normative environment where the students are expected to sit silently and respond with a pre-specified answer, in the sense that there is a "correct" response, when it is solicited by the instructor (Rychly & Graves, 2012). It is

important to note that these traditional styles ignore the needs of students from cultures in which student interaction is key to their successful education. For example, Sileo and Prater indicated that the highly interactive style of African American students may cause disruption in a primarily European American based classroom environment. Similarly, Pacific Islanders may not be willing to participate in competitive activities due to a cultural emphasis on interpersonal harmony with negative implications for learning and academic performance (as cited in Nieto & Booth, 2010).

Another mainstay of a traditional-type classroom is standardized testing or large final tests whose standardized grading scale is supposed to represent the students' progress (Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Teitelbaum, 2008; Rychly & Graves, 2012; Baker, 2012). This is in contrast to 'non dominant' cultures as discussed by Rychly and Graves (2010). Where participatory and active engagement during class time is a behavioral norm and "represents a powerful disconnect between the teacher and her students, it is powerful because language is so central to one's experiences and ways of being in the world" (Rychly & Graves, 2012, p. 47). However, some scholars have cautioned that instructors need to go beyond being aware of students' cultural ways of experiencing

education and social interactions, and instead become proficient in them (Teitelbaum, 2008; Baker, 2012; Rychly & Graves, 2012).

During the pre-instruction stage, TESLs can learn to exhibit more of the characteristics that lead to a non-traditional and potentially higher quality intercultural education. In order to achieve this, TESL pre-service students need to have access to effective instruction. One aspect of effective instruction is opportunity for reflective engagement in the form of journals, student or instructor led discussion followed by a time for notes or reflection, or carefully constructed guiding questions, although the final option is decidedly difficult to implement successfully. Guided questions can help students move towards a specific reflective outcome but may hinder their ability to reach necessary steps in their intercultural growth by too closely directing the path of their reflection. Reflective exercises may lead to pre-service TESLs showing progress in intercultural relationships and competence. This may improve instruction and create positive and safe academic environments for international students (Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Teitelbaum; 2008; Rychly & Graves, 2012). Reflection is not perceived as mere conscious thought about intercultural experiences, but rather deliberate reflection about personal beliefs and cultural frames of reference of the participant and people from other cultures that have

been personally experienced. This can be described as “deconstructing” the cultural identity of the participant in the sense that each aspect that is encountered through intercultural experiences is carefully considered. The reflective thinking should be grounded in evidence, flexible, and not dualistic. The participant should try to perceive classroom practices from both his/her own as well as the learner’s point of view and consider areas that present opportunity for further learning. If the reflection is part of a pre-instruction program, it should be a required component of TESL education and receive formal and informal assessment (Rychly & Graves, 2012).

The inclusion of comparison and contrast activities factors into intercultural instruction. ‘Compare and contrast’ could be described as a base form for ways to consider TESL students’ culture and other cultures. Some researchers have concluded that comparison/contrast activities lead to positive gains in intercultural awareness (Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Nieto & Booth, 2010; Rychly & Graves, 2012). As students are able to connect to cultures using this form of conceptualizing culture, they may be more prepared to move through the stages of the developmental model proposed by Bennett, Bennett, and Allen (2003). This developmental model notes ethnocentric behavioral responses to cultural

difference in three stages. These stages are presented as denial, defense and minimization and hinder the growth of intercultural competence.

Nieto & Booth's study is focused on undergraduate students and instructors, and describes participants who are involved in cross-cultural communication as less likely to show ethnocentrism, though Bennett's model still represents earlier stages in intercultural experiences (Nieto & Booth, 2010). Following increased exposure to the new culture and appropriate educational reinforcement, the behavior may potentially reach the three ethno-relative stages, presented as acceptance, adaptation and integration. Ethno-relative refers to the ability to understand one's own frame of reference in relation to those of others. Instructors should not expect their TESL students to reach ethno-relative stages immediately or even quickly and comparison/contrastive activities can be a beginning basis for quality instruction. More challenging topics where students might discuss cultural value systems and engage in reflective practices might also factor into later instructional methods and promote further intercultural competence (Nieto & Booth, 2010).

### **Cultural awareness in contrast to intercultural awareness**

The significance of the term "cultural awareness" is essential in

understanding how TESL instructors and researchers previously viewed the interactions between learners and their second language, English.

Cultural awareness is described as awareness of the "...relative nature of cultural norms which leads to 'an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries'" (Byram, 1997, p. 66). It must be noted that there are conflicting views between cultures, and there must be interplay between them for communication to occur. This means that there isn't a particular model to which one speaker or the other must adapt or conform. Cultural awareness is like a lens for the learner to move between their own cultural perception and the cultural experiences in the second culture. Therefore, cultural awareness acts as an individual growth progress for learners as they create an increasingly culturally-diversified perspective during communication between cultures (Baker, 2012).

Researchers still use this term, but it has been largely replaced by the term "intercultural awareness" which both stems from it and overlaps it:

In this way, the terms are often used in a confusing way "(cultural awareness) is then contrasted with intercultural awareness" (Baker, 2012, p. 66). Intercultural awareness refers to the "conscious understanding" of how culturally based forms, behaviors and frames of reference interact

within intercultural communication and the learners' capability to use them. The learner must be able to adapt the types of concepts noted above in a flexible way during intercultural communication as it occurs (Baker, 2012). Intercultural awareness should be an extension from cultural awareness, which encompasses the latter's assets. These include an awareness of culture, and the way that behaviors, values and beliefs are affected by an individual's culture in a way that allows a learner to compare and accept the differences in other cultures.

Intercultural awareness may also include aspects of awareness of "cultural norms" and their relativity—that there are many voices and perspectives within a culture as well as the possibility of commonalities within cultures and the effects of mismatching between cultures.

Intercultural awareness is to be more dynamic; however, in the sense that the learners and their instructors who are in possession of it are both explicitly aware of the changes that intercultural communication undergoes and can negotiate between different communication modes and frames of reference (Baker, 2012).

### **Intercultural competence in the US**

The inclusion of intercultural coursework and alternative culture and



language experiences in ESL or EFL departments focus on a broader framework for instructional methodology. Consideration of this type of content necessitates the change in focus from pure pedagogical decisions and English syntactical competence onto a cohesive educational plan that includes dynamic language and culture experiences. In the United States, such an integrative framework could potentially be modeled after those in other countries (Busch, 2010; Dogancay-Aktuna, 2005; Byrnes, 2008; Zimmer-Loew, 2008; Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Nieto & Booth, 2010). A collaborative framework also encourages the integration of the language experience at the K-12, collegiate, and post-baccalaureate levels of education (Byrnes, 2008; Malave, 1994). Unfortunately, this kind of collaborative methodology is often at the mercy of monetary concerns in education departments. This is because it takes funds to connect people and their ideas and resources to implement new materials and instructors. In addition, recent consideration of foreign language requirements and programs for budget cuts has resulted in language courses being given increasingly less priority. The pattern now seems to be a year or two years of 'intensive' language study that occurs during students' secondary education and in the first or second year of a typical collegiate career. After some amount of ESL-related coursework, pre-service and active-service instructors often come

to realize that this degree of language background and associated cross-cultural experience isn't necessarily effective for any measurable language fluency or effectual intercultural competence (Lee, 2009; Busch, 2010; Byrnes, 2008; Zimmer-Loew, 2010). Once instructors are immersed in their active teaching profession, it becomes increasingly difficult to address pedagogical gaps. The lack of second language acquisition should be addressed early in the pre-service stages so that TESL instructors have the means to further their own second language fluency.

It is also important to consider the methods of researchers who wish to determine what makes successful methodology, with evidence that successful studies seem to center around both qualitative and quantitative research concepts (Nieto & Booth, 2010; Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Busch, 2010; Duff & Uchida, 1997). In general, research that includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches surveys the pre-service teacher interns, their students, and the parents of students using a variety of survey styles. The surveys help to indicate successful procedures and the general feeling amongst participants and provide a statistical component to the results. The results of the quantitative surveys are then supplemented by interviews of willing participants for a well-rounded

comprehensive picture. Using more than one type of observation helps the study to be comprehensive and also helps to ensure that the information gathered is capable of reflecting the actual experience of the observer as well as containing an overall representation of phenomena (Nieto & Booth, 2010; Göbel & Helmke, 2010). TESL classrooms are comprised of any variety of languages, cultures, and student backgrounds, so it can be difficult to use one specific research method and also claim that the research is conclusive. In any field of education, the continual updating of methods is crucial for instructional methods to progress with the needs of the students. Continued research should be an aim for the TESL field (Burt & Keenan, 1998; Göbel & Helmke, 2010; MacNab, Brislin & Worthley, 2012; Nieto & Booth, 2010).

### **Discussion of section 1: Intercultural competence and cultural competence**

In the foregoing review of literature, there is a range of terms that deal with similar and overlapping material: intercultural competence, intercultural awareness, cultural competence and cultural awareness, culturally responsive, cultural fluency (Einbeck, 2004) and intercultural and cultural efficacy. These terms have been used to elaborate the usefulness

of a variety of behaviors that have come to be associated with successful TESL instructors and ESL or EFL students. Whether the authors wish to develop the scope of ESL literature by using new terms or hope to bring notice to their individual work by using a slightly altered term, the effect of using such similar terms to refer to the same material or essentially the same material results in ambiguity and confusion. Confusion to some degree can be considered part and parcel of academic study, but it generally drops away after continued focus and the connecting forces between the ideas soon begin to take shape. The confusion that results from focusing on what causes efficient or competent teachers of ESL seems to be due to two interconnected 'problems': lack of communication between the main authors on the subject, and the subsequent lack of clarity about the terms used to discuss the material. This disparity makes a review of the literature on these topics quite challenging.

Connections between the more commonly used terms are brought about by continued effort to organize the content of the literature. In order to discuss those terms in detail, we must flesh out the descriptors of their two-word parts: competence, responsive and awareness with the operational definitions and some further focus on the literature. The two-

part terms seem to stem from authors' desire to contribute to the literature. The fundamental terms--culture, second language acquisition--were generally taken from other literature including literature from other disciplines and then the descriptor was added to the fundamental term to make the discussion unique to the scholars' own field. Thus, it can be said that there is some 'communication' or overlay between the authors' discussions.

Though the plethora and overlap of terms and their conflicting usage can be confusing, the one term that stands out as being essential to this discussion is intercultural competence. It was referred to most often in both terminology and also second language acquisition references. It is a more recent term and therefore encompasses aspects from cultural competence, cultural awareness and intercultural awareness. Finally, it has more of the factors that scholars refer to as necessary for TESL education: awareness of cultural frames of reference, the stages of ethno-relativism and a dynamic mobility in terms of comprehension of the changeable nature of culture. In this way, I argue that the term "intercultural competence" should be used in discussions about pre-service TESL education.

TESL education would be well served to use methodology that

encourages the growth of intercultural competence in students. One way this can be accomplished is by moving classroom environments from a traditional style to a more flexible and interactive style. Traditional classroom environments do not set pre-TESLs up to work as effectively with international students. TESL educators need to comprehend the differences between cultural frames of reference. While a lecture and resulting exam can present the an idea, an interactive classroom in which students experience alternative frames of reference is more likely to cause actual growth. Few factors limit the cultures that TESLs may come in contact with over the course of their active service. English could be described as the language of commerce, and many countries are involved in global trade. While this means many students come to learn English as adults for business purposes, it also increases the likelihood that students of those countries who are still involved in academic institutions will seek to learn English. Intercultural competence based classroom experiences before active instruction allows future teachers to become more secure in their knowledge before establishing their future classrooms in which students from any number of countries may be present.

A way to implement such an interculturally competent methodology is through the use of the types of reflective assignments

discussed earlier in the chapter. When TESL instructors implement ways for their students to reflect on the diverse and sometimes upsetting ways that cultures interact, it is important that those ways are assessed. Assessment can simply refer to reading though and commenting on reflective journals or in-class discussions, but the students must be aware that their reflections have import. In this way, their experiences with intercultural relations gain meaning and eventually may be assimilated into their frames of reference with long-term effect. Another aspect of ways that reflective exercises may aid student appreciation of intercultural competence is by making such reflective sessions a requirement which will assure students acknowledge the necessity of thinking critically about experiences with other cultures. The instructor may want to participate in reflective experiences as well to encourage the students to remember that cultural competence affects both instructor and learner.

Another reason to focus on intercultural competence at the academic level is its dynamic nature. Intercultural competence helps instructors' pedagogies progress towards a more globalized society. Intercultural competence can reflect and transcend the changeable nature of culture and society. The literature indicates that students may respond better to classroom environments that are reflective and present

aspects of intercultural communication and experiences using interactive methodology. It is also dynamic in the sense that it is realistic for cross-cultural communication. Whether or not an institution offers intercultural experiences, a TESL education based in intercultural competence prepares students for the cross-cultural relationships they will find once they've completed their degrees and certificates and enter the field. In this way, all institutions, regardless of their ability offer true intercultural experiences in the traditional study-abroad sense, should focus on how they can expose their students to intercultural experiences.

### **Conclusions**

Intercultural competence is a more recent term used to describe the contemporary understanding of intercultural relations as dynamic and changeable as a person's frame of reference, which the term cultural competence and cultural awareness do not envelope in their definitions and usage. It can be used to identify and work with all three aspects of culture—the formal, informal and technical—and in fact encourages comprehension and thus competence in them. Intercultural competence can be useful for TESL education if instructors bring in intercultural interactions and experiences for their students. It is magnified by activities such as comparison and contrast techniques and when combined with



critical reflective strategies it may aid student progress and future classrooms. Finally, intercultural competence is useful for learners who wish to expand or develop second language proficiency.

### **Chapter 3: Review of the literature—Section 2: Second language acquisition**

The second theme notable in its importance to TESL education and the education of pre-service TESL instructors is second language acquisition. At the present time in the United States, pre-service TESLs can become certified to teach English to second language learners with what seems like minimal language requirements which can potentially be waived depending on the school or institution. Whether a difference exists between people learning their first language and learning a second language and the extent to which the two experiences differ is an important topic of study. It is especially relevant to this current study as I believe that exposure to a second language and culture is directly beneficial to future teachers. The second section of literature review will

consider aspects of second language acquisition, factors of a study abroad experience and whether a study abroad component is vital to a successful TESL education.

### **Second language experience needed to develop intercultural competence**

Second language experience is believed to help TESL instructors in connecting to their students' needs and in gaining intercultural competence (Busch, 2010; Malave, 1994; Lee, 2009). Like students, teachers need to have competence in a variety of areas in order to acquire a language: risk-taking, practice, and motivation are some of the necessary requirements for language fluency. In order to learn a second language, future teachers of English as a second language discover the kinds of steps necessary to reach fluency by personally exploring the relationships between language and intercultural competence, and may learn to recognize the stage in language acquisition that an individual student is exhibiting, as in-service teachers. Teachers with second language experience who have explored intercultural communication firsthand and recognize the needs for flexibility in language instruction should be more able to connect to foreign students and provide the welcoming, interactive environment that these students need to

incorporate themselves in their own second language experience (Baker, 2012; Burt & Keenan, 1998; Busch, 2010; Byrnes, 2008; Nieto & Booth, 2010; Dogancay-Aktuna, 2005; Kurzet, 1997; Rychly & Graves, 2012; Teitelbaum, 2008).

A successful TESL instructor will create a classroom environment in which the students are safe to practice verbal interactions. Classroom environments are places where students are protected and can feel free to make mistakes. If the atmosphere in the TESL classroom is not positive regarding the natural and necessary errors involved in learning a second language, the instructor is not effectively managing the needs of the second language classroom. Intercultural awareness may help the instructor create the needed respectful and caring classroom experience (Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Nieto & Booth, 2010).

### **Second language learning contexts: five settings**

Llanes (2010) describes five learning contexts. The fundamental context is the 'at home' setting and is in contrast to the naturalistic setting which has seen the most research; the foreign language setting, referring to learning the language in a country other than the country of origin for the language; the immersion setting which occurs in a region that uses the

language as a first language; and the study abroad setting, an immersion experience with a focus on an academic component. The study abroad setting has received the smallest amount of research though it is increasingly more popular in the United States and Europe. In study abroad research, oral fluency or production receives the most focus. This review of the literature will focus on the study abroad setting because its role in TESL education is connected to intercultural awareness.

### **Is the study abroad experience effective?**

While scholars are in continual discussion about the inclusion of study abroad experiences in undergraduate and graduate programs, the overall consensus is that a study abroad experience is advisable if it can be made possible (Cubillos & Robbins, 2004; DeWinter, 2007; Hernandez, 2010; Jarvis & Stakounis, 2010; Llanes, 2010; Zappa-Hollman, 2007). One of the notable issues in regard to study abroad scholarship is the difficulty of correlating the data. This is due to the diversity of study abroad circumstances and participants as well as cultures (Cubillos & Robbins, 2004; Llanes, 2010; Zappa-Hollman, 2007). TESL scholarship is interested in students in ESL and EFL contexts. Due to the international nature of ESL, both studies done on Americans in study abroad settings and also on

international students who come to the United States are pertinent to researchers' conclusions. This means there is a global range of potential studies on the effects of study abroad bound only by a requirement that either the participants or their receiving culture speaks English. Thus, although this wide range of diverse study abroad situations don't contribute to a unified consensus, the individual results of many study abroad experiences, surveys, and research literature have shown promising results (Hernandez, 2010; Jackson, 2004).

According to a study cited in Llanes (2010), there is a "threshold" of proficiency which study abroad students must pass before they are able to benefit from a study abroad experience. However, studies by Brecht (1995) and Carroll (1967) indicate that study abroad experiences benefit weaker language learners due to diversified participants, settings and focuses (Brecht, 1995 and Carroll, 1967 as cited in Llanes, 2010, p. 194). Another conclusion was that choosing a study abroad context was more beneficial for second language acquisition than the other four language learning contexts (Llanes, 2010). The contradictory conclusions may be attributed to differences in methods and focus between authors.

Llanes documents some "gaps" or problem areas for study abroad literature. The most obvious issues are the diverse research populations

and the diverse types of study abroad programs. Other issues are the amount of academic instruction involved in the program, whether the program is in European or American context, the length of stay, the quality of the program, whether long-term effects are documented, and the role of participants' cognitive ability (Llanes, 2010).

The literature presents a call for inter-global education for the future of academics ranging from elementary schoolchildren to graduate students in all fields. The literature points to a necessity for global citizenry for American students (Byrnes, 2008; Ferber, 2008; Goodman, 2009; Lee, 2009; Peters, 1991; Reeves, 2009; Roger, 2010). Noting that at the time of publication, 70% of American students did not hold a passport and could not find Iran, Israel or Indonesia's coordinates on a map, Goodman (2009) also points out that less than one percent of all American college and university students were studying abroad in a given academic year. Though more may be expected to join, only a handful of American universities have a study-abroad requirement (Goodman, 2009). Jacques Barzun wrote that it was noticeable that the educated class is not expected to be bilingual for the first time in over a thousand years (as cited in Goodman, 2009, p. 610). The literature is calling for a movement towards inter-globular--between all cultures--focus in American schools.

For TESLs, it is an opportunity to upgrade their professional understanding at the level of both theory and practice (Chen, 2008).

Peters (1991) noted that American education would be improved if international theories and culture were blended with a science and technological focus. He thought it best that such a transformation began with American youth. Like Goodman, Ferber (2008) also pointed to the bilingual capability of students. His essay reminds readers of the large number of 'polyglots' in English literature. Monolingual English readers may find translations of many of the notable works, but as Ferber points out, the close reading of literature is in the nuances, and only the study of other languages can provide that insight. While Ferber (2008) considers mostly the effect of monolingualism on English literature majors at the undergraduate level, Reeves (2009) notes the importance of integrating cultural values and global lessons into English lessons for both American and foreign learners. Ziegler (2011) also encourages awareness of how multilingualism encourages student growth. Student participants in Roger's 2010 study warn that global lessons must be integrated with care. Not all foreign students connect themselves to a global identity and some said that the concept disregards their individual identities. Though global perspectives are useful tools, researchers and language teachers should

be aware of the cultural effect of generalizing their students as global citizens without also focusing on individual perceptions and experiences.

Goodman's radical call for international and global awareness is a movement in all American universities towards a required "immersive, intensive foreign language experience" so that students are capable of learning and speaking and working in at least a second language (Goodman, 2009, p. 610). The idea may be considered radical because America's universities and colleges are largely independent institutions with individualized curricula. These foreign language experiences are recommended as at least a year of study abroad with the inclusion of at least an internship or service learning component. They could be a part of independent programs or joint/dual degree programs with foreign institutions. He believes it is the role of American education to develop multi-faceted global citizens for the modern global world. As each nation is affected at a global level, there should be a global exchange of knowledge. It is the responsibility of universities and colleges to encourage international dialogue and collaboration. Goodman's essay also points to three important calls for global education:

1. The U.S. Department of State has issued a number of critical language scholarships as a summer resource in 12 countries and an



international scholarship for participants who have been “traditionally underrepresented”.

2. The National Security Education Program has scholarships and fellowships which allow undergraduates and graduates to spend a “significant” amount of time overseas.
3. The Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) is expected to have over four hundred FLTAs by 2009-2010 on various American university campuses to allow students who cannot go abroad the opportunity to converse with native speakers of other languages (Goodman, 2009, pp. 611-612).

### **Immersion experience as teacher education**

Another factor that leads to quality engagement with ESL students is the inclusion of a language and culture immersion experience in the pre-instructive stage (Byrnes, 2008; Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Nieto & Booth, 2010; Zimmer-Loew, 2008). Finally, there are studies that advocate immersion experience as a method of increasing TESL/student intercultural awareness and contextualizing TESL motivations with great success (Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Rychly & Graves, 2012; Lee, 2009; Byrnes, 2008). Some of

the literature encourages immersion experiences as a requirement for developing the understanding of intercultural communication that is necessary as instructors of English to speakers of foreign languages (Rychly & Graves, 2012; Teitelbaum, 2012). An immersion experience connects to a concept of intercultural education that promotes a comprehensive program of study-abroad experience and the methodology to provide a variety of cultural and linguistic experiences at the pre-instructor stage. It also allows the student-teachers an education that makes them prepared to provide quality inter-and culturally competent instruction. In the research, the immersion experience is almost exclusively presented as a positive factor in helping students gain intercultural competence and acquire second language, as well as learning to interact with people of cultures foreign to their own (Lee, 2009; Byrnes, 2008; Zimmer-Loew, 2008; Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Busch, 2010). Finally, some programs teach students about learning a second language as well as a more general view of the TESL process through first-hand experience (Lee, 2009; Dogancay-Aktuna, 2005; Byrnes, 2008).

### **Factors of a successful study abroad experience**

The factors that contribute to successful study abroad experiences

are constantly changing, much as the way language itself changes. There is a notable amount of literature that highlights some of the more beneficial aspects of successful study abroad programs. These aspects can be broken into three subsections: the inclusion of pre- and post-study abroad processing, high interest cultural contact, and methods of maximizing native speaker contact (Brubaker, 2007; Goodman, 2009; Jarvis & Stakounis, 2010; Kruse & Brubaker, 2007; Reeves, 2009; Wolf, 2009; Zappa-Hollman, 2007).

Pre- and post study abroad processing is one of the first aspects mentioned when scholars write about what would most effectively improve study abroad experiences for participants. It seems that participants' expectations for study abroad benefits often result in let-downs, and the results of surveys and testing are generally lacking in long-term data. In order to address these issues, the study abroad program and researchers might consider a focus on advising (especially before departure) study abroad participants during the program as well as follow-up processing after the study abroad experience (Herman, 2010; Jarvis & Stakounis, 2010). Pre-study abroad help is a connecting point for the participants. They should be given more information about what they can expect to experience upon arrival in an attempt to dispel stereotypes

to some degree. It is important that many of the preconceptions of how participants expect to be involved with the host culture are determined ahead of time. Prestudy, it may be helpful to focus on readjusting expectations. Stereotypes are natural ways to deal with differences between cultures and will persist, but information beyond the immediately pragmatic (eg. how to order, use the bank/ATM, rent a bicycle or car, use the telephone etc...) can be considered instrumental in preparing participants for a successful experience (Einbeck, 2004; Herman, 2010). It may also be helpful to give students a "pre-sessional dose" of the local language (Jarvis & Stakounis, 2010). It can be frustrating for students to learn a language and then not recognize the sound of the local dialect. It is possible to prepare participants for local differences ahead of time.

Another mainstay in successful study abroad programs is the inclusion of high interest cultural contact (Kruse & Brubaker, 2007; Reeves, 2009; Zappa-Hollman, 2007). Literature is one of the notable choices for encouraging interest in culture because it provides historical and contemporary insight into the priorities of the culture. Literature is also mutually reinforcing due to its inclusion of explicit linguistic foci and its ability to create cultural engagement. It can present the socially constructed beliefs responsive to context that a foreign participant could

not individually experience due to their home-cultural frames of reference (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Einbeck, 2004). Also notable in creating cultural interest are opportunities for both formal and informal oral discourse (Zappa-Hollman, 2007). Understanding other cultural values and frames of reference take time, but it is important that study abroad participants have ample opportunities to speak to and listen to native speakers. Both formal and informal settings are crucial because they require a change of subject content, vocabulary and discourse styles. It insures that participants experience subject content that interests them individually. Residence also factors into the degree of cultural contact participants can expect to experience. Homestays are an excellent way for foreign visitors to interact on a daily basis with the fundamentals of their host culture (Cubillos & Robbins, 2004). Some of the factors of maximum contact are journal writing, task orientation, and maintaining a semi-structured format leaving room for cultural exploration and informal discourses (Cubillos & Robbins, 2004).

### **ESL literacy/literature as a means of integration**

ESL student needs can be grouped into three different literacy considerations that develop as students endeavor to learn a second

language: cultural, functional and critical literacy. **Functional literacy** can be considered the skills required to read and write in daily written materials. **Cultural literacy** is the type of behavior that allows a second language learner to identify specific characteristics of the new society and is necessary to comprehend the sociocultural context in a written text from that new society. **Critical literacy** involves being able to understand the authors' intended message and requires intercultural awareness in order to display this level of successful comprehension (Nieto & Booth, 2010; Duff & Uchida, 1997). There are many more aspects to language learning than the traditional style of grammar instruction and compare and contrast activities can deliver. Focusing on all three types of literacy will help to ensure that the students become proficient in all necessary aspects of the target language. It seems to prove difficult for students to move past their experiential beliefs, even when they are learning new methodologies in their practicum courses (Busch, 2010). Professional coursework that includes new experiential activities and also allows for opportunities to reflect may be stronger in combating the effects of pre-existing beliefs about teaching in pre-service teachers (Busch, 2010; Lee, 2009; Rychly & Graves, 2012; Teitelbaum, 2008). The activities can promote a hybrid literate identity in the students which creates individual and pedagogical growth (Kline, 1998 as cited in Taillefer, 2005). Some of the

bigger change factors for the pre- and in-service teachers were an immersion experience, or direct contact with foreign speakers. These experiences often led to the induction of a new belief (Lee, 2009; Nieto & Booth, 2010; Byrnes, 2008; Busch, 2010). It is necessary for pre-service teachers to change their beliefs about instruction and their comprehension of instructional methods during their pre-service instruction. If the courses do not cause the students to expand their perspectives on language and language acquisition, the quality of the students as in-service teachers will be lessened (Byrnes, 2008; Zimmer-Loew, 2008). One method that may ensure the progression of students to quality teachers of English as a second language, then, is increased exposure to varied languages and cultures, helping the pre-service instructors to connect to the language learning process and place their own cultural contexts within a working concept of intercultural competence (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Ferber, 2008; Reeves, 2009).

### **The possibility of a nationally implemented framework**

Pre-service TESLs need to consider the reasons they are interested in teaching second-language learners. One way to encourage reflection about language teaching for these students is the inclusion of an

immersion experience and a second language acquisition requirement within the pre-service instruction process. This necessarily involves the revamping of the framework of TESL classroom methodology. In-service teachers should be encouraged by their instructors to consider intercultural and cultural competence when creating their pedagogical frameworks, as the consideration of culture and linguistic communication goes beyond simple retrieval of facts, grammar and vocabulary to the deeper framework of intercultural perspectives and appropriate communicational styles. This can be accomplished by instructional opportunities for pre-service TESLs that lean toward intercultural competence and cultural competence, as well as second language acquisition. Intercultural competence helps instructors to increase their proficiency in dealing with the linguistic and especially cultural capabilities of their students because intercultural competence helps the instructor access new information. The hope is that implementing second language acquisition and immersion programs as standard procedures in pre-service instruction will enhance the quality of language acquisition in ESL classrooms.



## **Chapter 4: Discussion of the literature, second language acquisition & intercultural competence**

Intercultural competence and second language experiences are vitally important because in tandem they encompass many necessary traits of interculturally aware instructors and bring into focus some general goals of TESL classrooms. These two skills identify traits of effective language instruction in terms of instructor characteristics and define pre-service and in-service TESL instructor qualifications. When TESLs have these experiences in their backgrounds, they are more prepared to address the types of needs that their ESL students will have.

It seems imperative that instructors who work with ESLs have extensive education or experience with second language acquisition or at least foreign language immersion. If pre-service students cannot experience second language or foreign language immersion first hand, it is paramount that they learn about the phases of second language acquisition and ways to best expedite the process. TESLs who experience foreign language immersion and or the acquisition of a second language will be more successful in their capacity to teach ESL because they are able to recognize the phases of language acquisition. These linguistic

connections should more than be mentioned in a lecture--they should be incorporated into educators' pedagogy to better reflect an intercultural classroom. It is important that TESLs continue their education even while actively teaching. In order to maintain professional efficacy, they will need to pursue further technological and global advances to provide an education that encourages such growth in their students.

There are some issues with the individualized study abroad experiences of TESL programs or hosting universities, and it is important for institutions to recognize or maintain quality programs. Academic progress or linguistic acquisition must remain the main focus of such study abroad experiences, rather than an excuse for students to live in a different country away from their friends and parents. Study abroad programs through TESL programs and institutions should have sets of standards that are easily accessible to potential participants. This will allow TESL education to maintain quality and effective instruction during a time in which the field is experiencing much growth. When TESL institutions come across impassable issues with adding a study abroad or foreign language immersion component to their programs, the prospect of bringing many nationalities and languages to American campuses nationwide also holds great promise. In order to effectively bring TESL students into contact with

native speakers from other countries, it may be necessary for TESL programs to work more closely with foreign language departments.

English language instructor education is becoming more public due to the explosion of global relationships between countries in the last few decades. Teachers of English as a Second language are in a relatively new and burgeoning field of education. In order to remain competitive, developed countries must aim towards becoming more internationally competent in order for their citizens to thrive within the increasingly international markets of commerce, media, education, and other industries. This is especially true due to economic and political trends that have cut funding for education systems and made improvement projects and content and material updates notably difficult. For these reasons, teaching English as a second language is a field that must continually improve in quality and efficacy. There is, however, considerable support and interest in the TESL field due to increased opportunities abroad. Many countries are offering excellent incentives for English professionals to come teach in their countries.

**Effects of intercultural competence and second language acquisition & immersion experiences on TESLs**

In terms of TESL education, this means that America should focus on a transition from the traditional European style of lecture towards a dynamic classroom environment that more closely parallels the type of interculturally aware classroom that best suits international learners. The aspects of TESL classrooms that contribute to a more effective ESL classroom will be addressed here: the effects of intercultural competence, second language acquisition and immersion, global connections, unified methodology frameworks and contact with native speakers on TESL education.

Intercultural competence brings several benefits for teachers destined to work with diverse groups of international students during their professional career. This kind of competence allows the instructor to move between cultural frames of reference, connect to students using culturally significant lessons from those various perspectives, and create reflective space for both students and herself. The space for reflection and discussion is critical for continuous growth. When learners have the opportunity to consider what they've experienced and their reactions to potentially uncomfortable or unexpected situations, there is greater personal and professional growth. Reflection isn't simply the restatement of what occurred, but rather the process of paradigm recognition and

consideration of differences and inexperience or growing comprehension.

Two other reasons intercultural competence is key for TESL classrooms are student response and awareness. A teacher who recognizes the benefits of cultural competence is more likely to notice and correctly identify students' response to cultural information and is more capable of the type of pedagogical flexibility needed to continue the positive academic experience for all students.

Another aspect of successful TESL education is the increased recognition of globalization and how global connections affect all students and teachers. In this century, it is the responsibility of instructors to recognize the implications of cultural interconnectedness. It calls for a change in the focus of American instructors and TESLs in particular. Monolingualism is an unrealistic decision for the future of education, and it is necessary for American institution administrators to consider what cutting foreign language programs will do to the best interests of American students and educators. Regarding TESL education, it might be more effective to combine resources between modern language programs and TESL programs and collaborate to create more effective program curricula.

Some countries are in the process of moving towards a unified methodology framework. This means that TEFLs would have a comprehensive nationwide curriculum. It would also have implications for ESL standards and funding in those countries. It could also clarify TESL collaboration and potentially improve program quality. Most importantly, a unified framework for the field could reinforce making immersion experiences and second language proficiency requirements into a realistic expectation. Unfortunately, one important aspect of American education is the independence of its many academic institutions. While a unified framework is unrealistic for the United States, improved collaboration may still serve to bolster decisions towards improved immersion and second language requirements, both of which will well serve the ESL community.

### **The benefits of second language acquisition and immersion experiences**

Such an experience is more than an experience. It contributes to a solid pedagogical foundation for pre-service TESLs and to their individual professional growth and academic maturity. Intercultural competence and awareness cannot be taught in a course, though it can be lectured on. It should be a priority for TESL educational programs to improve

international efficacy in their TESLs. It is crucial that instructors understand the phases of adult language learning by experience and not just from their academic lessons. Studying abroad can have a significant effect on the linguistic, cultural and pedagogical decisions of language teachers.

While study abroad and immersion experiences should be a requirement for TESL education, another resource for TESL students are native speakers of foreign languages on American campuses. TESL programs should collaborate with foreign language departments in order to provide further opportunities for students to interact with other languages and intercultural concepts. Teachers have multiple reasons to be highly motivated in study abroad or immersion settings, and there are significant gains for their cultural competence in such contexts. Having experienced 'foreignness' is crucial to understanding students' feelings of foreignness. It provides experiential backing for managing and resolving such issues. It is appreciated and respected by students and allows instructors to not only recognize the levels of linguistic progress, but also identify problems efficiently and correctly.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and implications for research**

To provide the best possible TESL education, instructors must help students de-centralize their frames of reference from their home culture. Once they are able to see themselves as 'outsiders' or foreigners, it will be more possible for them to successfully engage their students at a level that creates intercultural competence. This should be taught in the early stages of pre-service work in order to allow students to maintain the highest level of intercultural growth. Such a shift in perspective should pervade the teaching of any instructor who wishes to teach culture and language to others and should be a cornerstone in all TESL educational pedagogy.

Perhaps the most crucial aspect of this sort of education that was not addressed in the previous paragraph is how to achieve de-centralization. If TESL programs were to adopt a study abroad or foreign language component to their regimen, it would be most beneficial in beginning that growth process for their students. An instructor travels with many study abroad programs, so such an inclusion would also contribute to furthering the TESL instructors' intercultural competence. According to Bennett, Bennett & Alan's 2003 model of ethnocentricity and ethno-relativism, participants in intercultural interactions undergo several stages



in the way that their comprehension affects their frames of reference. TESL educators who undergo this process are less likely to engage in ethnocentric behaviors or become more aware of them, and this makes them far more likely to encourage ethno-relative growth in their own students. These stages are not quickly passed through, even when a learner understands them or knows of them. Thus, it is important for both TESL educators and their students to experience this development earlier in their education to allow for the greatest amount of intercultural competence. Thus, this is a very good reason to promote study abroad experiences and or foreign language immersion opportunities for both TESL instructors and students. Of course, if a TESL program is simply incapable of finding a way to make study abroad and immersion programs mandatory and affordable for their students, it is ever more important for TESL programs to work together with the foreign language departments or other intercultural communities within their institution to provide students and instructors the opportunity to engage in culturally and linguistically relevant communication with native speakers from other home cultures. This interaction needs to address both informal and formal discourse settings to best serve the participants by covering more subject content, vocabulary, and engagement styles.

The increase of ethno-relativism in instructors makes it more likely that future-TESL instructors will engage in intercultural competence with their own students. When instructors have the opportunity for second language acquisition, this experience presents them with a comprehension of language acquisition that is much more difficult to achieve in a lecture scenario. These instructors are then rewarded with language learning insight and paradigm flexibility that should help to provide a welcoming classroom environment for their own students.

### **Final Conclusions**

While it is important for a new field to implement its own terminology, it must also have a set of core terms that scholars and educators alike are in agreement about. This doesn't seem to have happened yet for the TESL field. It is acceptable for TESL literature to acquire some of its terminology from psychology and the larger education fields because their terminology is established and useful for a common ground to base new TESL literature on. But it will be helpful to break common ground in TESL when authors begin to have dialogue internal to the field of TESL and come to agreement in the descriptors they add to the terms "culture" and "language". Fortunately, this is a process

that appears to have already begun. While it may seem like more progress is made when literature is describing conflict between terms, a foundational set of terms allows progress to be made in a different way: instead of a large amount of literature arguing for one slightly altered term over another, there could be a dialogue that focuses on furthering TESL education by promoting and bringing awareness of TESL education to a broader audience. A cohesive set of terms within TESL will clarify the literature and unite the field.

The difficulties that come of nationwide economic crises are not likely to speedily resolve, but they are poor reasons to ignore the areas of TESL education where improvements could lead to serious gains in the effectiveness of the instructors who graduate from US programs. Immersion and study abroad experiences might be that difference. Currently, many TESL programs rely upon their instructors of TESL to relay their own experiences or to encourage their students to experience immersion in another culture or language, but research indicates that it would be ideal to make immersion and second language acquisition a greater part of TESL education. Intercultural experiences are the factor in TESL education that will further intercultural awareness or intercultural competencies, which are of great importance for making an effective ESL

classroom experience. It is necessary for TESLs to respond positively using personal intercultural awareness to their students. Cultural conflict will arise when instructors are not prepared to handle cross-cultural situations in the classroom and intercultural competence should therefore be one of the bigger focuses of TESL education.

### **Ideas for future research**

While an obvious next step to this thesis is a quantitative study documenting exactly how second language acquisition (or specifically, study abroad experiences) affect pre-service ESL teachers, there are many obstacles to such a study. Beyond time restraints and money, such a study would be difficult to develop in terms of its research methodology; it will be difficult to define intercultural competence as a measureable research focus. However, any quantitative research about this topic would be extremely rewarding those interested in my thesis topic.

Some related topics to this thesis could be good research foci are: how several variations of similar terms impact the TESL field of education; pre- and post-processing of study abroad programs; potential native speakers and cultural contact programs in the United States; the ways that immersion programs and second language acquisition may improve

US TESL education; and how the research affects people involved with TESL education. Another focus might be how TESL came to have so many similar terms. This could lead to a search for the original use of each term and the reasons stated for their creation. One related focus untouched by this focus is the autoethnographic or first-person accounts or reflection about study abroad, foreign language immersion, second language acquisition, and intercultural competence. Because results for quantitative studies can tend to be inconclusive or impossible to generalize beyond the initial research population, a combination quantitative and qualitative study that considers measurable benefits as well as the critical reflection of experienced TESL instructors, TESL students, and pre-service TESL instructors may shed further light on the benefits and effectiveness of study abroad as well as second language acquisition.

It would behoove the field of TESL education to pursue further research regarding short-term and long-term study abroad experiences or sheltered versus integrated academic study abroad experiences. Since the majority of participants experience a short-term sheltered study abroad experience (a semester or less), further research about the effectiveness of shorter experiences is a good focal point for study abroad research. It is also necessary to consider the effects of study abroad

experiences in the long-term. While there are many positive ways that a study abroad experience may contribute to a pre-TESL's future performance, further research can determine whether those benefits are life-long or whether repeated experiences might be more useful for American TESL education. Another area that could profit from research focus would be the linguistic results of study abroad beyond oral fluency and increased use of vocabulary. These are most researched, but in terms of usefulness for pre-service instructors, other areas of gain such as intercultural competence and context comprehension may be more beneficial.

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- History of English Language
- Second Language Curriculum Design and Assessment
- Elementary German
- British Literature I
- Imaging Blackness
- Social Problems
- Introduction to Literature Study
- Intermediate German
- German Film
- Renaissance Europe
- Introduction to Literature II (Germ)
- Advanced German
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- Music Theory I - IV
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