

# *Novice-Service Language Teacher Development: Bridging the Gap Between Preservice and In-Service Education and Development*

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One reason for teacher attrition is that a gap exists between pre-service teacher preparation and in-service teacher development, in that most novice teachers suddenly have no further contact with their teacher educators, and from the very first day on the job, must face the same challenges as their more experienced colleagues, often without much guidance from the new school/institution. These challenges include lesson planning, lesson delivery, classroom management, and identity development. In this introductory paper to introduce the special issue on Novice Professionals in TESOL, I also outline practical suggestions that can help bridge the gap between pre-service and in-service education, with the idea that novice teachers can experience the transition from teacher preparation to the first years of teaching, less like “hazing” and more like professional development. I call this bridging period *novice-service language teacher development*.

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This article introduces the special issue on Novice Professionals in TESOL. I begin, however, with a reflective analysis of my own novice teaching experience. I clearly remember my first month as a newly qualified English language teacher in a university-affiliated language institute. In the third week of the semester, the director of studies told me that she would be coming to observe my class. I prepared as usual and commenced my lesson following my plan. The lesson seemed to be going well, but after about 20 minutes, the director suddenly stood up and, in a “You call yourself a teacher?” moment (Fanse-low, 1987, p. 1), suggested that I was not doing the lesson correctly. (I was doing a communicative activity in groups.) She proceeded to take over the class for the remaining 25 minutes, drilling the students via teacher-led grammar activities. After class, she said to me, “That is how to do it!” and then she said not to worry, because I would learn in

time, and that “those new group techniques you were using will not work in this institute.” I remember how low I felt emotionally and professionally; I had been denigrated in front of my own students and felt like leaving the profession, thinking that maybe I was not suited to be a language teacher. Thank goodness that, at the very beginning of my career, a few colleagues decided to act as my “guides and guardians” (Zeichner, 1983, p. 9). These colleagues boosted my morale and provided wise counsel.

Over the years I have often wondered how many other novice teachers have had negative experiences but without the guides and guardians who came to my rescue. How many of these novices traveling alone decided to abandon the teaching path before ever discovering the joys of teaching. As a result, I have always taken special interest in the development of novice teaching professionals in TESOL (the theme of this special issue), their experiences, and especially their well-being (the issues and challenges they face), as well as in how they are prepared (or not prepared) for their first years of teaching (e.g., Farrell, 2003, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2009). Indeed, many novice language teachers do seem to be able to navigate their first years successfully, either largely on their own or thanks to supportive administrators, staff, and fellow teachers. Unfortunately, it seems that supportive environments are the exception rather than the rule. Too often, novice teachers are left to survive on their own in less than ideal conditions, and as a result some drop out of the profession early in their careers (Crookes, 1997; Peacock, 2009).

One reason for teacher attrition is that a gap exists between preservice teacher preparation and in-service teacher development, in that most novice teachers suddenly have no further contact with their teacher educators and from the very first day on the job must face the same challenges as their more experienced colleagues, often without much guidance from the new school or institution. These challenges include lesson planning, lesson delivery, classroom management, and identity development. So as I introduce this special issue on novice professionals in TESOL, I also outline practical suggestions that can help bridge this gap, with the idea that novice teachers can experience the transition from teacher preparation to the first years of teaching as “less like ‘hazing’ and more like professional development” (Johnson, 1996, p. 48). I call this bridging period *novice-service language teacher development*.

## WHAT IS A NOVICE TEACHER?

When my proposal was first presented to the *TESOL Quarterly* editorial advisory board, the notion of *novice* generated a lot of interesting

discussion, with some board members suggesting that a novice could include anyone teaching a new course for the first time, which certainly is a reasonable perspective. Some also suggested that a novice can be anyone who has received a second license or endorsement in English as a second language (ESL; as in the United States) even though he or she may be an experienced teacher in other subjects. Indeed, there was a suggestion that teachers who enter a new cultural context for the first time could also be considered novice teachers. The discussion was interesting for me because it indicated a need to define from the onset exactly what a novice teacher is to be for this special issue, so that interested contributors would know exactly what was to be included and what was not. For this special issue, I define novice teachers as those who are sometimes called newly qualified teachers, who have completed their language teacher education program (including teaching practice [TP]), and have commenced teaching English in an educational institution (usually within 3 years of completing their teacher education program).

In the literature in general education, there is no full agreement as to the exact definition of when teachers cease to be novices in terms of time teaching; it can be from as little as 1 year to as many as 5 years in different research articles. I see 3 years as realistic; Huberman (1989, 1993) calls this novice period *career entry years*. As can be observed with this definition, age is not relevant, and it is general enough to include teachers in any context who have acquired a second license (endorsement) in teaching English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) as long as they have taken a particular course that qualifies them to become ESOL teachers. However, I do not see this definition including experienced ESOL teachers who now find themselves in a new culture or school context, nor is a teacher a novice if he or she is returning to TESOL after many years off. I can see where one can be a novice at instructing a new technology or a new teaching method, but these I consider outside the scope of this particular issue.

## **TRANSITIONING FROM TEACHER PREPARATION TO FIRST YEARS TEACHING**

When preservice teachers finish their teacher preparation programs, they begin their first years as novice teachers. This period has been characterized by Veenman (1984), in his classic study on the concerns of novice teachers, as a type of “reality shock” because of “the collapse of the missionary ideals formed during teacher training by the harsh and rude reality of classroom life” (p. 143). This reality shock is often aggravated because novice teachers have not one, but two complex

jobs during these years: “teaching effectively and learning to teach” (Wildman, Niles, Magliaro, & McLaughlin, 1989, p. 471).

During this transition period, some novice teachers may realize that they have not been adequately prepared for dealing with these two different roles (Fradd & Lee, 1997; Peacock, 2009) and may also discover that they have been set up in their preservice courses (and TP) for a teaching approach that does not work in real classrooms, or that the school culture may prohibit implementation of these “new” approaches (Shin, this issue). The resulting distress is compounded by the isolation novice teachers may feel as they are often left alone to carry out their duties without any immediate support (Kuzmic, 1993). Indeed, Freeman (1994) cautions experienced language educators and novice teachers alike that what is presented in language teacher education programs may be completely washed away by the first-year experiences. Tarone and Allwright (2005) also point a finger at language teacher education programs when they note that the

differences between the academic course content in language teacher preparation programs and the real conditions that novice language teachers are faced with in the language classroom appear to set up a gap that cannot be bridged by beginning teacher learners. (p. 12)

It is important to ask how second language teacher (SLT) education programs could bridge this gap more effectively and thus better prepare novice teachers for the challenges they may face in the first years teaching. It is important also to ask whose needs we are addressing when preparing language teachers: SLT preparation programs or novice teachers?

In this article I outline how SLT preparation programs can bridge this gap by implementing novice-service language teacher development, which provides novice teachers with reflective practice opportunities during their teacher preparation courses that can be continued into their first years. This bridging phase between pre- and in-service also suggests that language teacher educators maintain closer contact with novice teachers than they typically do, or are required to do, after the novices have started teaching. This contact, however, must be collaborative in nature, because as Baecher (this issue) notes, there must be a movement on the part of university-based teacher educators away from conducting studies *on* teachers to collaborative inquiry *with* teachers. In addition, I outline ways novice teachers can take responsibility for their own development by engaging in reflective practice throughout their first years so that they can better assess and manage whatever issues and problems they face in their particular context. As Faez and Valeo (this issue) point out, novice teachers also bear some responsibility for becoming cognizant of the profes-

sion in their particular context and developing expectations that are aligned with reality.

## **NOVICE-SERVICE LANGUAGE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT: BRIDGING THE GAP**

Novice-service teacher development begins at preservice levels in SLT preparation programs and continues into the first years of teaching in real classrooms. It includes three main stakeholders—novice teachers, second language educators, and school administrators—all working in collaboration to ensure a smooth transition from the SLT preparation program to the first years of teaching. The idea is that the knowledge garnered from this tripartite collaboration can be used to better inform SLT educators and SLT programs so that novice teachers can be better prepared for the complexity of real classrooms.

### **SLT Preparation**

Johnson (2009) has proposed that the knowledge base of SLT education programs inform three broad areas:

(1) the content of L2 [second language] teacher education programs: *What L2 teachers need to know*; (2) the pedagogies that are taught in L2 teacher education programs: *How L2 teachers should teach*; and (3) the institutional forms of delivery through which both the content and pedagogies are learned: *How L2 teachers learn to teach*. (p. 11)

However, there is still no consensus in TESOL about what specific courses, and their connection (if any) to TP, should be included in SLT preparation programs. And as Mattheoudakis (2007) has observed, “The truth is that we know very little about what actually happens” (p. 1273) in many of these courses. Part of the reason for this is that most SLT preparation programs vary so much in their nature, content, length, and even philosophical and theoretical underpinnings, so it is no wonder, as Faez (2011) has recently indicated, that there is still “no agreement in the field as to exactly what effective language teachers need to know” (p. 31). In this article, I do not enter into the debate of what should (or should not) be included in SLT preparation (but see Chappell and Moore, this issue, for a discussion on why it should include a strong linguistics component). Instead, I outline and discuss what should be added to existing courses in the program (regardless of the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of that program),

including a supplementary course that is focused exclusively on exploring the first years of teaching through reflective practice.

During SLT preparation programs, preservice teachers can be better prepared for what they will face in their first years in two ways. The first way is by making clear connections in all the preparation courses to teaching in the first year by including the completion of reflective activities and assignments that are related to the subject matter of that course. For example, at one point I had preservice teachers assess the origins and nature of their beliefs about grammar teaching and the way these could shape their classroom decision making and teaching in their TP and their first years of teaching (Farrell, 1999). A second, and more direct, way of addressing the needs of novice teachers is to add a supplementary course called *Teaching in the First Years* (Farrell, 2009), which provides opportunities for preservice teachers to develop skills in reflective practice so that they can better manage challenges, conflicts, and problems they may face in their first years of teaching. As Feiman-Nemser (2001) explains, "Preservice preparation is a time to begin forming habits and skills necessary for the ongoing study of teaching in the company of colleagues . . . and [learning] that serious conversations about teaching are a valuable resource in developing and improving their practice" (p. 1019).

*Teaching in the First Years* could promote the development of skills in anticipatory reflection (reflection-for-action). This reflective approach supports Wright's (2010) observations that SLT preparation should place "an emphasis on the student teacher's learning to teach, and becoming a thinking teacher," which "in turn means a great deal of reflective activity programmed into learning experiences" (p. 273). Such reflective activity can include exploration and analysis of beliefs and practices (Mattheoudakis, 2007; Shin, this issue; Urmston & Pennington, 2008), life histories (Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; Johnson & Golombek, 2002; Xu & Connelly, 2009), critical incidents (Farrell, 2008a, 2009; Shin, this issue), case studies (e.g., Farrell 2006a, 2007a; Mann & Tang, this issue; Xu, this issue), teacher metaphors (e.g., Farrell, 2006b, 2007a; Mann, 2008; Warford & Reeves, 2003), and teacher identity development (Amin, 1997; Farrell, 2012; Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Kanno & Stuart, 2010; Kiely & Askham, this issue; Park, 2007; Xu, this issue). In addition to these, and as Wright (2012) has recently pointed out, one of the main learning priorities for many novice teachers in their first years is how to manage the classroom context. Shin (this issue), for example, discovered that although novice Korean English teachers were required by government policy to teach English through English, they could not do so because of issues with classroom management. Wright (2012) maintains that this can be best accomplished with regular access to opportunities to learn in classrooms

through teaching and observation of other teachers. For example, these types of reflective activities can be further enhanced by linking case study analysis to the classroom observations, journal writing, and class discussions that are part of many current TP assignments.

During this supplementary course, graduating preservice teachers could also be encouraged to make a profile of the school they would like to teach in, and, if they intend to teach in the immediate area, they could talk to current teachers, invite practicing teachers to the course as guest speakers, and observe some initial classes before they take up employment (either full- or part-time), rather than having to learn all this while in their first years.

## **The First Years**

When novice teachers enter a real classroom for the first time, some educators, administrators, and even novice teachers assume that all they must do is apply all the knowledge they accumulated during their teacher preparation programs and all will be well. After all, the reasoning goes, they would not have been given this knowledge if it was not useful and applicable to their work. However, most experienced language teachers know that this is far from the truth, and they will readily admit that it may take years (or even a lifetime) of teaching just to balance lesson content and delivery (see Faez & Valeo, this issue). Richards (1998) points out that novice teachers do not translate the knowledge they obtain from their SLT preparation courses into practice automatically, because teachers must construct and reconstruct “new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and processes” (p. 164). As mentioned previously, novice language teachers have the complex task of not only being able to successfully match the content of what they are teaching to whom they are teaching, but also learning about “the texture of the classroom and the sets of behaviors congruent with the environmental demands of that setting” (Doyle, 1977, p. 51).

Although SLT educators are aware that novice teachers face many issues and challenges in their first years (Warford & Reeves, 2003), it is interesting to note that many TESOL programs still have limited information about how their graduates are faring in their induction years, or even what their graduates’ work lives involve (Baecher, this issue). Because of this paucity of knowledge about novice English language teachers’ experiences, novice-service teacher development includes the provision for some form of contact to be maintained between SLT educators, SLT programs, schools, and novice language

teachers during their first years. In fact, establishing more SLT education–school partnerships is important for SLT preparation programs, because in order to establish an effective knowledge base for second language teacher education SLT educators must have an adequate understanding of schools and schooling and the social and cultural contexts in which learning how to teach takes place (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Freeman and Johnson (1998) state,

Studying, understanding, and learning how to negotiate the dynamics of these powerful environments in which some actions and ways of being are valued and encouraged, whereas others are downplayed, ignored, and even silenced, is critical to constructing effective teacher education. (p. 409)

This SLT educator–novice teacher–school arrangement can be formal or informal. In a formal arrangement, SLT preparation programs and the schools where novice teachers are placed can collaborate when designing and implementing novice teacher induction programs (Faez & Valeo, this issue). Some schools and institutions have their own induction program that includes the provision of mentoring of novice teachers, but it may not be mandatory and it may not have a prescribed pattern of support, and mentors may not get the proper recognition in schools (Mann & Tang, this issue). Mentor teachers may need training in how to explain what they know intuitively about teaching so that they can articulate this clearly to novice teachers, and this can be accomplished by more collaboration between the school and SLT programs that can help facilitate such training. If schools already have a mentor who covers TP, then they can probably assist the appointed novice teachers in their school as well. At the very least, Mann and Tang (this issue) suggest, novice teachers need priority in timetabling to allow for meetings with their mentors in order to discuss aspects of their work and observe each other's lessons. That said, Brannan and Bleistein (this issue) also note that support from a mentor (which may be infrequent anyway) alone may not sufficient to meet the needs of novice teachers; rather, the combination of support from multiple sources (such as mentors, coworkers, and family) may be needed if they are going to survive their first years. As such, Brannan and Bleistein maintain that preservice English language teachers should be educated in how to build a social support network and given strategies for developing mentoring and collegial relationships, because such measures can increase the quality of their teaching experience and lead to an increase in teacher efficacy beliefs during their first years.

If these formal relationships are not possible, for whatever reason, it is still important for SLT educators to continue to monitor novice teachers' development during the first years so that they can develop



case studies of what really happens during these formative teaching years. In order to make these case studies real, however, they should be generated by the novice teachers themselves, because as Elbaz (1988) has noted, there seems to be a gap between what teacher educators and researchers produce (and interpret) as reconstructions of novice teachers' knowledge and experience and the novices' own accounts and interpretations of what they experience. So novice teachers should be encouraged to tell their own stories of the various issues and challenges they face in their particular setting during their first years. I have suggested the use of a story structure framework of *orientation-complication-result* as one way of imposing some order on these stories and experiences so that novice language teachers can have a sense of structure when reflecting on their experiences (Farrell, 2006a). As Jalongo and Isenberg (1995) have noted, this type of story framework can offer both preservice and novice teachers a "safe and nonjudgmental support system for sharing the emotional stresses and isolating experiences of the classroom" (p. 162). Shin (this issue) discovered that participants reported that sharing their stories let them reflect on their teaching practices and that they found such sharing empowering. SLT educators can then build up a corpus of such first-years stories from a variety of different contexts, and these case studies can be fed back into SLT preparation programs for preservice teachers to explore. Such real case studies can thus better inform the curriculum of SLT preparation programs, and preservice teachers can use them, as Wright (2010) has noted, to reflect on their beliefs and narratives and an investigation "into the professional contexts of teaching and learning for which [they] are being prepared" (p. 273).

During their first years, novice teachers also have a responsibility to ensure that they are doing everything they can to assimilate the school culture and the TESOL profession in general. For example, novice teachers can implement the various forms and types of reflection that they learned in their SLT preparation programs so that they are able to respond to whatever difficult issues (both inside and outside the classroom) they may encounter in their first years. In this way, the reflective practice skills preservice teachers have learned during their SLT preparation programs are translated into their own personal reflective practice during their first years.

## **SPECIAL ISSUE**

And so to the special issue. There are five main articles (apart from this introductory article), two brief reports, and one forum paper, all placed in no particular order of importance.

## Articles

Farahnaz Faez and Antonella Valeo, for their article “TESOL Teacher Education: Novice Teachers’ Perceptions of Their Preparedness and Efficacy in the Classroom,” used questionnaires and interviews to study the perceptions of 115 novice ESOL teachers about their preparation and self-efficacy to teach in adult ESOL classrooms. Results indicate that many felt moderately prepared to teach ESOL to adults but even better prepared after gaining some teaching experience during their first years. Faez and Valeo suggest that TESOL programs understand that they are preparing teachers to join a professional community, not just a classroom, and they also call for closer collaborative relationships between schools and teacher education institutions. They suggest that teacher preparation programs should reconsider how to more closely align the content with the needs of novice teachers.

Steve Mann and Elaine Hau Hing Tang, for their article “The Role of Mentoring in Supporting Novice English Language Teachers in Hong Kong,” used a multi-case study approach and gave voice to the perspectives of four novice teachers within the complex wider sociocultural context of Hong Kong that these teachers had to negotiate during their first year. Mann and Tang suggest that mentors (but not necessarily experienced or senior mentors) play a key role in supporting novice teachers and that they make the most positive impact on the novices’ first year of experience when they offer opportunities to collaborate, to work on things together (e.g., teaching the same classes, planning lessons together, sharing teaching ideas and materials).

Drawing on sociocultural theory, Richard Kiely and Jim Askham, in “Furnished Imagination: The Impact of Preservice Teacher Training on Early Career Work in TESOL,” look at the impact of a short teacher training course in TESOL (4 weeks, including the 3 weekends and TP) on 27 novice teachers working in different countries in Europe, North America, and Asia. Using telephone or Skype interviews, their study examined the extent to which graduates are ready for work. This readiness was constructed as *furnished imagination*, or a sense of belonging in the world of TESOL. The results indicate that the novice teachers have furnished imaginations, in terms of knowledge, procedural awareness, skills, dispositions, and a TESOL identity.

For their article, “Novice ESOL Teachers’ Perceptions of Social Support Networks,” Debi Brannan and Tasha Bleistein used integrated qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the perceptions of 47 novice teachers relating to social support and teacher efficacy in their first years in a variety of international contexts. Results reveal that support from a mentor alone is not sufficient, but the combination of support from multiple sources (mentors, coworkers, and family) best meets

the needs of novice teachers. However, the results also indicate that no group of support providers significantly predicted perceived efficacy with student engagement. Brannan and Bleistein note that, if novice ESOL instructors have a designated person that they can go to, who they know will be supportive and truly has their best interest in mind, they may feel more positive about their teaching experiences and abilities.

In “‘It Cannot Be Done Alone’: The Socialization of Novice English Teachers in South Korea,” Sang-Keun Shin analyzes data from questionnaires, interviews, and critical incident reports to investigate the usage of English among 16 novice Korean English teachers, all with native-like command of English, while teaching in their first years, and the factors that affected their teaching decisions. Results indicate that the choice of instructional language was influenced by institutional constraints, school culture, and norms surrounding the teaching and learning of English, rather than by the teachers’ individual capabilities.

**Brief reports.** Hao Xu’s brief report, “Imagined Community Falling Apart: A Case Study on the Transformation of Professional Identities of Novice ESOL Teachers in China,” explores the transformation of professional identities of four novice teachers. Xu suggests that novice teachers start their first teaching years with the imagined identities that have been previously constructed and that these are transformed into practice identities because of real-world interactions in communities of practice. Research results indicate that *cue-based* or *exemplar-based* imagined identities were transformed into the more *rule-based* or *schema-based* practiced identities because of institutional pressures such as school rules and regulations.

Laura Baecher’s brief report, “Feedback From the Field: What Novice PreK–12 ESL Teachers Want to Tell TESOL Teacher Educators,” outlines how she tracked 77 graduates of one master’s in TESOL program in the United States offering PreK–12 state certification in ESL who have been working in the local public school system for 1–4 years. By analyzing data from online surveys, in-person interviews, site visits, questionnaires, and a focus group, Baecher discovered that the top challenges cited among elementary ESL teachers were teacher–parent communication, lack of instructional time with English language learners, and wide variability in academic and English needs and levels. Among secondary ESL teachers, the top three challenges were teacher–ESL student communication about social and personal issues, encouraging and motivating students, and wide variability in academic and English needs and levels.

**Forum.** Phil Chappell and Stephen Moore’s article, “Novice Teachers and Linguistics: Foregrounding the Functional,” describes a post-

graduate certificate TESOL program that has a strong linguistics orientation. The authors argue that such a program provides novice language teachers with knowledge and skills superior to those of programs that focus heavily on methodology and practicum experience. No doubt this somewhat controversial Forum piece will generate much further discussion on how SLT preparation programs can best, as Chappell and Moore say, “equip [their] trainee teachers with the skill set that will best enable them to carry out their duties as confident novice teachers.”

## CONCLUSION

All of these articles provide us with more information about how novice professionals in TESOL are negotiating their first years in diverse settings. It is clear to me from all the excellent abstracts that I received for this special issue that novice teaching professionals in TESOL are getting more attention than was the case a few years back, and this is a timely and important change in our field. We have much more to learn about what influences second language teacher retention and attrition, and much more to learn about which aspects of the SLT preparation program novice language teachers choose to implement and which they ignore or abandon and why. We need to learn more about what aspects of language teaching specifically related to novice teachers' subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge should be emphasized in SLT preparation programs. Although we have two articles that are focused specifically on induction programs, and these provide useful information from different contexts, we also need to find out more about what can be learned through structured induction support during the first years and how SLT preparation programs can (and should) get more involved in the design and implementation of such induction programs.

In this introductory article I have called for novice-service language teacher development recognition to bridge the gap between preservice education and in-service development so that we can better support novice teachers in their first years. Novice-service teacher development begins in SLT preparation programs, where preservice teachers are provided with opportunities to practice reflection during their existing courses. I have also called for the inclusion of a supplementary course that specifically explores and examines the first years of teaching. Such a course is also designed to support, as Johnson (2009) has noted, “the development of teachers' adaptive expertise” (p. 10). I have also called for greater SLT education program–school–novice collaboration so that SLT educators can not only help novice teachers but also learn more

about, and eventually influence, the cultures of the schools in which their students are likely to be placed in the future. Indeed, Shin (this issue) goes so far as to suggest that a more important factor than the individual teacher's ability is creating school systems and school cultures that enable teachers to apply the teaching methods they were trained to use. In addition, I have noted that novice teachers should be encouraged to write about their experiences in the form of stories, so they can make sense of their own experiences. These stories also can be used as case studies for preservice teachers to examine so that they can be better prepared for their novice years as second language teachers.

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