

# Comparative and International Education / Éducation Comparée et Internationale

Volume 44 | Issue 2

Article 3

December 2015

## Negotiating TESOL Discourses and EFL Teaching Contexts in China: Identities and Practices of International Graduates of a TESOL Program

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### Recommended Citation

Ilieva, Roumiana; Li, Aojun; and Li, Wanjun (2015) "Negotiating TESOL Discourses and EFL Teaching Contexts in China: Identities and Practices of International Graduates of a TESOL Program," *Comparative and International Education / Éducation Comparée et Internationale*: Vol. 44: Iss. 2, Article 3.

Available at: <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cie-eci/vol44/iss2/3>

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**Negotiating TESOL Discourses and EFL Teaching Contexts in China: Identities and Practices of International Graduates of a TESOL Program**  
**Négocier les discours sur le TESOL et les contextes d'enseignement de l'EFL en Chine : l'identité et les pratiques des diplômés internationaux d'un programme de TESOL**

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**Abstract**

This article reports on a study of the material effects of the discourses circulating in a TESOL (teaching English as a second language) program housed in a Canadian university on the professional identities and practices that international graduates of the program negotiate and develop in their local professional contexts in China. The principal researcher and two of the study participants discuss pedagogical values salient among program graduates and explore complexities accompanying professional identity negotiation. The article offers recommendations for TESOL programs in affording EFL teachers the possibility to construct hybrid professional identities and dwell comfortably in a “third space” as educational practitioners in a globalized world.

**Résumé**

Cet article rend compte d'une étude sur les effets matériels des discours circulant dans un programme TESOL (enseignement de l'anglais comme langue seconde) logé dans une université canadienne sur les identités et pratiques professionnelles que les étudiants internationaux diplômés de ce programme négocient et développent dans leurs contextes professionnels locaux en Chine. Le chercheur principal et deux des participants de l'étude discutent des valeurs pédagogiques saillantes parmi les diplômés du programme et explorent les complexités inhérentes aux négociations d'identité professionnelle. Cet article propose des recommandations pour les programmes TESOL en fournissant aux enseignants EFL la possibilité de construire des identités professionnelles hybrides, et de s'étendre confortablement dans un « troisième espace » en tant que professionnels de l'éducation dans un monde globalisé.

**Keywords:** international graduates of TESOL programs and EFL teaching, English language teacher education and globalization, language teacher identity, third space in teaching practice, teacher agency

**Introduction**

Times of accelerating economic, cultural, and educational globalization pose serious challenges to language teacher education (Barnawi & Phan, 2015; Kumaravadivelu, 2012). This article reports on a study of the material effects of culturally specific discourses on education, circulating in a TESOL program designed for international students in a Canadian university, on the professional identities and practices of Chinese graduates of the program which they negotiate in their local professional contexts in China. Building on a study which examined the discursive constructions of professional identities 20 pre-service teachers from China displayed in portfolios documenting their learning through the program (Ilieva, 2010), the present study investigates the longer term impact of program discourses on nine graduates of the program through qualitative interviews. Grounded in poststructural (Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2011) and sociocultural (Clarke, 2008; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998) understandings of identity, the article, co-authored by the researcher and two of the study participants, draws on critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003; Luke, 2002) to reflect on the systems of knowledge and belief, the relationships, and the identities displayed in the interviews with program graduates. We explore complexities

accompanying teaching practices and negotiation of professional identities among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and discuss implications of this research for TESOL programs. The article adds to work that examines through a critical lens the place of teacher education programs in affording international graduates, in this case non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs), the possibility to construct positive professional identities (Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Ilieva, 2010; Ilieva & Waterstone, 2013; Pavlenko, 2003) to be able to dwell comfortably in a “third space” (Bhabha, 1994) as educators in today’s globalizing world (Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Phan, 2008).

The conditions of globalization and the trend towards a market orientation of higher education have led to the proliferation of international education, including pre-service education (Byrd Clark, Tarc, Varpalotai, 2012). These conditions seem to have led as well to the internationalization of TESOL programs (Beck, Ilieva, Scholefield & Waterstone, 2007) as increasing numbers of international students are graduating from TESOL programs in British, Australian and North American (BANA) universities (Barnawi & Phan, 2015; Liu, 1998). TESOL programs are viewed as sites of professional identity construction and research on language teaching in the last decade or so considers teacher identity as essential for how teaching is played out in language classrooms (Miller, 2009; Pavlenko, 2003; Phan, 2008; Tsui, 2007; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). In this context, an important question to ask refers to the relevance of TESOL programs to the real world of educators teaching English in a non-BANA context and, by implication, the material effects of BANA TESOL programs on the professional identities and practices of international graduates. This is the question that guided the study discussed in this article.

### **International students and TESOL programs**

Currently there seems to be very little known about how international graduates of TESOL programs fare in EFL teaching contexts. Most studies address the issues international students face within a TESOL program or when teaching in ESL contexts after graduation (see among others Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Ilieva & Waterstone, 2013; Kong, 2014; Nemtchinova, 2005; Park, 2012; Pavlenko, 2003). Much of this research shows the distinct need for TESOL programs to offer additional courses tailored for future teachers who are non-native speakers with respect to various aspects of language proficiency or empowerment in light of the dominance of native speaker ideology in the TESOL field (Holliday, 2005; Kamhi-Stein, 1999; Medgyes, 1999). Some (e.g. Braine, 1999; Canagarajah, 2004; Holliday, 2005; Polio & Wilson-Duffy, 1998) note that few courses in Masters TESOL programs address the issues and challenges facing EFL student teachers planning to go back to their countries to teach.

With respect to international graduates, Yi-Hsuan Lo (2001a; 2001b) interviewed four teachers who had completed Masters degrees in TESOL in the US and returned to teach EFL in their home countries (Taiwan and Thailand). The author concluded that they all had difficulties and faced resistance applying the ESL-based teaching methodologies to their EFL teaching contexts. Recently Osman Barnawi and Le Ha Phan (2015) reported on the local teaching practices of two Saudi teachers who had completed Western-based TESOL programs. The authors concluded that these teachers had proactively taken advantage of being trained in the West to teach effectively and take ownership of their pedagogical practices. Given the paucity of research in this area, and the dearth of studies on the effects of language teacher education on actual teaching from graduates’ perspective (Moussu & Llorca, 2008), the study discussed below offers important insights into the material effects of a TESOL program in Canada on some of its international graduates currently teaching in China.

The TESOL program discussed here has been the subject of several studies conducted by Roumiana Ilieva and colleagues (Beck et al., 2007; Ilieva, 2010; Ilieva & Waterstone, 2013). One study addressing the identity constructions displayed by students in the program in their end-of-program portfolios found that many of the students linked *being* a teacher with *doing* teaching and that for them “professional identity and agency are tied closely to possible future pedagogical practices” (Ilieva, 2010, p. 362). One particular “finding” of the study was that these pre-service teachers saw themselves as “agents of change” in their future teaching contexts. Ilieva wondered: given the empowering effect of consciousness raising ... a discourse [on teacher agency] might produce (Freire, 1970), further work that explores how these NNESTs actually approach teaching in their local context could perhaps answer more satisfactorily whether the position expressed in their portfolios reflected simple parroting of program discourses or a real sense of agency. (2010, p. 365)

In a study on the kinds of identities that two teachers from Taiwan develop as they attend a TESOL pronunciation course which challenges the myth of the native speaker, Paula Golombek and Stefanie Jordan (2005) also wonder how the identities of their participants would be negotiated when they are back in their local teaching contexts. The reason such questions are important is based on the need for research “to examine the *long-term* [italics added] impact of [TESOL] discourses and identity options on social and discursive realities in and outside teachers’ language classrooms” (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 266). This is all the more important given Dilin Liu’s (1998) claim that BANA-trained international TESOL students “often return home to face not only the problem of modifying their methods and techniques, but also the conflict between their newly acquired ideas and those still firmly followed by local professionals” (p. 6). However, in Liu’s work there are no examples of actual struggles graduates grapple with. The present study enquires into the material effects a TESOL program might have over educators teaching in non-BANA contexts, and provides illustrations of what may be happening at “home” with respect to their professional identities.

## **Theoretical considerations**

### ***Identity***

As already mentioned, this article draws on current theorizing on teacher identity in the TESOL field. As such theorizing has been summarized well elsewhere (e.g. Clarke, 2008; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Miller, 2009; Varghese et al., 2005), we will only briefly outline the main ideas within sociocultural and poststructural literature around identity construction that guide us in this study. Identity is viewed as intimately linked to social, cultural and political contexts (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Phan, 2008), and constructed and maintained through discourse (Weedon, 1997) as well as “in practice” (Holland et al., 1998). In addition, identity is not fixed, but multiple and shifting (Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2011), and agentive (Clarke, 2008; Varghese et al., 2005). In particular, the idea that identities are not stable, or unitary but rather changing, and in conflict, and shaped powerfully through discourses in communities is becoming central to theorizing about language learning and teaching. Phan (2008), for example, discusses the complexities of identity formation of Australian-trained Vietnamese teachers of English connecting their experiences to the broader context of mobility and transnationalism in the globalizing world we live in. She points out that identities are dynamic and hybrid and undergo processes of appropriation, resistance, and negotiation in reference to the simultaneity of mobility and locality. The result is the construction of transnational identities embedded in more than one society and reflecting the quality of existing “here and there” simultaneously. The linkages

between identity construction and globalization processes demand that the context of globalization be reflected on in reference to TESOL programs and EFL teachers taking part in them.

### ***Globalization and hybridity/third space***

While globalization has become very much a buzz word, there is strong acknowledgement that the unprecedented movement of people, ideas, goods, and knowledge ensuing in our globalizing times is creating a different set of educational conditions in the last few decades (Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Unterhalter & Carpentier, 2010). With regards to language teacher education, Kumaravadivelu (2012) calls for its radical restructuring so that language teachers develop the skills of “strategic thinkers, exploratory researchers, and transformative intellectuals” (p. x) to be able to shoulder what he perceives to be the responsibilities globalizing societies place upon them. While this article does not engage with the ambitious task to discuss what language teacher education should look like in conditions of globalization, the data below speaks to how globalization may impact some pre-service language teachers whose teacher education takes place thousands of kilometres away from their teaching settings.

In the context of BANA institutions of higher education, the economic dimensions of globalization are leaving their mark on universities, which are becoming more corporate and market oriented, and there has been an expansion of cost-recovery programs for international students, including in TESOL, and ever increasing numbers of international students in such programs. Yet little is known about what they take home from such programs. At the same time globalization is understood to be a complex dialectical process (Giddens, 1990) where the local is not separate from, nor a binary of the global, but part of it (Edwards & Usher, 2000). In such conditions TESOL instructors and students alike are caught in larger global/local structures, discourses, and ideologies (Beck et al., 2007). In the case of instructors in the program discussed here, they are left wondering about “possibilities for agency for the international students [in the] program as they accommodate, negotiate, and resist identities, practices and discourses in [it] inflected by broader racialized, neo-colonial, and global/local tensions” (Ilieva & Waterstone, 2013, p. 17). With regards to students, some of the dilemmas graduates of the program face in negotiating global and local tensions will be discussed below.

The postcolonial concepts of hybridity and third space (Bhabha, 1990, 1994) could be very illuminating in attempts to make sense of appropriation and negotiation of identities, practices, and discourses in complex global/local structures and conditions (cf. Phan, 2008). As Kumaravadivelu (2008) points out when discussing language education in conditions of cultural globalization, hybridity conveys the “struggles and strategies followed by individuals and communities to meet the challenges of cross-cultural experiences” (p. 120). This article focuses on the struggles and strategies of some TESOL program graduates in their local teaching conditions in China following their cross-cultural experiences in a BANA institution.

As all educational practices are cultural practices, an understanding of cultures as “subject to intrinsic forms of [cultural] translation” (Bhabha, 1990, p. 210), is helpful in seeing the meeting of cultures/different educational practices in conditions of globalization as a dynamic “intercultural zone of enunciation[,]... a translational space of negotiation” (Bhabha, 2009, p. x). For Homi Bhabha (1990), “the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather, hybridity ... is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority” (p. 211).

Thus the third space involves a dynamic interplay between competing cultural (local and global) discourses and the act of cultural translation becomes a central activity in it. Contesting binaries of all sorts, the third (hybrid/in-between) space is full of tensions, but also possibilities; it is froth with ambivalence and border-crossing, ever-evolving and incomplete, a process of the emergence of “something new and unrecognizable” (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211) in generative globalized conditions of cultural translation. These ideas will guide us in discussing the data that follow. We now turn to an overview of the TESOL program whose material effects are the main focus of this article.

## **Methodological considerations**

### ***Program context***

The Masters of Education TESOL program, housed within a Faculty of Education in a Canadian university, is a 17-month program funded entirely through student tuition fees. It started in 2005, each year enrolling cohorts of 20 to 24 students who are all international students. With the exception of a few students from Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Thailand, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Brazil, Singapore, and Malaysia who have gone through the program since its inception, the student body is primarily from China. Predominantly students are recent university graduates with little or no teaching experience. Thus the majority are beginning to learn about teaching in a context very different from the one where they will practice teaching. The program starts with a 5-week intensive introductory orientation to graduate study and consists of coursework, “fieldwork” through observations and practical engagement in Canadian classrooms, and a capstone comprehensive examination.

Ilieva worked as an academic coordinator and instructor in the program from its inception until August 2007 and continues involvement as an instructor. Aojun Li and Wanjun Li are graduates of the program from cohort one and cohort two respectively. The program’s academic culture reflects features frequently a staple for BANA settings of language teacher education: collaborative work, critical thinking, the making of meaningful connections between theory and practice, personal relevance. Common themes across coursework are 1) critical, poststructural, and sociocultural perspectives on language learning and teaching; 2) a focus on the broader context of schooling and the centrality of equity issues in relation to education; 3) emphasis on self-reflection and inquiry constant in every aspect of the TESOL program (orientation, coursework, fieldwork, comprehensive exam portfolio). While these features of the program were not designed specifically in mind to respond to accelerated conditions of internationalization and globalization, it is hoped that they develop in students the skills that Kumaravadivelu considers essential in language teachers’ professional life nowadays.

### ***Data collection***

The study discussed here emerged organically for Ilieva as a follow up to her research on the end-of-program portfolios of graduates in the program (Ilieva, 2010) which, as mentioned earlier, raised for her the question of the actual teaching practices of graduates, given the powerful discourse on teachers as agents of change displayed in their portfolios. Thus, neither the participants in the study, nor Ilieva, knew that it would take place when they were students in the program and she was their instructor. Ilieva’s wonderings prompted her to contact all graduates of cohort one and two who had left Canada after their graduation (after receiving the approval of the university’s ethics board to conduct this research). Ilieva invited these graduates to contact her if they were already teaching in their local contexts and interested in participating in an interview to

share their teaching experiences. Nine graduates responded to this invitation and the study consisted of semi-structured qualitative interviews of 1-1.30 hrs. length which Ilieva conducted with them. At the time of the interviews these graduates had been teaching in China for between six and 30 months after program completion, primarily in college and university settings. The interview questions were provided to them ahead of the actual interviews (three were conducted face to face when Ilieva was in China, one over e-mail, and five over the phone). The interviews focused on the graduates' experiences of successes and challenges in their teaching in China and how, or if, the TESOL program they attended in Canada affected their daily teaching practices. Study participants were in their mid 20s. A year later Ilieva invited all nine participants to take part in follow-up interviews and three responded to the call for a follow up interview (two from cohort 1 and one from cohort 2). All interviews were transcribed and sent back to the study participants for member checks (Creswell, 2013). A PowerPoint presentation of the interview data analysis, presented at a conference following the first round of interviews, was also sent to the nine graduates for comments. The study participants with whom two interviews were conducted (and thus there were more data on the longer term impact of the program on their teaching) were invited to participate in conference presentations with Ilieva. Aojun and Wanjun responded to this invitation and co-presented with Ilieva the data from both rounds of interviews at a prestigious international conference in China. The collaborative interpretation of the implications of the data in preparation for this presentation more than a year after the second round of interviews was experienced as an important on-going opportunity to reflect on one's teaching contexts for Aojun and Wanjun. It was also an opportunity for Ilieva to do further member checks with two study participants. Here pseudonyms are used for all study participants. The interview analysis is guided by assumptions underpinning critical discourse analysis (CDA).

### ***Analytical lens***

CDA stems from a view of language use/discourse as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 2003; Luke, 2002). The most common characteristic of CDA is an understanding of the centrality of language, text, and discourse in the constitution of human subjectivity, social relations, and social control (Luke, 2002). Analysis is aimed at examining how knowledge, social relations, and social positions are constructed in texts (Fairclough, 2003). Luke's guidelines for the usefulness of CDA in postmodern times of cultural globalization suggest the need for a move beyond ideological critique of hegemony through linguistic means. In Luke's view the focus in CDA should be on exploring local uptakes of dominant discourses and emergent discourses of hybrid identity generated counter to dominant discourses.

The discussion below addresses what systems of knowledge and belief, what social relations, and what identities are displayed in the interviews with the graduates of this TESOL program. The focus on systems of knowledge and beliefs reflects the pedagogical assumptions shared by interviewees that appear to be played out in their classrooms. The question around identities enquires into the types of identities displayed (e.g., teacher, cultural insider, friend, reflective practitioner, etc.) in the data. The question about relationships enquires into relations like domination, co-operation, resistance, negotiation that could be discerned among participants in educational settings study participants shared in the interviews.

### **The material effects of a TESOL program on Chinese graduates in their teaching contexts**

In examining the interview transcripts we see many commonalities in the ways these nine TESOL graduates now teach in their local contexts in China even though there are a number of differences

in the higher education institutions where they work (e.g. subjects these graduates teach, students they work with, assessment requirements they need to comply with). Despite these differences, all of them employ a somewhat inductive pedagogy and shape their work around students' various needs. Specifics in relation to these and other commonalities, which we view as linked to the TESOL program they completed, will be presented in the subsections below.

### *Systems of knowledge and belief*

The systems of knowledge and beliefs that can be discerned in the interviews reflect the graduates' accounts of their teaching practices. Due to space constraints, different aspects of their practices will be illustrated with a small number of quotes that most eloquently represent a given idea.

All study participants share that their pedagogy is very much activity-oriented. Below is an example from a teacher in a vocational college who teaches business content in English:

I think my teaching is much more practical... There are six major [business] terms we must learn in this course. So I'll not teach them beforehand, I'll divide the class into groups and ask them to do some research about each term, what's the meaning, how to use this term. So they will do this ... and for a group, they'll do a presentation to introduce ... this term. (Diana)

Another common feature in the practices of these EFL teachers is that they typically go beyond content presented in the (usually prescribed) textbook when working with their students. As Bao noted, "[s]ometimes the book doesn't have enough activities so I'll come up with something new... Last week I organized a debate to keep their interest." Similarly, Helen explained, "I just searched on the internet and tried to tell them more about the Statue of Liberty 'cause there should be more information that's beyond the text. And I asked them to think about Chinese symbols."

Other widespread assumptions among these graduates refer to the importance of developing critical thinking and learner autonomy in their students. For example, Fiona stated, "[t]he first thing I told them is, 'Be critical'." Bao observed that, "I am always talking, like this college study, the majority part is self-learning, so you cannot depend on the teacher. Teacher cannot teach you many things so you have to learn by yourself."

In terms of content, most of these graduates also focus on cultural aspects in their teaching of the English language. For example, Siu said that "[t]he most useful and important thing I have found is to keep culture teaching accompany language teaching." A large number of the TESOL graduates also shared that they are going beyond a focus on language instruction in their English classrooms:

I think it's important [that we discuss political topics] 'cause they are university students and all they know about is just this language and those subjects they have learnt ... I think it's really my responsibility to tell them more, that's very basic knowledge. (Helen)

[The TESOL program] really changed my teaching philosophy. For example, I like to teach my students to be global citizens, rather than just learn English knowledge .... So I'd like to broaden their horizon and to try to think more about their own society and more about the world, too. (Kathryn)

In our view all these examples provide clear evidence of the attempts of these Chinese teachers to engage in teaching practices in light of TESOL discourses they were subjected to during their Masters study in Canada. As outlined earlier, collaborative work, focus on the broader context, going beyond linguistic analysis were all part of the graduates' pre-service education and these seem to be guiding them in the first couple of years in their teaching in China. It is also



evident through some of the language structures the study participants employ in the interviews (e.g. “you cannot depend on the teacher”, “there should be more information that’s beyond the text”) that such assumptions/knowledge and belief systems are not questioned, but taken for granted by these EFL teachers in the way they conduct their teaching.

### ***Teacher identities***

Together with the practices that these EFL teachers seem to enact in their local educational settings, there are indications in the interviews that speak to who they “are” within the context of their classrooms. A common theme is that these teachers view themselves as more “informal” or “relaxed” in comparison to other Chinese teachers in their local contexts. Rhonda noted that, “[w]hen I’m with students, I’ll just be more relaxed.” Similarly, Bao stated, “I think my teaching style is kind of casual... I dress casually and I talk casually, and my classroom is more free compared to other teachers.”

Another shared identity among these EFL teachers is that of a Canadian/Western culture insider as illustrated below:

If I never went to Canada I’d have no idea how people celebrate Halloween in Western countries. But I have my real experience. So I have some real stories to tell them. ...They are interested with the stories. And they can learn more information other than the book. (Bao)

I’ll tell them some cultural differences between the Chinese and the Canadian culture ‘cause I’ve told them that I’ve been to Canada for 2 years. They are very interested in Canadian culture, too....And culture learning helps them to learn English better. (Kathryn)

Another identity option evident in the interviews is that of a teacher as a reflective professional meticulously described by Qing Lang:

I do a lot of self-reflective activities and I keep a sort of journal.... And I also talk to [the students] at the end of the semester one by one. And ask them how they feel about my teaching, what kind of suggestions they can offer for my future teaching. .... And then I will combine my journal and their comments. And I come up with a new plan for my next semester.

All these identity positionings reflecting informal teaching style, reference to personal experiences, and reflexivity seem to suggest that these TESOL graduates bring in their classrooms a teaching persona very much influenced by subjectivities and relations introduced in their pre-service program in Canada.

### ***Social relations***

The subsections above present how these international graduates of a TESOL program in a BANA institution approach their teaching and who they are in their classrooms. A focus on social relations in their contexts, however, suggests that these practices and identities are not enacted unproblematically. There are challenges along the way that bring tensions in accommodating personal educational values and local conditions. Often tensions appear at the institutional level as a result of the need to negotiate what seems to be a strong focus on assessment in the educational culture in China, and these teachers’ valuing of teaching English for communication. Siu mentioned that “[t]he dilemma between the need from school exam and teaching for practical English use is the biggest problem.” Likewise, Bao noted:

My English class basically is about talking and practice English... [while] my students ask me to help them to pass the CET [College English Test mandatory exam], but I have to focus on my plan for the class and it's really hard to find the balance between these two things.

Tensions appear as well with regards to some students' customary ways of being in a language classroom and the teacher's agenda. As Rhonda shared below, often these TESOL graduates feel torn when facing their students' resistance:

I understand like Asian students, and I don't want to push them [to speak] 'cause I was like that before. I can understand their fear or inhibition. [But] I feel it's important [that they try to speak up]... I changed when I was doing my Masters degree in Canada. So I think there's potential for them to change....You'll gain confidence from that. If you never try, you'll be like that forever. But sometimes, teachers make the difference for them.

Student resistance to going beyond language instruction in a language classroom is also sometimes evident as in the account of a teacher working in a city not far from Hong Kong:

We talk [about] many of the political issues in our class in Canada. I was trying to tell [my students] that language is the carrier of culture.... I explained to them why Hong Kong is so reserved and on the other hand is so westernized. And then one student just said, 'Oh, our class is going to be a political class' .... I think they were not expecting to hear these kinds of issues in a language class. (Helen)

Aiming at individualizing instruction, another discourse commonly espoused in BANA TESOL programs, is also difficult to reconcile in these EFL teachers' current working conditions as Diana explained: "[i]n Canada, we treat every student ... very personally. Here, because we have such big classes, big size, so it's hard."

While the TESOL graduates reflect on their unease in negotiating their BANA-influenced perspectives on teaching given the expectations of some of their students, they aim to establish teacher-student relationships that express care for students beyond the exam level: "[w]e would ... be more interactive, more listening, more speaking to students" (Rhonda); "I have no right to force them to do something so I have to choose a mild way and friendly way" (Fiona). They also seem to be generally appreciated by their students. Helen related, "I thanked them for their cooperation for these 3 months and some of them just, applause!" Similarly, Fan Hua observed that "[student] evaluation ... is most satisfying experience I got from my students because I guess that is the most direct way I can feel [they] got my care and they actually project it back in this way".

Relations with colleagues, however, are not as satisfying. With the exception of Qing Lang who enjoys very positive relations with colleagues, the others generally express disappointment because of lack of collegial support or cooperation with other teachers in their educational settings. For example, Rhonda noted that "[sharing among colleagues] doesn't happen that often. We don't really cooperate that much...they don't see this cooperation that important." Likewise, Kathryn stated, "I know little about the relationship between other teachers and their students. We seldom talk about the relationship together."

### ***The hybrid professional***

The systems of knowledge and beliefs, identities, and social relations these teachers shared in interviews with Ilieva suggest that the nine graduates of this TESOL program are impacted strongly by their language teacher education in Canada in their daily teaching in China. However, the data presented so far does not address a very important aspect of how they relate to their TESOL education in light of the current tensions they experience in their local teaching contexts. The quote below reflects

powerfully most teachers' agency in their uptake of discourses dominant in their TESOL program, and developing hybrid identities in making sense of these discourses in their local context:

I think that like in Chinese eyes, I am in a more Western way. But in your eyes, I think I am quite Chinese. But I am trying to use *my* understanding of what *I* experienced of the Westerners' education ... it is more from *my own* point of view. (Fiona)

The idiosyncratic uptake of TESOL discourses in the local context can also be experienced as an important asset as suggested by Fan Hua:

I always feel I'm in-between but I feel that gives me more... I think more than other people think for the students. Because I always think maybe this way is better, either this way is better or that way is better. But for other teachers... there's only one way to do it.

In our view these quotes illustrate the emergence of a 'third space' that most of these TESOL graduates seem to begin to occupy in their local teaching contexts. These EFL teachers find themselves in a place of tension and on shifting ground as they navigate through local and TESOL discourses in their work. The in-betweenness of the third space seems productive, however, as evidenced further in the interviews. For example, Bao, who shared that finding a balance between focusing on practical English and the students' desire to get College English Test preparation is hard, is quite creative in negotiating his pedagogical concerns with the students' needs by dividing his class time so that together with a focus on communicative English, "for this term, I help them to do the writing [for the CET exam]... And next semester, I'll do more work on the reading." Similarly, Helen, who found student resistance in bringing issues beyond language in the classroom, is reflecting on the need to negotiate her approach to such issues in the local context: "Maybe next time I'll finish these political issues in one or two sentences and do it from time to time. And when they get used to that, I may go further. I want to do it according to the students' responses."

Individualizing instruction, that these TESOL graduates have come to value, demands extra time, but they take up the challenge, usually on their own time. As attested by Qing Lang, "I need to do a lot of ... advising after class [with those who] didn't do well enough." Diane also shared, "I try my best to know everyone, personality or characteristics, and then help them to ... participate in my class ... more easily."

A very powerful account of potential clashes between competing local and TESOL discourses and the hybrid positioning and stances such clashes could bring about, is evident below:

I was thinking, "Why should I bring western ideas into China?" At the very beginning, I just copy what our [TESOL] instructors [did] and really think that's the appropriate thing to do. But then ... one time a student's response to me kind of changed my view. One time, because there is no volunteer [to speak up], I was like, "The Canadian class is not like that. Students are different." I was very upset at that time so I made this kind of comment. And [the student] actually after class, she was like, "What are the kind of differences between Canadian students and Chinese students? Are they just better than us in your view? Like how?" I [didn't] have answers at that time. So suddenly I feel, maybe if I just transfer, or incorporate those Western ideas totally in China, that's another way of colonialism. So then I think maybe there's no better way, just *different*. [So in terms of how I can make use of what I've learned in Canada without making this another colonial practice], I think in my mind, it's really find what Chinese students really want. It's not just, "Oh, I think this is good for them". To really get to know them, to be familiar with what they really need and what their context is, even after class, and then incorporate ideas or skills from what I've learned to them. And also I have to constantly get back to those [TESOL] materials. And another thing I'm planning to do, I also need to get

familiar with Chinese educational theories because I haven't touched it. So I have to get to know those things. (Fan Hua)

This account points to the negotiations that these TESOL graduates often need to undertake to reconcile multiple discourses they live with that reflect local and global conditions. Such negotiations demand that they exhibit qualities as strategic thinkers and exploratory research-practitioners. This calls for them to be engaged in, as well as engage their students in, “cultural translation” at any moment in their teaching. Cultural translation is about negotiating new situations from the perspective of re-formed positions and ideas rather than in the frame of old paradigms (Bhabha, 1990). Negotiating resistance and appropriation of their TESOL program discourses, these EFL teachers seem to be infusing their work with meanings expressive of multifaceted transnational identities and transformative practices. There seems to be a new form of teaching developing at the collusion of two teaching traditions and belief systems that entails hybridity. We believe the emergence of this third or hybrid space reflects the process of these EFL teachers' agentive experience of living in two or more cultures. This negotiating process involves complex layering of multiple factors and discourses.

### **Discussion and implications**

As the data above suggest, the TESOL program seems to have strong material effects on these EFL teachers. These effects lead to struggles and tensions “at home” and constant negotiations with local students in terms of pedagogical activities and student teacher relationships. Clearly these teachers are in a “new situation” interweaving the global and the local. And “a new situation may demand... that you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them” (Bhabha, 1990, p. 216). This situation requires the articulation of a creative synthesis between sometimes opposing discourses, and operating in a third/hybrid space. We believe that it is possible to think of these international graduates not simply as mixing educational/cultural practices and expectations, but as engaged in the process of the emergence of “something new and unrecognizable” (Bhabha, 1990, p.211) in their own classrooms by setting up new “structures of authority” and relations beyond the histories that constitute them. Holland et al. (1998) theorize that it is understanding “identity in practice” that helps us to see how identity takes shape in interactions in given settings. As our responses are not autonomous individual acts divorced from the social milieu in which they occur, it is mutually constituted settings that are the context for “co-development” (p. 270) of new material conditions, practices, and identities. It seems that “cultural translations” (Bhabha, 1990) and “the improvisations that come from the meeting of persons, cultural resources and situations in practice ... [when] used again and again, can become tools of agency” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 4). Bao's response to the students' demands to work on CET exam preparation, Helen's reflections on how to continue bringing in issues beyond language in her classroom, Fan Hua's plans how to avoid imposing Western styles of teaching while integrating aspects of them in her classroom are all examples of such agentive improvisations in practice. Thus teacher agency in times of cultural globalization characterized with simultaneously inhabiting the “here and there” for these TESOL graduates seems tied to hybridity, hybridity reflecting their *own* understanding and incorporation of Chinese and Western educational discourses.

Given that all participants in this study are teachers in China and given that later cohorts included students from other countries as well, it would be important in future research to address how the program may have impacted its graduates teaching in other EFL contexts. Besides, a further study might include a larger number of participants now that the program has been in place

for almost 10 years, which would allow further in-depth investigation of how specific institutional contexts may impact the teaching practices and identities of the program's graduates as the concept of "the English teacher" could vary dramatically in different contexts. Comparative research with graduates of TESOL programs which admit international and local students would be another fruitful avenue for further research.

### ***Implications for TESOL programs***

The suggestions that follow are applicable to the specific program these graduates completed. Yet, we believe that most, if not all of them, are pertinent to all TESOL programs that accept international students. The implications for TESOL programs for international graduates need to be tied to the relevance of these programs to the "real world" they will be teaching in in our globalized times. Yet, as a study participant observed, "people have different ideas whether to stay [in Canada] or go back to China. So their future context is kind of different. How to make them feel smoothly staying in different contexts is really important" (Fan Hua). Thus, it seems to us, that a major focus in TESOL programs needs to be on raising awareness of the complexity of adjustments when mediating global and local discourses and contexts. Phan (2008), who found that among her study participants appropriation of Western discourses was taking place alongside resistance to these discourses, argues for the need to make more explicit inherently contradictory roles and selves perceived and experienced by EFL teachers in TESOL classes in BANA institutions. Phan suggests ongoing orientations about changing senses of self before, during, and after a TESOL program. Such measures are taken in this particular program with the focus on self-reflections and inquiry before (in the introductory orientation) and during the program (in coursework, fieldwork, and comprehensive examination). Yet this focus in the program needs to be expanded. It is important to incorporate relevant case studies into the curriculum, including those of previous graduates, experienced teachers from BANA and local contexts as these could be very powerful in showing what to expect and various possibilities to approach similar situations. Dilemmas in juggling various factors (e.g., students' needs, institutional needs, pedagogical beliefs, prior knowledge) need to be discussed extensively when addressing professional identity negotiations into the TESOL curriculum for international students, so that they are more aware and prepared for more reflective teaching practices. The importance in understanding the potential of engaging with systematic reflection specifically for students who will be teaching in a context very different from the one in which they received their pre-service education is paramount. As Kari Smith and Orly Sela (2005) argue,

it is impossible to prepare teachers for every situation and problem they might encounter. Instead of a 'cookbook' approach to teacher education, teachers need to be empowered and provided with tools through which they are able to analyze the challenge and know where and how to look for solutions. (p. 297)

This argument is fully developed by Kumaravadivelu (2012) whose model for language teacher education assumes that all individuals can be change agents and incorporates tangible problem-solving, abstract and critical thinking. This argument is of even greater significance when teacher educators have little understanding of the teaching context of their students as seems to be increasingly the case in times of globalization and mobility (Beck et al., 2007). Through focus on reflective practice teacher educators could provide student teachers "with tools for ongoing professional development, asking questions, facing challenges" (Smith & Sela, 2005, p. 306) based on the principles of "particularity, practicality, and possibility" (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) and thus prepare them for autonomous, independent teaching. Given the challenges and opportunities posed

by the processes of globalization, it would be important to enhance the development of exploratory skills in this and other TESOL programs that would equip graduates to conduct their own classroom-based research and become true “producers of knowledge” (Kumaravadivelu, 2013, p. 322) in their local educational settings.

Given the impact the TESOL program discourses seem to have had over these teachers, it would be helpful if programs in BANA institutions could continue to be available to their international graduates as they negotiate in the ‘real world’ their acquired knowledge in ways that make sense in their local contexts. One form of such engagement could be the establishment of peer networks and facilitation of peer mentoring among international graduates of a TESOL program. Supporting TESOL graduates could include providing an online forum and opportunities for them to discuss and reflect on their own challenges and agendas for change and the third space they attempt to occupy in negotiating the TESOL discourses with local discourses in their own particular teaching contexts. As the data on hybrid professionals indicate, within the third space of collusion, starting from student needs and wants and being attuned to context are very important in mediating the global and local. Kumaravadivelu (2012) argues that in the globalizing world a viable teacher education program should be “sensitive to local demands and responsive to global forces” (p. xii) and help its graduates to develop a holistic understanding of classrooms, learning, and teaching. While this article does not engage with Kumaravadivelu’s broader recommendation for multidirectional cyclical modules to be incorporated in language teacher education, it is hoped that some of the data presented here reflect on the practicalities associated with various ways to grapple with becoming “strategic thinkers, exploratory researchers, and transformative intellectuals” (2012, p. x).

In addition, what the data above suggest is that enactments of teaching identity and practices as agents of change, which were evident in the end-of-program portfolios of graduates of this TESOL program (Ilieva, 2010), are mediated reflectively in the local context and entail occupying a third space. It is our hope that the data and analyses presented here “may offer key insights into the ‘glocalized’ (Robertson, 1992) uptake and use of transnational flows of discourses” (Luke, 2002, p.108). It seems that the nine graduates of the program are learning to live comfortably within sometimes conflicting discourses. According to Canagarajah (2004), resolving conflicts of inhabiting competing subject positions within diverse discourses is “at the heart of becoming a successful language learner” (p. 117). We contend that this could apply to becoming a successful international graduate of TESOL programs in an EFL context dwelling comfortably in a “third space” as an educational practitioner in times of globalization.

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