HOW LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOSTER COMMITMENT TO A CAREER IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

by

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(Under the Direction of Sharan B. Merriam)

ABSTRACT

Throughout the world millions of adults, representing a diversity of cultures and languages, are learning English as a second or foreign language. Governments, educational institutions, corporations, and individuals are seeking people who can teach the English language. In response to this global situation, well-trained and committed teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) are needed. The purpose of this research was to identify how learning experiences foster commitment to a career in teaching EFL.

This study employed a qualitative method of research using in-depth interviews to gather data. The study involved 15 native English speaking EFL teachers. The teaching environments represented six cultural contexts. The average age of the participants was 37 years old. Research questions addressed how the participants constructed their commitment to the field of teaching EFL, what types of learning experiences impacted the commitment, how an experiential learning component of a formal teacher-training program fostered the commitment, what was the experiential learning process, and what factors shaped the experiential learning process.

Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method. The study found that the career commitment was constructed in relationship to other commitments, with a focus on other's

development, and in alignment with personality and abilities. Impacting the career commitment were both formal and informal learning experiences. Composing the informal experiences were self-directed and incidental learning experiences. The experiential learning component of the participant's formal TESOL training program enhanced the participant's knowledge and developed his or her skills. The experiential learning process consisted of multiple reflective learning cycles embedded into three life stages. Personal factors shaping the process were interest in cultural diversity, enjoyment of teaching, and a meaningful spiritual life. Contextual factors identified were enduring personal relationships, support from others, and exposure to the EFL teaching profession.

Two conclusions were drawn from the findings: (a) Career commitment to teaching EFL is a developmental process that occurs within a supportive environment; and (b) Learning experiences are central to the process that fosters commitment to a career in teaching EFL. Implications for practice and suggestions for future research are presented.

INDEX WORDS: Experiential learning, Career development, Career choice, English as a foreign language, EFL teacher-training, Adult education, TESOL

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Throughout the world adults are learning. The subject matter being studied, and the cultural context of the learning, as well as the process through which the learning takes place are diverse. Learning has been described as "a process central to human behavior [that] has been of interest to philosophers, psychologists, educators, and politicians for centuries" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 263). Within this global context of learning, a subject of great interest is the English language. The National Center for Education Statistics (as cited in the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education, 1998) refers to English as a second language instruction as the fastest growing area of adult education. Not only in the United States but around the world adults are investing time, effort, and money to learn the English language. Griffith (1999) mentions that it is estimated that "300 million people are learning English at the present time" (p. 9).

Adults around the world are using English as the language of choice for business, international relations, and education. A Japanese pilot communicates in English in order to navigate a safe landing in Manila, Philippines. A Filipino nurse uses English medical terms while treating patients in Amman, Jordan. Jordanian businessmen may find using English more advantageous when conducting business with international partners. A Chinese student studies English in order to meet the entrance requirements at a major university in the United States. These are just some of the scenarios that point to English as having become the *lingua franca* for

today's global neighborhood. Orem (2000) affirms this when he refers to English as "the world language of commerce and popular culture" (p. 439).

Driving this development of English as the *lingua franca* is the reality of communicating across cultures. Snow (1996) states that "English is now the language of publishing and speech for most international communication and is often used even by people from non-English-speaking countries when they need to interact with people from other nations" (p. 14). Crystal (2001) affirms that "English is now spoken by more people (as a first, second, or foreign language) than any other language and is recognized by more countries as a desirable lingua franca than any other language" (p. 54).

Humankind's quest for knowledge also reinforces English as the *lingua franca*. It is estimated that "90% of the world's electronically stored information is in English" (Griffith, 1999, p. 9). The desire for knowledge and the need for clear international understanding are mobilizing adults around the world to enroll in English language classes. The motivations range from a desire of grandparents to communicate with their English-speaking grandchildren, to leaders of nations seeking to improve their country's economic status in the global market.

The concept of English as the *lingua franca* is not without its critiques. Those in the field of teaching English must address certain issues. Although it is not the intention of this research to go into detail as to what these issues are, it is important to acknowledge that there is not a uniform agreement that teaching the English language is beneficial. Pennycook (2001) identifies a few of the major issues that challenge the favorable acceptance of English as the *lingua franca*. One issue is that the teaching of the English language poses a threat to the existence of other less-spoken languages. As Pennycook states "the prevalence of English can easily lead to the disregarding of one or more other languages" (p. 81). Bamgbose (2001) warns that the

"acceptance of the dominance of English should not . . . blind one to the need for other languages" (p. 357). A second major issue in the critique of the proliferation of the English language concerns "the extent to which English functions as a gatekeeper to positions of prestige in society" (Pennycook, p. 81). Often people give prestige to those in their country that can communicate through the medium of English. Along with this prestige can oftentimes come higher paying jobs and opportunities to secure better living conditions. Those that do not have the means to pay for English classes, and cannot communicate well in English can not access these job opportunities. A third critique is that the English language plays a role in the reproduction of global inequities and injustices. Governments and companies based in the English language can extend their power and influence throughout the world by promoting their policies and goods via the medium of English. Those countries and peoples who do not speak the English language must choose whether they want to invest in learning English. By investing in learning English, they have greater potential to acquire the knowledge and/or goods produced by these powerful agencies. If they choose not to invest in learning English, the powerful agencies may neglect them.

Kramsch (2001) offers four questions that the teacher of English must critically reflect upon:

> How does the teaching of English change the balance of the haves and the have-nots in local cultures around the world? What kinds of identities does the teaching of English create and promote in an international playing field that will never be level? How does our enabling individuals to speak English and pass the TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language] tests enhance world peace and harmony? and finally, How can we

> train those who move back and forth over cross-cultural borders - i.e., diplomats, lawyers, and English teachers - to foster intercultural rights and responsibilities? (pp. 205-206)

In response to this global situation, and sometimes unaware of the critical issues involved, adults are traveling throughout the world teaching English. Since the 1960s teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) has blossomed into a field of its own. TESOL, as it is more commonly referred to, has developed into a field known for its many acronyms, each describing a different aspect of teaching or learning English. The acronym TESOL itself represents both the field as well as a professional organization with its U.S. headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia. The organizational acronym stands for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.

English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are two other acronyms that represent two major classifications under the umbrella of TESOL. ESL, used in a general sense, refers to all learning or teaching of English when a language other than English is the learner's first or primary language. This would be irrespective of the socio-cultural learning context. ESL, used in a specialized sense, refers to learning or teaching English in a socio-cultural context where English is the predominant language. An example of this would be teaching English to new immigrants in the United States. In comparison, EFL refers to the learning or teaching of English in a socio-cultural context where English is not the predominant language. An example of teaching EFL would be teaching English to speakers of the Japanese language living in Japan.

As English language teaching opportunities proliferated throughout the world and more EFL teachers with no more than the English language requirement responded, an awareness of a

need for better trained EFL teachers surfaced. Lynes (1996), who served as Executive Director of International House, a non-profit-making educational charity based in London, concludes that

> it is not enough just to be a native speaker of English to cope with the problems that come with teaching English. . . . Enthusiasm, imagination, common sense and hard work are all qualities you will need in the classroom, but these alone do not make you a good teacher. (p. 4)

Today training in ESL/EFL is available throughout Great Britain and the United States on a variety of levels in what Griffith (1999) refers to as "a bewildering array of courses . . . at vastly different levels and costs" (p. 17). Camenson (1995) states that

> The field [of TESOL] . . . has grown enormously in the past two decades. At one time, it was believed that the only qualification necessary to teach English to non-native speakers was to be a native speaker. But . . . that school of thought has almost vanished. Before the TESOL profession firmly established itself as an important and valid discipline, an individual could venture overseas, finding teaching work along the way to cover travel costs and living expenses. Although such tutoring and part-time teaching situations do still exist in a few locations, they are quickly shrinking, replaced with quality programs touting qualified and experienced ESL/EFL teachers. (p. 3)

In contrast to the teaching qualifications for ESL/EFL in the 1980s and early 90s, educational institutions, government agencies, corporations, and hiring agencies are today looking for English teachers trained in the pedagogy of ESL/EFL. In colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada, several hundred teacher-preparation programs are graduating trained ESL/EFL teachers. The *Directory of Professional Preparation Programs in TESOL in the United States and Canada* (Garshick, 2002) lists over 200 institutions offering

nearly 400 programs in TESOL ranging from doctoral programs to certificate programs. Aspiring to teach ESL/EFL and being trained in TESOL are preliminary steps that may demonstrate an intention to enter the field. However, not only are teachers trained in ESL/EFL needed but, more specifically, those who are *committed to a career* in teaching EFL. Simply having the desire to teach or acknowledging EFL teaching as a career preference is not enough to address the needs of a world seeking such teachers. Needed are people who demonstrate their commitment to a career of teaching EFL by entering the field following graduation. Understanding how learning experiences foster this commitment to a career in teaching EFL is the focus of this study.

Career decision making involves more than choosing a career. Peterson, Sampson, Reardon, and Lenz (1996) define career decision making as "a process that not only encompasses career choice but also involves making a commitment and *carrying out the actions necessary to implement the choice* [italics added]" (p. 428). Osipow and Fitzerald (1996) emphasize that "the failure to clearly distinguish among [the] various definitions of choice [i.e., preference, aspiration, and intention], as well as between choice and entry, creates confusion in the literature on career choice and development" (p. 52). When people enter the TESOL field they not only publicly demonstrate their choice and commitment but also make themselves available to address the global need for EFL teachers. Entry into the field of teaching EFL is a demonstration of a commitment to a choice. Fortunately, most graduates do "end up working in elementary and secondary programs, in intensive English programs in colleges and universities, or in countries where demand for English as a foreign language is particularly strong" (Orem, 2000, p. 445).

In 1996 a survey involving 250 agencies looking for people to teach EFL revealed that career EFL teachers were in highest demand (Dickerson & Dow, 1997). Although trained short-

term and volunteer teachers have served faithfully in EFL positions and will continue to in the years to come, EFL teachers committed to a *career* in teaching adults can offer the expertise that a long term commitment provides to an English language program. A career EFL teacher has the privilege to invest time and effort into learning the culture and language of the people. This understanding of the learner culture is one of the four key elements needed for adult education to be culturally relevant (Marchisani & Adams, 1992). EFL career teachers can strengthen the development of an English language program through their knowledge of the learner's culture. In addition, due to the nature of their full-time and long-term commitment, they can provide staff development and "take a more active role in materials and curriculum development projects" (Orem, 2000, p. 446).

In order to learn the culture and language of the learner, along with developing one's own cultural self-awareness, Guy (1999) suggests that this is "best achieved through experiential learning" (p. 16). Experiential learning is one of two approaches to learning identified by Hoberman and Mailick (1994). This approach to learning can take place within any of the three contexts in which adults learn: formal, non-formal, and informal or self-directed (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The experiential learning approach requires participants to gather data, interact with others, respond to changing circumstances, implement decisions or deal with consequences. These learning experiences include "above all, real experience" (Hoberman & Malick, p. 18). Jarvis (1995) gives great importance to the experiential learning approach in his belief that "there can be no learning that does not begin with experience" (p. 66). This approach to learning has seen in the last ten years "a major growth in interest . . . in terms of both theoretical exploration and the development of practice" (Miller, 2000, p. 72).

Learning experiences have been categorized into the concepts of learning from experience and experiential learning (Usher, 1993), as well as that of experiential education (Dewey, 1938). These three sub-concepts are similar yet contain differences that help clarify discussion although the learning process remains a "complex, vague and ambiguous phenomenon" (Malinen, 2000, p. 15). Learning from experience holds the experience as primary in the midst of learning, whereas experiential learning tends to keep the act of learning as primary in the midst of an experience. Miller (2000), in clarifying Usher's distinction, states that

> most people, educators and non-specialists alike, would recognize learning from experience as a part of everyday life, and might use this term to refer to the process by which they learn to drive a vehicle. . . . However, "experiential learning" is part of a more specialized discourse, referring to an activity with which professional experiential educators . . . are concerned. (p. 74)

When experience and learning are combined in the context of higher education, we can think of it as experiential education. "Experiential education refers to learning activities that engage the learner directly in the phenomena being studied" (Cantor, 1997, p. 1). Institutions of higher education are prime contexts where we can find examples of experiential education.

EFL teacher-training programs across the United States and Canada, which foster the development of career teachers, often require an experiential learning component. These training programs may refer to this experiential learning component as a teaching practicum, internship, or field experience. LaMaster (2001) points out that "field experiences have always been an important component in teacher education programs" (Full Text, para. 1). To fulfill this requirement, the teachers-in-training may travel to countries where English is not the primary language and teach EFL for two or three months.

This experiential component is designed to enhance the individual's "attempts to ascertain whether choices and decisions made during the exploratory stage [second life-stage of Super's career development model] have validity" (Isaacson & Brown, 1997, p. 31). Marso (1971) concluded from his research on 36 education majors that early field experiences "will likely increase their positive attitude toward teaching and students and, on the whole, [they will] feel more prepared to become a teacher" (p. 198). van Aalst (1979c) also underscores that experiential learning and career development are interrelated. He states that "career development theory lacks detail in defining how the late teen-early twenties 'exploration' stage can be structured to be most effective; experiential educators are specialists in designing field learning experiences for that very age group" (p. ix). Learning experiences, which include learning from experience, experiential learning, and experiential education, can be instrumental in instructing individuals in their career development to choose, commit to, and eventually enter the field of teaching EFL. However, "the [specific] process of entry into the world of work has been relatively ignored by vocational psychologists" and has "received only cursory attention in academic treatments of vocational behavior" (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996, p. 66).

Cantor's (1997) literature review of experiential learning in higher education identifies research that documents the "benefits of experiential learning for student career decisionmaking [*sic*] and development" (p. 10). Fields of education that Cantor mentions are law; medicine; health care and social work; and science, engineering, and technology. He also addresses the field of teacher education but noticeably missing is any reference to ESL or EFL teacher-training programs. Further, the Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (1998) points out that "although much is known about 'best practices' in adult ESL, there are still many unanswered questions about the adult English language learner, program design, *teacher preparation* [italics

added], instruction, and assessment" (p. 1). More specifically, our knowledge of the EFL teacher-training experiential component is limited with respect to how it interacts with other learning experiences thereby moving the learner towards entering the field of teaching EFL as a career.

Problem Statement

The global situation has created a need for well-trained EFL teachers. Presently, many non-career, short-term and volunteer EFL teachers with various levels of training are filling this need. However, EFL teachers need not only to be well trained in second language acquisition, they also need to know their learners and the cultural context in which they live. Teachers gain this cultural knowledge over time and through interaction with the culture. Short-term teachers are often limited in their cultural knowledge and restricted in the depth and breath of English teaching they can offer. Well-trained teachers having knowledge of the culture, acquired over time and through cross-cultural interaction, are equipped to develop effective English language programs. These teachers might also be instrumental in training non-native English speaking teachers in ways not available to short term teachers. Teachers committed to a career of teaching adults in EFL and who demonstrate that commitment by entering the EFL teaching context are needed. To help adult educators address this need, an understanding of the prior learning experiences of those who have recently entered the field of teaching EFL may be beneficial. These prior learning experiences may include informal times of learning, and they may include times of intentionally structured learning. This intentionally structured learning could be of a self-directed nature or through a formal educational process.

Throughout the United States, teacher-training programs are attempting to foster a commitment to a career in EFL through various instructional and experiential learning activities.

One such experiential learning activity is requiring the teacher-in-training to live in a cross-cultural context and teach EFL for a short period of time. Teacher-trainers anticipate that this experiential learning component will be influential in leading the teacher-in-training to a stronger commitment to teach EFL as a career. However, the role that learning experiences have in fostering this commitment to a career in teaching EFL has yet to be studied. An understanding of the role of learning experiences could be helpful in planning the experiential learning activities of teacher-training programs.

The purpose of this study was to identify how learning experiences foster commitment to a career in teaching EFL. The research questions that guided this study were

1. How do participants construct their commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?
2. What types of learning experiences have impacted a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?
3. How has an experiential learning component of a formal teacher-training program fostered a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?
4. What is the experiential learning process that fosters a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?
5. What factors have shaped the learning process?

Significance

There will be great value in gaining a fuller knowledge of how learning experiences, one of which being an experiential learning component of an EFL teacher-training program, foster a person's commitment to a career in teaching EFL. The *Research Agenda for Adult ESL* (National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education, 1998) affirms that there is a need for such knowledge

in the field of adult ESL teacher preparation. Although the document speaks to ESL concerns in the United States, its ramifications impact EFL teaching and learning as well. The section entitled "Teacher Preparation and Staff Development" raises two research questions: “What *experiences* [italics added], values, knowledge and skills characterize adult ESL teachers?” and “What types of *pre-service courses* [italics added] best prepare teachers for teaching in adult ESL programs?” (p. 9). By looking intently at learning experiences, including the experiential learning component of a teacher-training program, this research is one attempt to supply answers to these questions. The document emphasizes, “Answers to these questions [as stated above and elsewhere in the research agenda] are critical, not only to improve the effectiveness of adult ESL programs but also to improve the lives of adult ESL learners” (p. 1). Finding answers to these questions will not only add to the theoretical base of ESL/EFL teaching and learning, but also will contribute to understanding the link between learning experiences and career development. The primary theoretical significance of this study will be the insights uncovered as to how the three knowledge bases of experiential learning, EFL teacher-training, and career development interrelate.

The practical significance of this study can be seen in the context of the experiential learning process model that resulted from this study. This model will be useful in a variety of ways. One way will be that an individual considering a career in EFL will be able to refer to the model and possibly identify similar experiences in his or her life. This personal identification with the model can be a source of encouragement in that what an individual has experienced is validated. Having a personal learning experience(s) validated can motivate the individual to continue to pursue a career in teaching EFL. In addition, these same individuals may identify experiences that they have not yet had opportunity to encounter. New learning experiences,

similar to those in the model, can then be sought out that can lead to further personal development and progression towards entering the EFL teaching field.

Another way by which the model, along with its supporting data, can have practical significance is in the designing of effective experiential learning practicums by educational institutions and host agencies. Educational institutions that provide ESL/EFL teacher training will have information that will help inform the development of their program. Teacher-trainers, being more aware of the dynamics involved in an EFL teaching experience, will be better equipped to shape and design the experiential component. Specifically, this research might be helpful in addressing the selection and arrangement of the student's assignments; the length and location of the practicum; as well as the type and degree of supervision before, during and after the practicum.

Not only will the educational institutions providing the training benefit from this research but also benefiting will be the governments, organizations, and educational institutions that host the teachers-in-training. These hosting agencies will have information that will assist in the enhancement of the learning environment. They can design, in collaboration with the sending institution, teaching experiences and provide for the needs of the foreign teacher in a manner that will facilitate rather than hinder learning and effectiveness both in and out of the classroom.

Furthermore, the teacher-in-training will benefit from a well-designed and implemented experiential learning component that is situated in a strong knowledge bas**e**. The affective factors of self-satisfaction, personal fulfillment, and affirmation of personal skills and abilities flowing from a well-designed training program will likely promote entry into the field of teaching EFL. Should a teacher-in-training decide that a career of teaching EFL is not something they want to

pursue, that decision would be made with the assurance that the decision reached was not the result of a poorly designed experiential learning component.

With favorable conditions in place there will be a greater likelihood that positive relations between the sending institution, the host agency, and the teacher-in-training will endure. This enduring relationship will result in future teachers-in-training being assigned to the host agency when requested by the host. A favorable learning experience by all will also open doors for the possibility that the teacher-in-training will return in a full-time capacity as a career EFL teacher should the host agency make such a request.

This study is significant in ways that inform both theory and practice. The knowledge bases of experiential learning, career development, and EFL teacher-training will be expanded through a broader understanding of their inter-relationship. Practice will also be better informed through the application of the experiential learning model and its supportive data to personal lives, training programs, and host agencies.

Definitions

Throughout this study, several words or phrases represent core concepts of the research. In order to facilitate a clearer understanding of how these key concepts are to be understood the following definition of terms is provided:

1. Experiential learning component – the part of a formal undergraduate educational program that requires the student to participate in a real-life practicum or internship.
2. English as a Second Language (ESL). When used in a general sense this acronym refers to all learning or teaching English when a language other than English is the learner's first language irrespective of the socio-cultural context. When used in a specialized sense it refers to learning or teaching English in a socio-cultural context

where English is the predominant language (e.g., teaching English to new Mandarin speaking immigrants in the United States).

3. English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In contrast to ESL, this acronym refers to the learning or teaching of English in a socio-cultural context where English is not the predominant language (e.g., teaching English to Mandarin speaking Chinese in China).
4. Career commitment - A developmental process that occurs over time and is evidenced by a person having taught EFL for at least one year and who plans to continue teaching for a minimum of two to three more years.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

With anxiety filling their hearts and fear incubating in their minds they knock on my office door and inquire, “Could you please tell us again about the TESOL practicum requirements?” These are young adults matriculating in an undergraduate TESOL degree program anticipating the time when they will have an out-of-country experience teaching English to people whose first language is not English. During the ensuing months as plans are made for their departure and teaching the emotions swell: fear of the unknown and fear of failure; excitement overtakes apprehension momentarily and then apprehension suddenly reappears; questions rise relating to logistics, health, living conditions and finances; and uncertainty surfaces as to what teaching challenges await them.

The weeks of anticipation pass. Finally, the students depart for their first teaching English as a foreign language experience. A couple more months pass and I hear another knock on my office door. This time the knock is noticeably louder and is quickly followed by the proclamation, “I really liked teaching EFL and want to continue pursuing this career!” They had just fulfilled the experiential teaching requirement of an undergraduate degree program and they felt affirmed in their choice of career. The decisions they had made in the past regarding their career preference were validated and their motivation to continue pursuing a career in teaching EFL increased. In the ensuing years, some of these students will find their careers lived out as adult educators. They will dot the globe teaching the English language to adults living in societies where the primary language is not English.

This practicum experience is only one of perhaps several learning experiences that teachers of English as a foreign language go through that can foster commitment to a career in teaching English as a foreign language. What other learning experiences, in addition to the formal practicum experience, foster an individual's commitment to teaching EFL? An identification and understanding of these learning experiences will widen our knowledge base of experiential learning and will inform the practice of training EFL teachers. The purpose of this study was to identify how learning experiences foster commitment to a career in teaching EFL. The study is situated in the context of adult education. Under this umbrella are the contexts of experiential learning, career commitment, and the EFL teacher-training experiential learning component. A review of the literature provides a foundation for the study.

The body of this review is divided into three main sections that correspond to the three related contexts of the study: experiential learning, career commitment, and the EFL teacher-training experiential learning component. Literature regarding experiential learning, being the foundational discourse, is discussed first, followed by literature related to career commitment. Career commitment is situated within the broader discourse of career development and choice. The third and final section of literature reviewed pertains to the EFL teacher-training experiential learning component. The literature on this topic is minimal, and therefore supportive literature that pertains to a non-EFL teacher-training experiential learning component has also been included. The question that this review seeks to answer in all three discourses is, "What knowledge is presently available that will help inform this study?"

Experiential Learning

Experience, learning, and experiential learning are three concepts that are not easily defined. Nevertheless, there is literature that helps us to clarify their meanings.

Experience

Experience is a term which "has preoccupied philosophers and which many have tried to avoid. It contains many ambiguities, it acts sometimes as a noun, at others as a verb, and is almost impossible to establish a definitive view with which to work" (Boud, Cohen, & Walker, 1993, p. 6). In spite of this seemingly hopeless perspective, Dewey's (1938) explanation of experience helps us to begin to get a handle on this illusive term. For an experience to be educative, Dewey states that it must possess the two inseparable yet distinct principles of continuity and interaction. Continuity means that "every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (p. 35). Interaction refers to the "transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his [*sic*] environment" (p. 43). This environment is "whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had" (p. 44). These environmental variables may be different from one "had experience" to another although the event may be the same. An experience is time bound in the sense that its meaning is dependent upon the environmental variables present at the time of the particular event. An experience is also "inextricably connected with other experiences" (Boud et al., p. 7). Bateson (1994) describes experiences as spiraling through the life cycle like a double helix, "presenting the same lessons from new angles" (p. 40). It is a "meaningful encounter [and] an active engagement with the environment, of which the learner is an important part" (Boud et al., p. 6). Jarvis (1999) defines experience in two ways: (1) "the process of creating an understanding or perception of a situation, which often appears to be a direct participation in an event," and (2) "the accumulation of previous experiences, both conscious and unconscious, and stored in the mind" (p. 65).

Learning

Merriam and Caffarella (1991, 1999) open their overview of learning theories by describing learning as "so central to human behavior yet so elusive to understanding, [that it] has fascinated thinkers as far back as Plato and Aristotle" (1999, p. 248). Theorists that see experience as being fundamental to learning offer their definitions of learning. Kolb (1984) defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (p. 38). Jarvis (1987b) expands on Kolb's definition by stating that learning is not simply the transformation of experience into knowledge but also into "skills, attitudes, and to recognize that this occurs through a variety of processes" (p. 8). Prochazka (1995) suggests that learning be understood as having four levels or stages. The first level relates to memorization and is usually short lived. The second level of learning relates to having knowledge but not being able to apply that knowledge to life. At the third level direct experience is involved but the learner may not take away new skills from the experience. The fourth level is when the learning is internalized and the learner is intimately involved in bringing the learning to reality.

The literature identifies and discusses different types of learning. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) "present a framework for three types of opportunities within which learning occurs for adults" (p. 26). Formal learning occurs mainly in the contexts of educational institutions such as public schools and universities. Nonformal learning occurs outside of the walls of an institution and often supplements the needs of those who have limited access to formal educational opportunities. Nonformal learning is prevalent in developing countries and in comparison with formal learning, has "less structure, more flexibility, and concern with social inequalities" (p. 29). The third type of learning opportunities described by Merriam and Caffarella is informal or

self-directed learning. This type of learning occurs in the natural settings of the learner and is "planned and initiated primarily by learners" (p. 35).

Experiential Learning Defined

Just as experience and learning are difficult concepts to define so is the combination of these terms. Malinen (2000) begins her review of the theories of Knowles (1984), Kolb (1984), Mezirow (1991), Revens (1980) and Schön (1983) with the statement that

> Adult experiential learning is a complex, vague and ambiguous phenomenon, which is still inadequately defined, conceptually suspect - and even poorly researched. . . . On the other hand, its theoretical and philosophical foundations are fragmented and confusing. . . . There are too many interpretations and priorities among the theorists and practitioners that no single, clear definition of these foundations could be constructed. (p. 15)

Several authors have suggested definitions for experiential learning. Jarvis (1999) defines experiential learning as "learning that begins with experience and transforms it into knowledge, skill, attitude, emotions, values, beliefs, senses" (p. 65). Fenwick (2001) finds the basic conceptualization to be "an independent learner, cognitively reflecting on concrete experience to construct new understandings, perhaps with the assistance of an educator, towards some social goal of progress or improvement" (p. 7). Saddington (1992) defines experiential learning as "a process in which an experience is reflected upon and then translated into concepts which in turn become guidelines for new experiences" (p. 44). Hoberman and Mailick (1994) identify experiential learning as one of two approaches to learning. While acknowledging a degree of ambiguity between the two approaches they define experiential learning as "learning activities that require participants to gather data, interact with others, respond to changing circumstances, implement decisions, or deal with the consequences" (p. 18).

In addition to these definitions, Usher (1993) differentiates between learning from experience and experiential learning. Learning from experience happens "in everyday contexts as part of day-to-day life" (p. 169) whereas, experiential learning is a specific discourse in which the everyday learning process is the subject. As a discourse experiential learning provides us a vocabulary and a "disciplined and systematic way of 'talking about'" (p. 169) learning from experience. Experiential learning is thus a "body of knowledge about learning from experience based on constituting experience as a form of knowledge. The everyday process of learning from experience becomes 'experiential learning', a 'theory' and 'systematic' practice embodied in a 'literature' of written texts" (p. 169).

Models of Experiential Learning

In the literature we can find various models of experiential learning, each of which identify experiential learning as a process.

John Dewey's Model

Historically it was Dewey (1938) who brought into the foreground of educational theory, pedagogy and administration the important role that experience plays in the educational process. His writings challenged the systems of education at that time to explore and implement the growing possibilities of experience. Today, some 64 years later, his writings remain as centerpieces in the development of experiential learning theory. He espoused the belief that "all genuine education comes about through experience" but that not all experiences "are genuinely or equally educative" (Dewey, p. 25). As mentioned previously, for an experience to be educative Dewey stated that it must possess the two inseparable yet distinct principles of continuity and interaction.

Dewey's (1938) model incorporates three key elements:

> (1) observation of surrounding conditions; (2) knowledge of what has happened in similar situations in the past, a knowledge obtained partly by recollection and partly from the information, advice, and warning of those who have had a wider experience; and (3) judgment, which puts together what is observed and what is recalled to see what they signify. (p. 69)

The interaction of these three elements are described as a

> dialectic process integrating experience and concepts, observations and actions. The impulse of experience gives ideas their moving force, and ideas give direction to impulse. Postponement of immediate action is essential for observation and judgment to intervene, and action is essential for achievement of purpose. (Kolb, 1984, p. 23)

Dewey's model and the concepts associated with it set the foundation for future experiential theorists to further develop our understanding of the nature, process and context of the learning experience.

David Kolb's Model

Of the various experiential learning models in the literature the most referred to is Kolb's (1984) four-part constructivist model. This model includes the concepts of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. These four concepts are to be seen as "interrelated phases within a cyclical process" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 224). First, the individual experiences a concrete experience. Following this experience the individual enters a reflective observation period wherein they ask questions such as, What did I observe? What was I aware of? What does this experience mean to me? How might this experience have been different? After this second stage the individual continues to reflect but in

a more abstract manner. Here the questions can be, What principle seems to be operating here? What general 'rule of thumb' have I learned here? What new understanding does this experience reveal about myself, people, or how things work in particular situations? During the fourth stage the new principle is tested out in actual life or just in thought.

For learning to happen there must be a concrete experience that is acted upon through a reflective process. This reflection involves asking questions about the experience that in turn leads to the transformation of that experience into knowledge. This knowledge is then available to be applied to new life situations and the cycle continues. Fenwick (2001) describes this process as "a tension- and conflict-filled process that occurs in a cycle" (p. 10).

David Boud and Colleagues' Model

Boud and Walker (1992) detach themselves from the idea of trying to describe the processes of learning because "these processes are in general inaccessible to us" (p. 164). Rather they "explain the progressive refinements of a framework for prompting reflection" (Boud & Walker, p. 164). Within this framework is the element of experience. These two concepts, reflection and experience, cannot be separated due to the complexity of the relationship. Boud and Walker believe that "we experience as we reflect and we reflect as we experience" (p. 167).

Experience for Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985/1996) "consists of the total response of a person to a situation or event: what he or she thinks, feels, does and concludes at the time and immediately thereafter" (p. 32). This experience is shaped by the context in which it occurs as well as by the individual differences or uniqueness that the person brings to the experience. The emotions and prior experiences that a person brings to the experience shape the experience. Negative emotions that an individual may bring to the experience can aid in blocking any learning that could potentially take place. The experience can be formal (e.g., a workshop,

lecture or field trip) or it can be informal, for example an event coming from personal study, or a "totally unplanned occurrence in daily life" (Boud et al., 1985/1996, p. 33).

Reflection, the second element to their framework, is a "human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it" (Boud et al., 1985/1996, p. 33). This reflective activity can take place in isolation or in association with others. Boud and Walker (1992) took "reflection by the learner on his or her own experience to be the central focus in the learning process" (p. 164). Their understanding of reflection has developed from three clusters of reflective activity in 1985 to five in 1992. Originally, the three clusters or elements were (a) returning to the experience, (b) attending to feelings, and (c) re-evaluating the experience (Boud et al., 1985/1996). After their publication in 1985 of *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning* Boud, Keogh, and Walker realized, through the help of critiques, that they had not given enough attention to critical reflection and what precedes any experience. They felt that "there remained too many loose ends and matters which [they] believed needed further development" (Boud & Walker, p. 165). Two additions to their framework became the roles of preparation prior to the experience and, reflection-in-action, a concept they borrowed from Schön (1983).

In understanding the preparation prior to the experience, focus is given to the personal characteristics of individuals and their learning styles as well as to the context in which the experience is situated. Reflection-in-action begins at the onset of the experience as the learner notices it, chooses how to participate in it, chooses what is to be learned, and then chooses how to respond (Boud et al., 1985/1996). During and after the experience the learner recalls and reevaluates through the four elements of reflection: association, integrating, appropriation, and validation. Through association there is a connection "of ideas and feelings which are part of the

original experience and those which have occurred during reflection with existing knowledge and attitudes" (Boud et al., 1985/1996, p. 46). Miller (2000) points out that "Boud, Keogh, and Walker argue that it is necessary to deal with emotions associated with past experiences in order to learn from such experiences, since unresolved feelings of anger, humiliation, or regret, for example, may act as obstacles to learning" (p. 79). Through integration a connection is sought between the new and the old (Fenwick, 2001) and validation allows for determining the authenticity of the new knowledge (Boud et al., 1985/1996).

Reflection includes, in addition to the four elements or stages already mentioned, noticing and intervening. Noticing is the "act of learners becoming aware of what is happening in and around them" and intervening is the "action taken by learners within the event which can affect the learning milieu or learners themselves (including learners acting on themselves)" (Boud & Walker, 1992, pp. 167-168). The concept of reflection involves a number of stages and elements and is seen as a process foundational to learning and "encompassed…in the midst of experience" (Boud & Walker).

Boud and Walker's (1992) framework or model enhances Kolb's four-part model by adding a focus on the social context, individual learner differences, preparation prior to the experience and reflection-in-action.

Peter Jarvis's Model

Jarvis's (1988, 1995) model gives considerable attention to the social situation in which an experience takes place believing that all experiences occur within a social situation. He identifies two types or modes of experiences as being primary and secondary. Primary experiences focus on "the idea of sensing or perceiving a situation" (Jarvis, 1995, p. 67). This is a "subjective awareness of the present situation . . . [which] occurs only in the light of previous

experiences" (Jarvis, 1995, p. 66). When someone has an experience there is a "combination of the biological past . . . with the present" (p. 66) and would be more of a direct experience. This experience can either be a sensation or a perception such as recalling from memory a previous experience. The secondary experience is more of an indirect experience such as when listening to another person describing an event or object. Secondary experiences "occur through linguistic communication, . . . pictures, music and so on" (Jarvis, 1995, p. 67). Secondary experiences will usually occur within a primary experience. In an experience, whether primary or secondary, the external is fused with the individual's past.

For Jarvis (1995) reflective learning involves a heightened consciousness through which the learner must think, plan, or learn something new. Jarvis clarifies that his concept of reflection is not to be equated with Freire's (2000) revolutionary meaning of the term. Jarvis specifically defines reflection as "the process of thinking about a previous experience or event" (p. 157) and it "does not require a behavior change" (Merriam & Caffarella, p. 284). He views requiring a change in behavior to be "too restrictive because it would necessitate the exclusion of the acquisition of new cognitive knowledge unless it resulted in behavioural [*sic*] change" (p. 58).

Reflection, or the absence of it, is seen in the context of nine different routes or reactions a person may have from an experience (Jarvis, 1995). Six of the nine reactions are divided equally into the categories of non-learning (i.e., presumption, non-consideration, and rejection) and non-reflective learning (i.e., pre-conscious learning, skills learning, and memorization). In identifying some learning as being non-reflective it is inferred that reflective action can be absent from some types of learning. In other words learning does not require reflection.

Three of the nine reactions involve reflection and learning (i.e., contemplation, reflective skills learning, and experimental learning). Contemplation, which allows for meditation, is the

"process of thinking about an experience and reaching a conclusion about it without reference to the wider social reality" (Jarvis, 1995, p. 73). The second type of reflection is that of reflective skills learning. This refers to practicing on ones feet and producing new skills as they respond to the uniqueness of their situation. This learning is more than just learning a skill and includes learning why the particular skill should be preformed. The third type of reflection is experimental learning and although it may, it does not have to result in change. This reflection occurs when "theory is tried out in practice and the end-product of the experimentation is a form of knowledge that relates fully to social reality" (Jarvis, 1995, p. 74).

Jarvis's model adds depth to our understanding of the process of experiential learning through his identification of the nine responses to experience and the role that the social context plays in the learning process. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) identify the strength of Jarvis's model as being "the thoroughness of his discussion, which concentrates on explaining the responses one can have to an experience" (p. 285).

Supportive and Less Well-known Models

Mulligan's (1993) Model of Internal Processes represents the inter-relatedness of seven internal processes of experiential learning (i.e., willing, remembering, imagining, sensing, feeling, reasoning, and intuiting). The model "offers a way of categorizing internal actions, required to learn effectively from experience" (Mulligan, 1993, p. 46). These internal processes enable people to live and learn and are "utilized significantly more [in experiential learning] than in the traditional mode of learning through and from books" (Mulligan, 1992, p. 178). Mulligan (1992) argues that the full potential of these seven processes will be realized "through [the] conscious discrimination and intentional use" (p. 178) of them by both learners and educators.

Hutchings and Wutzdorff (1988) apply their Integrated Performance Model in developing the curriculum at Alverno College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The model was developed out of student's responses to being asked "to describe and analyze something they learned in the past from direct experience, as opposed to from a text" (p. 6). A six stage process that integrates knowing and doing was uncovered: observation; actual doing; reflection on what has been done, usually at some distance; trial and error; development of something like a hypothesis or theory that will tell the learner what works, what does not, and what to do next; and testing of theories through further experience. Four principles and strategies (i.e., concreteness, involvement, dissonance, and reflection) "run all through the experiential curriculum" and thereby allow students to "bring knowing and doing into increasingly greater integration" (Hutchings & Wutzdorff, 1988, p. 17).

Hunt (1987) transforms Kolb's learning cycle into a C-RE-A-T-E cycle. The proposed advantage of Hunt's cycle is that it "provides a basis for practitioners to apply their implicit theories to their concerns" (Hunt, 1987, p. 157). The cycle involves five steps: Concern, REflect, Analyze, Try out, and Experience. During the concern stage concerns, challenges, or difficulties being faced are voiced. Reflecting upon the theories that form the practitioner's intentions follows this. The analyze stage represents the time when the practitioner's theories and experienced knowledge are applied to the area of concern to develop an action plan. The fourth stage is when the plan is tried out in action. The final stage of the cycle, which leads back to the beginning of the cycle, is when feedback is received and evaluated and thus the cycle begins again.

Mak (1992) draws a correlation between Kolb's model of experiential learning and the teaching of Confucius. This correlation is presented in a five-stage process of learning: extensive

study, accurate inquiry, careful reflection, clear discrimination, and earnest practice. These five stages are viewed as taking place simultaneously as thought and action interact. Mak supports these stages with the teachings of Confucius.

Although each model has its unique characteristics, Kolb's (1984) summary of the experiential learning theories of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget can help in giving us a general overview of experiential learning as depicted in the various models. According to his summary, experiential learning is characterized as

1. Being conceived as a process, and not in terms of outcomes.
2. Being a continuous process grounded in experience.
3. Being a process that requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.
4. Being an holistic process of adaptation to the world.
5. Involving transactions between the person and the environment.
6. Being a process that creates knowledge.

Enhancements to Understanding Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is not a concept that is neat, simple and easily explained. Several perspectives of the concept help us to see the diversity and intricacy of this learning process. Weil and McGill (1989b) have grouped the various ways in which experiential learning is used into four categories or "villages." Each of these four villages represents a focus or emphasis of experiential learning. In *Village One* the focus is on the assessment and accrediting of learning from life and prior work experience. *Village Two* represents a focus on using experiential learning to bring about change in higher and continuing education. This change would involve a "fundamental change in the role of the teacher and her [*sic*] relationship with students" (Weil &

McGill, p. 11). Group consciousness raising, community change and social action are the emphasis of those belonging to *Village Three*. Within this village experience "is viewed as anything but a context-free concept, and education cannot be neutral, given that both take place in a particular social context" (Weil & McGill, p. 15). The last village, *Village Four*, focuses on using experiential learning for personal growth and development that would "increase self-awareness and group effectiveness" (Weil & McGill, p. 3). Weil and McGill recommend that those educators in these four villages dialogue and learn from each other.

Kolb (1984) has also categorized experiential learning but into its various contemporary applications: social policy and action, competence-based education, lifelong learning and career development, experiential education, and curriculum development. Two of these applications relate more clearly to my study than the other three. Within the application of lifelong learning and career development, Kolb specifically identifies (a) the non-university education industry, (b) adult development programs in higher education, and (c) integration of learning and work. Situated under the second application germane to my study, experiential education, Kolb lists (a) co-op education, (b) internships, (c) simulations, (d) experiential exercises, and (e) on-the-job training/learning.

Saddington (1992) offers another categorization of experiential learning, this time along the lines of theoretical traditions of adult education: liberal, progressive, humanist, technological, and radical. This categorization is visually portrayed through a chart that compares these traditions against six questions. The questions focus on (a) the social problem taken by the tradition, (b) the theory of social development that the tradition rests on, (c) a metaphor that best describes the educational process of the tradition, (d) the key value held by the tradition, (e) how knowledge is understood, (f) what the role of the educator is viewed as, and (g) how the educated

person is described within the tradition. This chart demonstrates the diversity within the discourse of experiential learning. Saddington affirms this when he states that "the place of experience within each of the theoretical traditions of adult education varies dramatically" (p. 47).

In a more recent critique, Fenwick (2001) analyzes the diversity within the discourse of experiential learning from five different theoretical perspectives. One perspective is the reflective constructivist view. This is identified as the dominant theoretical approach to experiential learning within the field of adult education--an approach that revolves around cognitive reflection upon concrete experience. The corresponding educational approach, as identified by Fenwick, is a "humanistic, learner-centered practice that assists adult learners in reflecting on their experience in order to construct new knowledge" (p. 9). The other four perspectives represent alternative approaches to this dominant reflective constructivist view and "represent distinct currents of thought that have emerged in recent scholarly writing addressing (experiential) learning and cognition" (Fenwick, 2001, p. 27).

The psychoanalytic perspective highlights the conscious and unconscious dynamics of desire and its role in the experiential learning process. In the situative or participation perspective learning is "not in the head of [the] person as intellectual concepts produced by reflection" (Fenwick, 2001, p. 34), which the reflective constructivist view takes. Neither is learning viewed as "inner energies produced by psychic conflicts" (p. 34), which represents the psychoanalytic perspective. In the situative perspective learning is rooted "in the situation in which a person participates" (p. 34). This participation involves an interaction with the "community (with its history, assumptions and cultural values, rules, and patterns of relationship), the tools at hand

(including objects, technology, languages, and images), and the moment's history (its purposes, norms, and practical challenges)" (p. 34).

The critical cultural perspective is an alternative approach that focuses on power as being the core issue of an experience--a focus that may be lacking in the other perspectives. Learning in this perspective is seen as being shaped by "the *discourses and their semiotics* [emphasis in the original] (the signs, codes, and texts) that are most visible and accorded most authority by different groups" (Fenwick, 2001, p. 40) within a particular cultural setting. In this perspective experiential learning may be referred to as "emancipatory" in the sense that a person is emancipated through their learning experience from powers that dominate them. The fourth alternative approach to the reflective constructivist perspective is the enactivist perspective. From this perspective experiential learning simultaneously enacts the cognition and environment. This perspective assumes that "cognition depends on the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities embedded in a biological, psychological, cultural context" (Fenwick, p. 47). Enactivism focuses not on the various components of the experience (i.e., the person, experience, community, etc.) but on the "*relationships* [emphasis in original] binding them together in complex systems" (p. 48). These five perspectives, as reviewed by Fenwick, illustrate the complexity of experiential learning. Fenwick warns, "producing a synthesis of these five perspectives in terms of their implications for educators is perhaps impossible and theoretically unsound" (p. 55).

A study conducted by Henry (1989) also supports this diversity within the discourse of experiential learning. Henry disseminated a questionnaire to members of the First International Conference on Experiential Learning asking the respondents to offer their explanation of experiential learning. Each respondent was to provide an example of experiential learning that

each was personally familiar with. Henry categorized the results into eight different forms of experiential learning with each form having unique methods associated with it. These eight forms of experiential learning are (1) independent learning; (2) personal development; (3) learning for social change; (4) non-traditional education that may include a combination of independent study, prior learning, and distance study methods; (5) prior learning for accreditation; (6) work and community placements (e.g., working with a mentor, shadowing, working in a relevant environment); (7) learning by doing through project- and activity-based learning; and (8) problem-based learning.

Related Discourses in Adult Education

Our understanding of experiential learning is enhanced not only by various categorizations but also by related discourses in adult education that see an integrated connection between experience and learning.

Andragogy

Andragogy has added much to the ongoing development of the field of adult education. It has helped in the understanding of what adult learners bring to the educational environment as well as clarifying some of the differences between young and adult learners. Andragogy is based on five assumptions about the adult learner:

1. "As a person grows and matures his self-concept moves from one of total dependency . . . to one of increasing self-directedness" (Knowles, 1978, p. 55).
2. "As an individual matures, he accumulates an expanding reservoir of experience that causes him to become an increasingly rich resource for learning, and . . . provides him with a broadening base to which to relate new learnings" (Knowles, 1978, p. 56).

3. "As an individual matures, his readiness to learn is decreasingly the product of his biological development and academic pressure and is increasingly the product of the developmental tasks required for the performance of his evolving social roles" (Knowles, 1978, p. 57).
4. "Adults tend to have a problem-centered orientation to most learning" (Knowles, 1978, p. 58).
5. "The more potent motivators [for adult learning] are internal" (Knowles & Associates, 1984, p. 12) rather than external.

In the andragogical model of learning, experience is defined as "the interaction between individuals and their environment" and is "the central dynamic of the learning process" (Knowles, 1980, p. 56). The learning experience is also understood as "the basic unit of learning" (p. 56).

Adults bring to the learning experience a wealth of knowledge gained from a variety of prior learning experiences. This wealth is seen not only in the quantity of experiences that the adult has but also in the quality of those experiences. It is noted in the literature (Boud & Walker, 1993), however, that this wealth of experience can provide a number of barriers to learning (e.g., past negative experiences, lack of one's self-awareness of one's place in the world, and established patterns of thought and behavior).

The assumption that the adult has a rich source of experiences has implications for the practice of adult education. One implication is that adult education should place a greater emphasis on "group discussion, simulation exercises, laboratory experiences, field experiences, problem-solving projects, and the like--that make use of the experiences of the learners" (Knowles & Associates, 1984, p. 10). Another implication for practice is that emphasis should be

placed on "individualized learning plans" (Knowles & Associates, p. 10) due to the diversity of experiences resident in the individual lives of the learners.

Andragogy widens our understanding of adult learning and emphasizes the important role that learning experiences have in the education of adults. However, Pratt's (1993) critique is noted: "andragogy . . . has done little to expand or clarify our understanding of the process of learning" (p. 21).

Transformative Learning

The process of transformative learning has been in existence since the creation of humankind. Only recently has it been articulated as a theory through the writings of adult educators such as Mezirow (1991), and Freire (2000). The theory focuses on adult learning and is limited in its application. Mezirow (1991) points out that "not all learning is transformative" (p. 223). Transformative learning since it was first articulated by Mezirow has undergone numerous critiques. These critiques have resulted in the creation of various forms or perhaps sub-theories of transformative learning. Common to transformative learning is the importance of life experiences and the role they play in bringing about change or transformation in a person's life.

There are three phases of transformative learning: critical reflection on one's basic assumptions (instigated by an experience), discourse to validate the reflection, and action involving development (individual and/or social) (Mezirow, 1997). These three basic phases can be reflected in a seven-stage process that begins with a disorienting dilemma and concludes in the reintegration of the transformation into one's life (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). This process represents the norm and the sequence of events does not necessarily need to follow this seven-stage sequence (Mezirow, 1991).

Another important aspect of the theory is the differentiation that Mezirow makes between *meaning schemes* and *meaning perspectives.* Meaning schemes are "specific beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and value judgements" whereas meaning perspectives are "broad, generalized, orienting predispositions" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 47). Transformative learning focuses primarily upon a change in meaning perspectives. This type of learning results in a change in the way we see the world and ourselves. Our existing set of beliefs are challenged and changed. We think and scrutinize the values that we hold. This change is dramatic and shapes the individual who learns. Clark (1993) describes this change as shaping people so they are different "in ways both they and others can recognize" (p. 47).

Conscientization, Praxis, and Social Action

Freire's (2000) problem-posing education is to be understood in contrast to what he labels as the banking approach to education. Banking education takes place when information is poured into or deposited into the learner as if they were a receptacle waiting to be filled. Problem-posing education views people as having lost their humanity living in and with a world that is undergoing transformation. The goal of education is to emancipate people from their dehumanization state and enable them through dialogue and critical thinking to be more fully human (Freire, 2000). The learner's experience and knowledge is valued in this process and the learner is "someone who has his [*sic*] own experience of life and who therefore has knowledge" (Gadotti, 1994, p. 53). Through the process of conscientization the learner becomes aware of the influence of the dominating consciousness and is liberated from its influence. This process requires "praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, p. 51). It is through this process of critically reflecting upon the world and one's experiences, and taking action that one is liberated from oppressive conditions. This requires that the educator or

revolutionary leader think with and dialogue with the people. The educator will want to involve the oppressed in the learning process and not simply give them the truth or tell them what needs to be done. The learner and the educator must experience the problem, reflecting upon it and acting.

Problem-posing education requires the educator and the learner to experience life together and to dialogue about real life issues and concerns. Through the process of critical reflection and taking corresponding action the social structure can be changed and the oppression removed. Learning in and through one's experience is a way for people and societies to be fully released from oppressive conditions and "regain their humanity" (Freire, 2000, p. 44).

Informal and Incidental Learning

Marsick and Watkins (1990) provide a further understanding of experiential learning. While accepting the reality that learning can take place in different situations (i.e., formal, informal or incidental) they focus their work on the informal and incidental (Marsick & Watkins, 1990). According to Fenwick (2001) their theory shows "how people's experiential learning is not always conscious and may simply reproduce the (sometimes dysfunctional or erroneous) beliefs of their surrounding contexts" (p. 12). Fenwick also points out that they "stress the importance of Schön's notion of problem framing that tests the assumptions of our reflections" (p. 12).

Marsick and Watkins (1990, 1999) focus in on a specific type(s) of experience while acknowledging that there are other types of learning experiences available to people. Their concept of experience is better understood in view of what they are and are not focusing upon. One such type of learning experience that they are not focusing on is the formal classroom learning experience that is "typically institutionally sponsored, classroom-based, and highly

structured" (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, p. 12). Another type of learning that they are not looking at is when "institutions incorporate experience into education, as for example, in cooperative education, internships or the field practicum" (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, p. 15). What they are looking at are experiences that are the non-routine situations people encounter in their daily lives. The nature of the non-routine, in contrast to the routine, is that of a problem that needs to be solved. They believe that these non-routine situations are good environments for informal and incidental learning (Marsick & Watkins, 1990). "It is this persistently non-routine characteristic of informal learning which produces the need for skill in critical reflection among informal learners" (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, p. 23).

A further enhancement of our understanding of their concept of experience can be seen by their definitions of what informal and incidental learning is. The linkage between learning and the experience is such that if we look at informal and incidental learning we can imply an understanding of experience. Informal learning is "predominantly experiential and non-institutional" (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, p. 7). It can be planned, intentional or accidental and may occur in institutions but not typically classroom-based. The control of learning is primarily the responsibility of the individual learner. Incidental learning is never planned or intentional and is "coincidental with some other activity and largely buried in the context of other tasks" (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, p. 8). People are not always conscious of this learning and it includes learning from mistakes, learning by doing (e.g., trial and error), and by "covert interpersonal experiments" (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, p. 13) (e.g., wearing certain clothes and then waiting to see what is allowed to pass the dress code). An experience for the purposes of Marsick and Watkins is one that people encounter during their daily lives and presents a problem that needs to

be solved. Experience is also to be understood as being affected by past experiences and can happen with varying degrees of conscious awareness of ones learning.

Critical reflection, based on their research, is identified as "one of the key factors for successful learning" (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, p. 219). It is one of three factors that enhance a learning experience; the other two factors are proactivity and creativity. Proactivity refers to an individual's readiness to take initiative to learn and creativity refers to "the capacity of people to see a situation from many points of view, and to use new perspectives and insights to break out of preconceived patterns that inhibit learning" (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, p. 8). It is in the context of these two elements that reflection is placed. This reflection is critical reflection in that one's assumptions are checked out, meaning is given close attention, probing questions are asked and the problem is reframed. Critical reflection is "not just thinking back over what worked or did not work, [trying] to identify observable sources of error in cause-effect relationships, or simply [letting] their attention wander back over an event" (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, p. 29). Critical reflection involves returning to the experience with different ways of thinking about it.

Reflective-action / Practice

Reflection, which has been discussed already in relation to some of the literature, is a vital concept of experiential learning. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) highlight three assumptions that undergird the process of reflective practice. One assumption is that reflective practitioners seek to not only solve problems but find them. This requires an openness to identifying new problems as well as looking differently at old problems. A second assumption involves "making judgements about what actions will be taken in a particular situation" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 233). This implies the need for a standard or basis for making ethical decisions. The third assumption is that the reflective process results in some type of action.

Schön's (1983, 1987) writings are foundational to the discourse of reflection. In his writings he presents the dominant view of professional knowledge as "the application of scientific theory and technique to the instrumental problems of practice" (Schön, 1983, p. 30). His expressed need for reflection-in-action flows from his critique that this professional knowledge is inadequate to address the challenges being confronted in the professional world. Schön emphasizes that the professionals themselves assess that "professional knowledge is mismatched to the changing character of the situations of practice--the complexity, uncertainty, instability . . . which are increasingly perceived as central to the world of professional practice" (p. 14).

Against this backdrop Schön presents the concepts of *knowing-in-action* and *reflection-in-action*. Knowing-in-action is our tacit knowledge--the knowledge that informs our actions without our having to think about it. We do things in life without thinking about it and are often unaware of having learned it. Reflection-in-action is when we pause to think about what we are doing or what we need to do. It is this reflection-in-action that Schön suggests is the solution to how best to deal with the diverse and ever-changing situations in the professional world. Reflection-in-action is a process:

> The practitioner allows himself [*sic*] to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomena before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behavior. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomena and a change in the situation. (Schön, 1983, p. 68)

Developing further the concept of reflective practice Brookfield (1995) discusses critical reflection, which he identifies as "one particular aspect of the larger process of reflection" (p. 2). Critical reflection involves two distinctive purposes:

> The first is to understand how considerations of power undergird, frame, and distort educational processes and interactions. The second is to question assumptions and practices that seem to make our teaching lives easier but actually work against our own best long-term interests. (Brookfield, 1995, p. 8)

Other writers, specifically those writing in the field of experiential learning, see reflection as being vital in their models. For Kolb (1984), reflection transforms experience into knowledge. Boud and his collegues (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Boud & Walker, 1992; Boud et al., 1993) understand that reflection is central to the learning process and have identified four elements of reflection: association, integrating, appropriation, and validating. Jarvis (1987, 1995) sees reflection as a higher form of learning.

Experiential Learning and Experiential Education

Experiential education is a special field or application within the discourse of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Kendall, Duley, Little, Permaul, and Rubin (1986) define experiential education as "learning activities that engage the learner directly in the phenomena being studied" (p. 1). Cantor (1997) affirms this definition and sees experiential education as a "method of education [that] facilitates active multisensory involvement of one's students in some aspect of the course content" (p. 1). Jarvis (1999) defines experiential education simply as "education that uses the whole of the learner's experiences, including the affective domain" (p. 65).

Joplin (1995), writing about experiential education, situates her topic within "those portions of experiential learning which are deliberately planned. She offers two approaches to

defining or identifying experiential education: a five-stage model, and a review of several characteristics taken from a comparison of experiential and nonexperiential programs. Joplin's five-stage model was developed "to communicate an experiential action strategy to teachers as they planned their courses and thus, increase the experiential nature of those designs" (p. 16). This model should not be confused with models of experiential learning that describe the process of learning. It is intended to be used by experiential educators in the design and implementation of their courses. In the first stage, Focus, the educational task is identified and the learner's attention is directed toward the upcoming learning activity. Action, the second stage, places the learner in "a stressful or jeopardy-like situation where he [*sic*] is unable to avoid the problem presented, often in an unfamiliar environment requiring new skills or the use of new knowledge" (p. 17). This action can be of a physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual dimension in which the learner is involved with the subject. The third and fourth stages, Support and Feedback respectively, are active throughout the entire learning experience. Support provides security and encouragement that will enable to learner to continue to engage with the planned experience. Feedback provides the learner with information about what he/she is doing and thereby enabling the learner to make adjustments and press on through the learning experience. The final stage, Debrief, is when the learning is "recognized, articulated, and evaluated" (p. 19).

Joplin's (1995) second approach to understanding or defining experiential education is in the form of a set of characteristics:

1. Content is based on the student's interests and ideas more so than the teacher's.
2. The learner is seen as being as important as the subject being studied.
3. The process as to how the learner draws conclusions is stressed as well as what the product of the learning is.

4. Evaluation is carried out to inform parents, satisfy institutional requirements or to fulfill other external purposes as well as to help the learner develop skills in self-evaluation.
5. The complexity of the subject matter is addressed through a variety of approaches and not simply through the summation of facts.
6. The organization of the experience flows from the nature of the anticipated experience as well as from the ideas of the learner who makes suggestions based on his/her prior experiences.
7. The student's "ability to articulate and argue his [*sic*] position in the light of conflicting theories, facts, and firsthand encounters will be the text and learning medium" (p. 21) rather than simply to recite a theory.
8. Development is seen more individualistically than in relationship or comparison to a group.

Joplin's (1995) list of the characteristics of experiential education is supported by Luckner and Nadler's (1997) listing of 16 principles of experiential learning, four of which refer directly to experiential education. These four principles are (a) Educators' primary roles include: structuring appropriate experiences, posing problems, setting boundaries, supporting learners, insuring physical and emotional safety, and facilitating the learning process; (b) Educators must recognize and encourage spontaneous opportunities for learning; (c) Educators strive to be aware of their biases, judgments, and pre-conceptions and how they influence the learner; and (d) Educators use a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of real-life problems.

Warren, Sakoffs, and Hunt (1995) have identified contexts in which experiential education can be found. These contexts include "classroom teaching, psychological counseling

and therapy, corporate training and development, concerns of women and people of color, [and] physically and developmentally differently-abled programming" (p. vii). Common forms of experiential education are internships, field studies, cooperative education, community service-learning, and cross-cultural programs (Kendall et al., 1986); also, practicums in health-care agencies, plays in languages and literature, student-run radio stations in communications, and reenactiments in history (Cantor, 1997).

Hoberman and Mailick (1994) situate their concept of experiential learning within what others may classify as experiential education. For Hoberman and Mailick, "in experiential learning the student is physically engaged in a professional activity with real consequences" (p. 22). They add to our understanding of experiential learning/education by identifying two types of experiential learning: synthetic and natural. Synthetic experiential learning "takes place in special learning venues constructed for the purpose of providing the learning opportunity" and are void of "risk and concern with consequences" (p. 22). An example of synthetic learning is the practicum. Natural experiential learning, on the other hand, "makes use of naturally occurring situations and problems in an actual work venue [and the] students are subject to the totality of variables and uncertainties of that venue" (p. 22). Examples they give of this second type of experiential learning are supervised casework in social work and internships in medicine.

Within the experiential education literature there is a growing number of articles that focus on spirituality. The research base of this discourse has been described as "being in a state of infancy" (Anderson-Hanley, 1997, p. 106). Stringer and McAvoy (1995) conclude from their qualitative study of participants in two wilderness adventure programs that although more research is needed in this area, "if experiential learning is a truly holistic approach to education, one should create opportunities for spiritual learning in programs" (p. 71). Haluza-Delay (2000)

argues that "spirituality is central to human experience and, therefore, to experiential education" (p. 143). As a part of this growing knowledge base of spirituality within the field of experiential education, Henderson (2000) describes eight world religions with the hope that her summary "may help experiential educators begin to think about how religion and spirituality influence people's lives" (p. 133).

Summary

The theoretical framework of experiential learning is central to this study. The literature base is broad encompassing both theory and practice. Various definitions and characterizations of experiential learning have been offered depicting the diversity of the discourse while at the same time providing a basis for clearer discussion and growth. Kolb's model of the experiential learning process seems to be the foundational, although not the first, model that much of the literature refers to and build's upon. Experiential learning, incorporating a strong emphasis on reflection, is seen in several major discourses within the field of adult education.

The existing knowledge base will provide insight and guidance in critiquing the data gathered from the study participants. More specifically the literature on experiential education will help in analyzing the learning experiences in reference to the experiential component of the EFL teacher-training program. In addition, it is anticipated that some of the participants in this study will have been motivated to enter the field of teaching EFL by issues related to their spirituality. The literature related to experiential education and spirituality, although not exhaustive, will be helpful.

Career Commitment

A second context of this study is career commitment. For this research, a commitment to a career in teaching EFL is evidenced by a person's entrance into the field of teaching EFL.

Entrance is viewed as that time when a person begins teaching EFL as paid employment following their formal training. Searches of the literature in the area of career entrance resulted in minimal evidence of research and discourse in this area. This is not too surprising in light of Osipow and Fitzgerald's (1996) statement that the process of entry into the work force "has been relatively ignored by vocational psychologists" (p. 66). Osipow and Fitzgerald emphasize that career entrance must be distinguished from the various definitions of choice. Identifying a choice of a career could mean (1) having a preference for a specific career, (2) having a certain career as fantasy or ideal aspiration, or (3) having an intention to enter a certain career when the time is right. Osipow and Fitzgerald point out that none of these definitions of choice necessarily means that the individual actually enters the "chosen" career. There is a gap in the literature in the area of career entrance. It is anticipated that this study will address this gap by revealing how learning experiences foster commitment to a career, specifically the field of teaching EFL. Career commitment, as evidenced by entrance into the field of teaching EFL, is aligned under the broader field of career development and choice.

Career Development and Choice

Osipow (1983) groups career development theories into five helpful approaches whereby we can think about career counseling. Although the categories formed assist in counseling they can also help this research in focusing in on the factors that foster career commitment. The category of trait-factor theories can open the door to viewing an individual’s abilities and interests and how they align with opportunities in the field of teaching EFL. Sociology and career choice theories direct the research to look into environmental factors that may or may not be beyond the control of the teacher. A third category of approaches, developmental / self-concept theories, guide the research into looking at how developed is the student’s self-concept

and how that self-concept matches the career choice of teaching EFL. Vocational choice and personality theories, the fourth approach of Osipow, guides the research to look into the relationship of the needs of the student and the degree to which it is perceived that teaching EFL will bring the satisfaction of those needs. The fifth and final approach is the behavioral approach that directs the research to look into the interaction between the student and the environment. These five approaches are not clear and independent but are "closely intertwined and in many instances draw heavily upon one another both in terms of actual practice and in empirical research" (p. 11).

Srebalus, Marinelle, and Messing (1982) define career development theory as "a conceptual system that identifies, describes, and interrelates important factors affecting lifelong human involvement with work" (p. 15). Modern theories of career development can be traced back to Frank Parsons' tripartite model that appeared in 1909 in *Choosing a Vocation*. Isaacson and Brown (1997) provide a good historical overview of the development of eighteen career development theories beginning with Parsons's model and concluding with the constructivist philosophy of Richard Young and associates in 1996. Of the eighteen theories five are identified by the authors as having a major impact on research and practice today. These five are (1) Holland's theory of vocational choice; (2) Super's life-span, life-space theory; (3) Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise; (4) Krumboltz's social learning theory; and (5) Lofquist and Dawis's theory of work adjustment. Regarding these five theories Isaacson and Brown make a summary statement:

> Theorizing began at the turn of the twentieth century (Parsons, 1909) and continues today. Today trait and factor theories, particularly Holland's (1985) model, are of greatest influence, probably because of their parsimony, and ease of application. However, there

> is increasing interest in the theories based on learning theory, and the constructivists theories are receiving increasing attention. (p. 48)

The research to discover how the experiential component of an EFL teacher-training program fosters commitment to the field of teaching adults in an EFL context is partially guided by three of these five theories: Super's, Holland's, and Krumboltz's. These three offer a variety of angles by which the experience can be viewed and provide needed direction to the research. The order by which these theories are presented is based on the chronological sequence by which they were initially published: Super, 1953; Holland, 1959; and Krumboltz, 1976 (Isaacson & Brown, 2000). These theories also represent three different categories of career development theories. Super's Life-span, Life-space Model represents developmental theories; Holland's theory represents theories based on traits and factors; and Krumboltz's theory flows out of the social learning theories. Isaacson and Brown (2000) draw our attention to two of these theories. They state that, "Probably no one has written as extensively about career development or influenced the study of the topic as much as Donald Super" (p. 29). Isaacson and Brown also state that "Holland's theory . . . stands as the most influential of the extant theories" (p. 26).

Donald Super is identified by Osborne (1997, Opening section, ¶ 1) as "a giant in the career development field for half a century." Osborne, who worked alongside Super during the last several years of Super's life, draws our attention to a perspective of Super that we can hold as we discuss individual theories. Super expressed, three years before the end of his life, his desire that all major career development theorists would come together and draw up an integrated view of the process. Super's perspective was that "no view stood alone, and all views stood in relation to others" (Osborne, 1997, Tomorrow section, ¶ 2). Themes and concepts link the theories together. One such concept is experiential learning.

Super's Life-span, Life-space Model

Donald Super developed this theory or model during the early 1950s. Through the years, it has undergone various degrees of revision and expansion (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996). The original model (Super, 1953), incorporated 10 major propositions but through research and continuing development the theory now incorporates 14 major propositions. The 10 original propositions are still in tact with four being added to them, two in a 1957 book written with Bachrach (Super & Bachrach, 1957), and then two more in 1990 (Super, 1990).

The theory is developmental in the sense that factors that influence career development and choice are related to certain developmental stages an individual goes through during his/her life-span. These factors have been portrayed on a Norman arch with biological factors on the left column (e.g., needs, values, intelligence) and geographical factors on the right (e.g., society, school, family, the economy) (Osborne, 1997). These factors interact during the five stages of life (growth, exploratory, establishment, maintenance, decline) and aid in the development of an individual's self-concept. These stages are situated between birth and death.

In addition to the five stages of life that an individual progresses through during their span of time on the earth an individual also takes up "space" in the form of the various roles that they hold. Super (1980) identified six life-roles that people can hold throughout their life-span. These roles are child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker, and homemaker. According to the theory all these factors interrelate, the biological, geographical, and role, while the individual develops through life (Osborne, 1997). As these factors interact the individual develops varying degrees of readiness to make educational and vocational decisions. This readiness is referred to as "career maturity" and relates more to ones readiness to make the vocational decisions than to ones physical age (Super et al., 1996). Through this "life-span, life-space" developmental process the

career is developed. Super (1976) defines career as "the course of events which constitutes a life; the sequence of occupations and other life roles which combine to express one's commitment to work in his or her total pattern of self-development" (p. 4).

Experiential learning plays a potentially major role throughout the five stages of the theory. In the Growth Stage, physical as well as psychological growth, "experiences are providing a background of knowledge of the world of work that ultimately will be used in tentative choices and in final selections" (Isaacson & Brown, 2000, p. 31). In the Exploratory Stage learning from experience can play a role in helping the individual narrow down the career choices and identify abilities, employment opportunities, and be trained to do certain jobs or careers. The Establishment Stage offers "early encounters within actual work experiences" (Isaacson & Brown, p. 31) where often through trial and error the individual learns through the experience and gains proficiency that may lead to stabilization. The Exploratory and Establishment Stages are key stages where experiential learning can play a role in the career development process. During the final two stages, Maintenance and Decline, experiential learning can play a role in helping the individual with their attempts to continue or improve the occupational situation and eventually simply trying to keep the job (Isaacson & Brown). Some skills involved in these stages, but not limited in their use to these stages, could be reflective practice and action research.

Experiential learning can also be perceived in the 14 propositions that are foundational to the entire theory (Isaacson & Brown, 2000; Super et al., 1996). An example of this can be taken from one of the original 10 propositions. The proposition states that

> vocational preferences and competencies, the situations in which people live and work, and, hence, their self-concepts change with time and experience, although self-concepts,

> as products of social learning, are increasingly stable from late adolescence until late maturity, providing some continuity in choice and adjustment. (Isaacson & Brown, p. 30)

The role of experiential learning here can be seen in facilitating the change in a person's self-concept and vocational preferences and competencies. This change could be both positive, directing a person towards a certain career or negative, directing a person away from a career. The impact of experiential learning upon changing ones self-concept may weaken as a person moves into adolescence or later-life maturity. For Super, self-concept should be defined broadly to include not only ones personal view of self but also their "view of the situation or condition in which he or she exists" (Isaacson & Brown, p. 30).

Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice

This theory was first presented in 1959 and has been labeled by Holland as a theory of vocational choice in his various writings (e.g., *A Theory of Vocational Choice* published in 1959, and *The Present Status of a Theory of Vocational Choice* published in 1972). Isaacson and Brown (2000) locate the theory among the trait and factor theories that "stress that individuals need to develop their traits, which include their interests, values, personalities, and aptitudes, as well as select environments that are congruent with them" (p. 21). This transaction between personal traits and the various factors of the environment is a key focus of the theory. The theory incorporates six personality types and six environments that today employ the same identifiers, namely Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. Using the graphic design of a hexagon Holland has developed a model that demonstrates the relationships between these traits and environments. Four key concepts related to the use of this hexagonal model are (a) congruence, which measures the degree of fit between an individual's personality and their work environment; (b) consistency, which is the measure of internal coherence of an

individual's type scores; (c) differentiation, which is a measure of "the crystallization of interests and provides information about the relative definition of types in an individual" (Brown, Brooks, & Associates, 1996, p. 45); and (d) identity, which indicates the degree of clarity of ones goals, interests and talents.

According to the theory, a person is born with a certain inherited personality type, or more appropriately a mixture of types with some being more dominant than others. A person can identify their type through the use of the Self-Directed Search assessment tool that results in providing the individual their Holland Code (Isaacson & Brown, 2000). This code can then be used to find ones job options using Holland's Occupations Finder. As a person lives out their life they "search for environments that will let them exercise their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values, and take on agreeable problems and interests" (Spokane, 1996, p. 39). In order to maximize their job satisfaction and achievement the individual must select work environments that fit, or are congruent with, their personality. Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) point out that "the adequacy of the decisions and the amount of difficulty encountered in the process of making them are related to knowledge about self and the world of work" (p. 78). Although the person is "relatively a stable entity who moves in and out of environments" (Spokane, p. 39) the Person-Environment interaction model implies change and adjustment in people and environments. This interaction "predicts and explains the behavior and interactions that occur in those environments" (Spokane, p. 39).

A major contribution to the field of career development that this theory has generated is the number of assessment instruments that are being used in "schools, colleges, industry and private practices" (Spokane, 1996, p. 62). Spokane gives a brief overview of five such tools (viz., The Self-Directed Search, The Vocational Preference Inventory, My Vocational Situation and

the Vocational Identity Scale, The Position Classification Inventory, and The Career Attitudes and Strategies Inventory).

Experiential learning is implied in the development of an individual's personality. Holland (1997) held to the concept that the personality developed as a result of three interacting factors. These factors are "the inherited characteristics [of the individual], the activities to which the individual is exposed, and the interests and competencies that grow out of the activities" (Isaacson & Brown, 2000, p. 22). The process of an individual seeking for congruency can involve learning from the experiences they are involved in. Through the process of experiential learning their goals, interests, and skills are enhanced and shaped which aids in the selection of congruent environments.

If the individual finds they are in an incongruent environment then, according to the theory they resolve the situation "by seeking a new and congruent environment or by changing personal behavior and perceptions" (Spokane, 1996, p. 50). Experiential learning could play a role in the seeking and changing in order to find a more congruent environment.

In their critique of Holland's theory Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) identify a "serious deficiency" in the theory in that "it explains little about the process of personality development" (p. 104). They go on to critique the theory mentioning that it is one thing to state that people with a certain orientation are looking for a congruent environment, "but it is quite another thing to explain how or why they develop their . . . orientation to begin with" (p. 105).

Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory

The idea that there is an association between what a person learns and the actions they take is not new. Mitchell and Krumboltz (1996) state that "there is nothing new about the power of learning to affect people's attitudes and behavior. It has been widely recognized since the

advent of recorded history" (p. 235). However, what is new is associating learning theory with career development. Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) emphasize this development when they state that "one of the most significant developments in career theory is the recent application of social learning theory to career decision making" (p. 167).

Based on learning theories that describe "both the process by which the individual develops and the choice making process" (Isaacson & Brown, 2000, p. 21) Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory, first presented during the mid-1970s, identifies four factors or variables that influence career decision making. These are (a) the genetic endowments and special abilities of an individual, (b) the environmental conditions and events that they face, (c) the various learning experiences they encounter throughout life, and (d) the skills that they have to address a task or problem. These skills influence outcomes as well as are outcomes. The learning experiences are further broken down into two types. Instrumental learning experiences are "those situations in which the individual acts on the environment to produce certain consequences" (Isaacson & Brown, p. 39). These actions are direct with observable outcomes and would include "writing a term paper, preparing a meal, or making conversations with a stranger at a party" (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996, p. 239). A second type of learning experience is the associative learning experience. In this experience the "individual observes relationships between events and is able to predict contingencies" (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996, p. 168). Mitchell and Krumboltz suggest that people can experience associative learning either vicariously through reading a book, or directly through an experience. In relation to career development an example of associative learning would be when a person relates pain and suffering with hospitals, vicariously through watching television or directly through being admitted to the hospital, and then is reluctant to enter a career of nursing.

Through the interaction of genetic endowments, the environment, learning experiences, and task skills people form two types of generalizations. One relates to how they view self (i.e., self-observation generalizations) and the other relates to how they view the world (world-view generalizations). People tend not to remember specific characters or the sequence of learning experiences but they "rather remember generalized conclusions from them" (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996, p. 238). In addition to the development of generalizations, the interaction of the four factors will also produce new task approach skills and actual behavior such as applying for a job. Generalizations and skills that develop as the result of ones learning experiences lead to career-related behaviors (Mitchell & Krumboltz). An important concept involved in this decision making process is self-efficacy. Nord (1997) defines this as "believing that you can do what is required to get what you want" p. 369. The application of this concept to the theory is clarified by Mitchell and Krumboltz's statement that "people's beliefs about their skills . . . are better predictors of their behavior than their actual skills or the outcomes that actually exist" (p. 236).

Krumboltz's theory is summarized by Isaacson and Brown (2000) in that a person is born into the world with certain characteristics. They encounter various events and cultures. They learn from these encounters and apply their new learning to new events and encounters. Success and failures of these encounters influences their choices of action in any subsequent learning experience. The process is not static as both the individual and the environment or culture change.

Learning while interacting with or experiencing the environment is central to Krumboltz's theory of career decision making. Krumboltz and Ranieri (1997) summarize the theory by stating that "by *learning* we can formulate new aspirations and fulfill them through a variety of work

experiences. We can *continue to learn* and grow both professionally and personally as we *continually interact* [italics added] with our environment" (p. 2). The theory uses assessment instruments but these instruments "do not provide the *needed* [italics added] learning experiences" (Krumboltz & Ranieri, p. 3). These needed learning experiences, one of the four factors that influence career decision making, take place as the individual "acts on the environment to produce certain consequences, [instrumental learning experiences]" and "reacts to external stimuli, by observing real or fictitious models, [associative learning experiences]" (Isaacson & Brown, 2000, p. 39). "Krumboltz sees the individual as constantly encountering learning experiences, each of which is followed by rewards or punishments that in turn produce uniqueness of the individual" (Isaacson & Brown, p. 39).

The genetic endowment factor, another influencing factor on career decision making, is seen as having an impact specifically on learning experiences in that a person with certain genetic characteristics may learn more from an experience than someone who might not have that characteristic (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). There is also a connection between the various environmental factors and experiential learning. Mitchell and Krumboltz present 12 such environment factors, some of which have a greater connection to learning from experience than others. A couple of these factors are the number and nature of job opportunities, the number and nature of training opportunities, and family training experiences. Experiential learning also plays a role in shaping and reshaping task skills, the fourth and final factor that influences career decision making. As the individual experiences a new task or problem they use their learned skills to affect an outcome and while doing so may gain new learning that modifies previously learned skills (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996).

Throughout the theory it is through experiential learning (i.e., the interaction of genetic endowments, the environment, learning experiences, and task skills) that the process of career development takes place. The theory "assumes that people's personalities and behavioral repertoires can be explained most usefully on the basis of their unique learning experiences while still acknowledging the role played by innate and developmental processes" (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996, p. 234).

All three theories have the potential for experiential learning to take place. In Super's and Holland's theories the experiential learning is much more implicit than in Krumboltz's theory. Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) state the difference this way: "Social learning theory approaches to career development differ from the other approaches by being more explicit about the variables of concern" (p. 168).

To understand more fully the process of career development and choice it is important to have a general understanding of how decisions are made. Supporting this idea Isaacson and Brown (1997) devote a section to the theories of decision-making in order to “alert the reader to the importance of this process” (p. 47). Peterson, Sampson, Reardon, and Lenz (1996) identify three lines of inquiry that are part of the process of choosing a career: self-knowledge, occupational knowledge, and the integration of these two to reach a decision. Factors that influence how decisions are made are identified by Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996): abilities, interests, personality, social class, race/ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

Career Development and Choice, and Experiential Learning

As the guest editor, van Aalst (1979c) links career development and experiential learning in a complementary manner:

> Career development theory lacks detail in defining how the late teen-early twenties "exploration" stage [second life-stage of Super's career development model] can be structured to be most effective; experiential educators are specialists in designing field learning experiences for that very age group. (p. ix)

Career development and experiential programs are compatible in "that each brings strengths to the other, and that such a blending may hold clues to the resolution of major problems facing education and work" (van Aalst, 1979a, p. 91). van Aalst (1979a) summarizes a number of themes drawn from his edited book, *Combining Career Development with Experiential Learning*. Two of these themes are pertinent to this research: (a) "experiential components are the most substantive part of college career development programs," and (b) "the exploratory stage of career development is acknowledged as the most critical; as the name implies, it requires an experiential component" (p. 92).

van Aalst (1979b) also states that we must find a way to combine education and meaningful work "in order to meet the career development needs of our . . . college students" (p. 33). Watkins (1979) makes clear the connection in his statement that "central to the career development program is the experiential component" (p. 55). The timing of this component in Watkins' chapter is "before graduating from college" (p. 56).

The literature-supported link between career development and experiential learning can also be seen when Isaacson and Brown (1997) allude to experiential learning in describing Super's (1990) establishment stage of his life-span, life-space theory. This stage is explained as relating to "early encounters within actual work experiences" wherein the individual "attempts to ascertain whether choices and decisions made during the exploratory period [prior stage] have validity" (p. 31). Experiential learning is also seen as a vital part of Super's eleventh proposition

of his theory in that he mentions “learning from feedback . . . in real-life activities” (Isaacson & Brown, p. 33).

Combining experiential learning and career development in adventure education is evidenced in the research of Nord (1997). Using an overnight retreat for career development with college students Nord concluded from his qualitative research that "participants are better equipped for pursuing satisfying and successful careers after the intervention [i.e., the overnight retreat]."

Summary

The discourse of career development and choice informs this study. Recalling Super's insight that none of the theories stands alone, no one theory portrays the full picture in which experiential learning is imbedded. Super's theory identifies various stages that a person may go through during their life as they make decisions about their career. The theory also highlights, through the graphic design of an arch, various factors that shape and influence the development of an individual towards the formation of career decisions. Holland's theory focuses more on the individual's personality than on the stages of life that the person develops through. Along with the individual's personality is a corresponding and favorable work environment. Job satisfaction is evidenced most often when the personality and the work environment are congruent. Krumboltz's theory directs our thoughts about career development towards the various social experiences that an individual encounters throughout his/her life. These learning experiences along with the individual's genetic make-up and special abilities as well as the environmental conditions and skills the individual uses to manage the experience are factors that influence the choice and development of a career. It is envisioned that this study will add to the knowledge

base of career development and choice by providing qualitative research specifically in the neglected area of career commitment.

EFL Teacher-training Experiential Component

In searching the literature very little was located that addressed the third context of this study, that being the EFL teacher-training experiential learning component of a formal TESOL degree/certificate program. In the broader field of language teacher education, ESL or EFL, there was also little research. Freeman and Johnson (1998) clearly identify this gap in the literature in stating that "research on language teacher education has been noticeably missing from the professional discourse" (p. 397). The autumn, 1998 issue of *TESOL Quarterly* was for the first time in its 32-year history devoted to research and practice in ESOL teacher education. This is a good sign; however, the focus of the articles was on the education of practicing teachers and their professional development, and not on pre-teacher training.

In one article from the 1998 issue of *TESOL Quarterly* mentioned above, Freeman and Johnson (1998) recognize the importance of a teacher's total life experiences or prior learning experiences for the development of teacher's knowledge of teaching. In a more recent article, Freeman (2001) reiterates this principle. Important for my study is their acknowledgement that life's experiences are factors in a person's development to become and develop as an ESL/EFL teacher. One of these life experiences for the ESL/EFL teacher may be the experiential learning component of their TESOL teacher-training.

In the field of language teacher education Roberts (1998) draws the connection between experiential learning theory and teacher education. He suggests that "Kolb's theory of experiential learning offers a flexible and helpful framework for formal (i.e., course-based) and informal teacher learning" (p. 33). Roberts also discusses the role of reflection in teacher

education and suggests activities that could be used in language teacher training that would incorporate reflective action. A conclusion he makes regarding the meaning of reflection is that "given the diversity of meanings, background theories and contexts of LTE [Language Teacher Education] design, it is not surprising the 'reflection' and 'reflective teacher education' mean so many different things to different people" (p. 54).

Randall and Thornton (2001), also writing from the field of language teacher training, confirm a favorable connection between experiential learning and teacher training. They offer "two powerful reasons for believing that Experiential Learning can provide a model for the way that teachers/trainees learn about teaching" (p. 46). The first reason is that teachers and trainees are adults so an approach to learning that emphasizes the strengths of adult learners is appropriate. Secondly, the subject matter of teacher-training (i.e., teaching) has a large practical, experiential element which is critical to learning so an approach valuing concrete experience is again appropriate.

In the area of specific research, Marso (1971) conducted research on 36 education majors at Bowling Green State University who were enrolled in a new teacher preparation course. Although this course was not related to TESOL training, it did relate to an experiential learning component of a teacher-training program. This new course required the students to spend two days per week in an urban public school system observing and teaching so that they would be better acquainted with urban school settings, as well as gain classroom experience. The purpose of the research was to "ascertain the feasibility of the project in terms of immediate impact upon the college students" (p. 195). One of Marso's conclusions was that this type of learning experience "will likely increase [the student's] positive attitude toward teaching and students, and, on the whole, [they will] feel more prepared to become a teacher" (p. 198).

Also outside of the field of EFL teacher-training, but within the boundaries of an experiential component of a formal training program is Neapolitan's (1992) research. This research was concerned with "the effect of a small-scale [i.e., three semester hours of credit] internship program on clarification of career goals" (p. 223). Thirty students majoring in sociology, between the ages of 20 and 40, participated in the research. They were required to do at least 150 hours of on-site work, keep a diary of their experiences, meet with the instructor, and write an evaluation paper. Using qualitative and quantitative data, Neapolitan came to four conclusions that are worth highlighting here. First, the results suggest that "the internship experience has a significant effect on improving career choice certainty" (p. 226). Secondly, "a major way in which the internship experience contributes to clarification of career choice is by providing information on options, attributes, and implementation of careers" (p. 227). A third conclusion worth noting is that "the internship experience helps many interns to become less anxious about entering and working in their probable chosen careers" (p. 228). Fourthly, in reference to an intern's self-knowledge, the findings suggested that "most interns are fairly certain of their interests before the internship; if they are not, the internship does little to help them" (p. 228).

Johnston (1997) conducted life-history research on 17 EFL teachers in Poland. Although this research was not connected to a teacher-training experiential component, two of the conclusions do inform my study. Johnston found that "teachers presented their entry into teaching as accidental or as a second choice and did not draw on notions of a vocation" (p. 691). What the research does not tell us is what or how learning experiences lead them to this kind of entrance or commitment. A second finding informs my understanding of the EFL teachers that I will be interviewing. The finding was that "leaving teaching was a possibility that was constantly

present in the teacher's accounts" (p. 692). This attitude may or may not be on the minds of my participants but an awareness of the possibility will inform the questions I might ask and the analysis of the data.

Gaining a better understanding of pre-teachers' perceptions of the practicum "may enable the field of second language teacher education to better understand how second language teachers learn to teach and how teacher preparation programs can effectively enhance this development process" (Johnson, 1996, p. 47). More research will help EFL teacher trainers better understand the dynamics of the experiential teacher-training component.

Summary

Three major areas of discourse informed this study: experiential learning, career commitment / career development and choice, and the experiential learning component of an EFL teacher-training program. Experiential learning is foundational and the literature provides definitions of experience, learning, and experiential learning. Theorists, such as Dewey, Kolb, Boud and colleagues, and Jarvis offer models of the experiential learning process. Along with these models are some less well-known models that broaden our understanding of the process. Our knowledge of experiential learning is enhanced by various categorizations and perspectives. The related discourses of Knowles, Mezirow, Freire, Marsik and Watkins, and Schön further build the literature base. Experiential education provides information that will help to inform our understanding of the experiential learning component of an EFL teacher-training course.

Little literature is available regarding career commitment and this study should add to this gap in the literature. However, the literature on career development and choice does provide information about the developmental stages of career development, the role of personality in career choice, and the role the social context plays in the development of an individual's career

selection. Also, a correlation between experiential learning and career development is established in the literature.

The literature base for the EFL teacher-training experiential learning component is limited. A couple pieces of literature in the field of language teacher education give support for a connection between experiential learning and language teacher-training. A few studies were found that support internships and their favorable impact on career choice.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Throughout the world millions of adults are involved in learning the English language. They form a diverse population of ages, cultures, and English language proficiency. Their motivation to learn English as a second or foreign language springs from a perception that in learning English they will have a better or more secure life. This global situation has created a need for committed teachers. Many of these teachers will need to leave their English dominated society and live in a social setting where English is not the primary language. They will need to invest time in learning the culture of their language students and in helping to establish reputable English language programs. The purpose of this study was to identify how learning experiences foster commitment to a career in teaching EFL.

In this chapter, the research methodology that was followed is explained. Being a qualitative study a description of what a qualitative study is and why such a design was chosen for this particular research is supplied. The sample selection process will be explained including a description of the criteria used in the selection process. Data gathering was conducted primarily through in-depth interviews while drawing supportive data from documentation. These forms of data collection are described in this chapter. The constant comparative method of data analysis will then be discussed and a description of the data analysis process will be provided. The validity and reliability of the research will be highlighted with consideration given to concepts of triangulation and generalization.

All researchers bring their own biases and personal identity to their research. These personal elements can both strengthen and weaken the research process and results. My own assumptions and identity that I bring with me will be exposed and critiqued. As with most research efforts there are limitations to this inquiry. The acknowledgment of limitations focuses the research by identifying what is not being addressed and for what reasons. A statement of such limitations will conclude this chapter.

Design of the Study

Qualitative inquiry rests on the assumption that "the subject matter of the social or human sciences is fundamentally different from the subject matter of the physical or natural sciences and therefore requires a *different goal* for inquiry and a *different set of methods* [italics added] for investigation" (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1996, p. 475). Bogdan and Biklen (1992) identify this goal of qualitative research to be "to better *understand* human behavior and experience. [The qualitative researcher seeks] to grasp the processes by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are" (p. 49). Collecting data that will allow the researcher to fulfill this goal requires that the data is rich and descriptive, in fact the researcher should "collect the richest possible data" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 16). This involves the collection of diverse data through diverse methods.

A qualitative study was advantageous for this research for it directed the researcher to go deep into the lived experiences of the participant. It allowed the researcher to discover the meaning attached to a variety of learning experiences encountered by the participant. According to the five types of qualitative research commonly found in education as outlined by Merriam (2001), this inquiry aligns well within the basic or generic qualitative research category. Research in this category seeks "to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the

perspectives and worldviews of the people involved" (Merriam, 2001, p. 11). Understanding these learning experiences as the participant understands them is fundamental in qualitative inquiry. This understanding supports the purpose of this study, which was to identify how learning experiences foster commitment to a career in teaching EFL.

Sample Selection

When discussing sampling or selection in qualitative research Merriam and Simpson (2000) help pull the concepts together when they state that "sample selection in qualitative research is purposeful" (p. 100). The overarching purpose of all qualitative research in this process of deciding who or what to study is to identify that which will provide the most depth of information relative to the research question. Patton identifies these cases as being "information-rich" (p. 169). It is this purpose of selecting information-rich cases that guides the process of identifying the participants of qualitative research.

Qualitative sampling is not only guided by the common desire to garner rich data but each research study offers its own specific purposes that further guide the sampling process. Silverman (2000) categorizes sampling into purposive and theoretical. The time and resources available guide purposive sampling and theoretical sampling is guided by the emerging theory as the research is being conducted. Patton (1990) identifies 15 different strategies for selecting samples (e.g., depth sampling, maximum variation sampling, snowball sampling, convenience sampling, etc.). Important in the selection process is identifying the unit or units of analysis. This is the "individual element or component aggregated to constitute the study population" (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 110). Units of analysis can be either individuals or groups of people, entire programs or parts of a program, or geographically bounded areas such as a city or state (Patton). Patton advises that the "key issue in selecting and making decisions about the

appropriate unit of analysis is to decide what it is you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study" (p. 168).

The purpose of my research was to identify how learning experiences, including an experiential learning component of a formal teacher-training program, foster commitment to a career in teaching EFL. The unit of analysis was the individual teacher who participates in the experiential learning component. When the unit of analysis is people the "primary focus of data collection will be on what is happening to individuals in a setting and how individuals are affected by the setting" (Patton, 1990, p. 166).

In view of my research purpose the participant selection process was guided by the following criteria:

1. Adult citizen of the United States, male or female, native English speaker, presently teaching EFL to adults. This criterion places the research within the field of adult education. Not only are the participants adults engaged in education, but also the education they are involved in is specifically adult education.
2. They have been teaching EFL for at least one year. This criterion provides evidence that the participant has actually entered the field of teaching EFL.
3. They have expressed (verbal or written) a commitment to continue to teach EFL to adults. This criterion provides support that the participant has committed to a career of teaching EFL. They are looking at teaching EFL on a long-term basis.
4. Their TESOL training has been on an undergraduate, graduate or certificate level. With this criterion the participant is assured to have formal TESOL training. With such training already in place, the participant is more likely to be in a position to be

hired by organizations or institutions in search of career EFL teachers. This also allows the researcher to select from variety of TESOL training options.

5. Their training (#4) included an experiential component in which they taught ESL/EFL. One of the key learning experiences that this research is concerned about is the formal experiential learning component. This criterion assures that each participant has had such an experience.
6. An effort was made to seek a balance between participants who had significant EFL teaching experience prior to their formal TESOL training, and those who did not. This criterion not only allowed for a wider variation in sampling but also allowed for different perspectives of the experiential learning component of the teacher-training program.
7. They represent a variety of cultural contexts and sponsoring agencies. This criterion helped to identify common patterns or themes and capture "the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts of a program" or learning experience (Patton, 1990, p. 172).
8. The time frame between the experiential component and data collection is not over 5 years, preferably 2 - 3 years. Often as time passes following an experience facts are blurred or reshaped in the mind of the participants. This criterion helps the data to be fresh on the mind of the participant as they recall the experience.

Participants were selected through a variety of approaches. Organizations that provide EFL instruction were contacted and the participant criteria sought were presented to them. Eight organizations were contacted. Some of these were English Services International, Peace Corps, Teach Corps, Resource Exchange International, JET Program, and the English Language

Institute. Institutions of higher education that offer ESL/EFL teacher-training programs and include a practicum were contacted for names of graduates who might meet the criteria. Seven institutions were contacted. The location of these institutions were diverse representing California, Illinois, Indiana, Vermont, South Carolina, Korea, and China. In addition to organizations and educational institutions, contact was made through electronic message boards. Messages were posted on three message boards. Two of these message boards were part of TESOL, Inc. and had member-only access. The third message board was the public www.TEFL.NET teacher forum / discussion list.

Through this process names of potential participants were received. Individuals that appeared to meet the study criteria were contacted by telephone or e-mail. Referrals were requested and a networking or snowballing process aided in locating additional participants. Doug, a participant in this study was found through the referral process. I contacted one organization that employs EFL teachers. Through this contact I received the name of another organization and a contact number. When I followed-up on that contact I received Doug's name and contact information. I then contacted him by telephone as well as e-mail. Doug was in the U.S. for a short time seeking prospective EFL teachers to join his organization in Vietnam. He agreed to come to my location and be interviewed. Another participant found through referral was Shauna. While attending a national TESOL conference I met the director of a TESOL program of a university in California whom I had previously contacted by e-mail. When I met her at the conference she said, "Oh, you've got to interview Shauna!" She introduced me to Shauna and we scheduled an interview.

Not all of the avenues to find prospective participants proved profitable. I received several e-mail replies to a message I posted on a message board. Several of replies, although

expressing support for the research topic, did not represent people who met the criteria. Several were non-native speakers of English or were holding administration positions. Replies to this particular message board represented people living in countries such as Colombia, Uzbekistan, the Philippines, and Mexico. In another attempt to contact someone I discovered that the person was no longer residing at the number I was given and had recently moved to Japan to teach English. I envisioned interviewing approximately 12 people and I finished with 15 participants.

Data Collection

The three primary methods of data collection are interviews, observations and documentation. The nature of this study was such that interviews were the primary method of data collection and documentation was secondary.

Interviews

Kvale (1996) uses a visual reminder throughout his text that provides a continual reminder of what an interview is. The visual is two pictures in one but the viewer can only see one picture at a time even when they know two pictures are present. One picture is composed of two faces looking at each other like silhouettes and the other is a vase seen in the space shaped by the two faces. An interview can be seen as the interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer or it can be seen as the "knowledge constructed *inter* the *views* of the interviewer and interviewee" (p. 15). An interview is "an inter-subjective enterprise of two persons talking about common themes of interests" (p. 183). It is in this context that the rich experiences of the participant are made known and available for probing. Through interviewing the participant and the interviewer work together to uncover the experience of the participant. The purpose of the interview is to "find out what is in and on someone else's mind" (Patton, 1990, p. 278). Bogdan and Biklen (1992) state that interviews are used to "gather descriptive data in the subjects' own

words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (p. 96).

In this study, data collection was through what Patton (1990) calls the general interview guide approach. Through this approach data is gathered from the participant using a "list of questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of an interview" (Patton, p. 283). During the interview the researcher is free to explore and probe beyond the confines of the interview guide questions and is not bound to asking only the questions in the guide. However, the guide serves to keep the interview focused on the predetermined issues and, therein provides the tool to handle the temptation to go off the subject or to get onto topics unrelated to the research topic. The list of questions that served as the original interview guide is included in the Appendix as Appendix A.

This interview guide was helpful in getting me started and guiding me through the first seven interviews. However, as I used the guide and became more familiar with both the guide and the interview process I began to see that there were aspects needing improvement. One aspect that I felt could be improved was the layout. I needed something that visually demonstrated a flow from one set of questions to the next. One action that I took was to include an introduction in the guide. This introduction suggested to me a couple questions that would help in getting the interview going and building rapport between the interviewee and me. After the introduction the guide lead me through the five research questions with the sub-questions. I also added a closing that reminded me to ask if there was anything that we had not talked about that the interviewee would like me to know about. In addition to making the guide user-friendly I also reworded some questions that had not worked well in the interview. An example of this is that I found one question that would consistently lead the interview off course (i.e., Tell me

about what has led you into the field of teaching EFL). After reflecting on the problem, I deleted the question and wrote in my audit trail, "This is too broad and is covered as other questions are answered." Other adjustments were made that resulted in a more useful and clearer guide. This revised interview guide is also displayed in the Appendix as Appendix B.

For this research, I interviewed each participant once with the possibility of a follow-up interview. I anticipated that these interviews would take place within and outside of the United States. However, I was able to travel to two locations in the United States where several EFL teachers had gathered. One such gathering was the 34th Annual TESOL Convention held in Baltimore, MD. The other gathering was on the campus of a university in southern California where EFL teachers from Asia were gathering to take summer study courses. All interviews were tape recorded and I personally transcribed each of them as soon as possible following the interview. My practice was to go through the entire interview and transcribe it using my laptop computer and a transcribing machine. Then I would listen to the taped interview again and compare what I heard with what I had typed. I would make any corrections that were needed. After I was satisfied with the accuracy of the transcription, I would format it with new margins and line numbering.

Some major skills involved in conducting and analyzing qualitative interviewing are interpersonal relationship skills, question posing, probing, transcribing, and coding. Kvale (1996) and Weiss (1994) both emphasize the importance of a partnership relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. The participant should be seen as a partner in the production of material useful for the research. Patton (1990) identifies six categories of questions (e.g., experience questions, opinion questions, feeling questions, etc.) and stresses the importance of single questions because multiple questions (e.g., Tell me what you saw and felt in that

experience.) "create tension and confusion" (p. 306). Probing is when questions or probes are used to deepen the response to a previous question and is what distinguishes interviews from normal conversations (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Bernard (2002) goes so far to say "the key to successful interviewing is learning how to probe effectively" (p. 210). An example of a probe is taken from my interview with Ann. I had just asked her, "How did that experience in your practicum influence your commitment to teach English as a foreign language?" Her answer was short and simple, "I think it made it more serious." My follow-up question probed her response, "More serious? Explain that, what do you mean?" She went on to talk about her experiences reading books and how they "moved" her and showed her "the potential that we have." If a probe question had not be asked the learning experience centered on reading books may not have been shared.

Documents

A second method of collecting data in this research was through documents. Documents can refer to "all forms of data not gathered through interviews or observations" (Merriam, 1998). They can be written, visual and physical materials that are relevant to the study. Lofland and Lofland (1995) refer to them as *supplementary data*; Goetz and LeCompte (1984) write about *artifacts*; Bernard (2002) describes *archival research*; Taylor and Bogdan (1998) write a chapter on *documents*; Silverman (2000) focuses on *texts*. While each author provides a slightly different focus they all are discussing material that was in existence prior to the study. Documents are valuable in that they can (a) help the researcher uncover meaning, (b) develop understanding, and (c) discover insights to research problems (Merriam, 1998). They can also give the researcher ideas about important questions to pursue through observation or interviews (Patton, 1990).

The specific types of documents available to the researcher are numerous. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) provide a lengthy discussion of the various types of documents. A few are highlighted here. Personal letters and diaries can provide insights into the participant's beliefs and values. Official documents that are used within an organization as well as those that are for the general public, although potentially biased, provide a picture of how the organization sees itself. Videos, magazines, and television shows can provide a view of the culture in which the participants live. Photographs allow "researchers to understand and study aspects of life that cannot be researched through other approaches" (p. 142).

In addition to those documents available before the study begins there are documents that develop after the beginning of the study. These are documents that the researcher prepares or requests others to prepare. Merriam (1998) identifies some of these documents as being photographs that the researcher takes or requests the participants to take, diaries or logs recorded during the study, and quantitative data such as tests or data from surveys. Documents, in existence before the study or produced during the study, provide a rich source of information.

The variety and number of documents that were gathered in this research were limited. The participants did not have access to documents such as diaries or journals written during times of learning experiences, portfolios that they submitted in fulfillment of the experiential component of their EFL training, or pictures of or taken during a learning experience. Documents that were gathered were organizational fliers, publications, and TESOL programs of study for the educational institutions. These documents were not particularly relevant to the questions of this study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is described as "the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 153). Data analysis is not something that takes place following the gathering of all the data. Data analysis must be an activity "more or less from day one" (Silverman, 2000, p. 119). Merriam (2001) describes the relationship between data collection and data analysis as being "a simultaneous activity in qualitative research" (p. 151). A practice that I employed that exemplified this simultaneous activity was to take brief and sketchy notes on paper during the interview. These notes were usually a key word that was said by the participant or I would quickly write down one of the acrostics I developed for each of my research questions next to a word I jotted down. For example, the question, How do participants construct their commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career? corresponded to the acrostic (i.e., code), CC. I also kept a note pad next to me while transcribing so that I could note any piece of information I wanted come back to after transcribing the interview.

There are different types or strategies for analyzing qualitative data. Merriam (2001) identifies four methods that are commonly found in educational research (i.e., ethnographic analysis, narrative analysis, phenomenological analysis, and the constant comparative method). For this research, I used the constant comparative method. At the heart of this method "is the continuous comparison of incidents, respondents' remarks, and so on, with each other" (Merriam, p. 179). The constant comparative method is not only useful for grounded theory but is also a method "adopted by many researchers who are not seeking to build substantive theory" (Merriam, p. 159).

The first two stages of the constant comparative method as identified by Seale (1999) are coding the data into categories and, integrating and noting the interactions of categories. Coding is an analytic process by the researcher that links "what the respondent says in his or her interview to the concepts and categories that will appear in the report" (Weiss, 1994, p. 154). Coding is directly related to the theoretical assumptions and research interests of the researcher. In conducting the interviews it is important "that the persons being interviewed respond in their own words to express their own personal perspectives" (Patton, 1990, p. 287).

Once I had the interview transcribed and entered into the computer I would print the transcription so that I could interact with the data. I would make pencil notes in the wide right-hand margin that I intentionally formatted for this purpose. Once the interview was printed I read through it and marked anything that I felt related to the problem statement. After this I read the transcription again, and this time I categorized my notes to align with my research questions. I used codes in the form of acronyms for each of the questions (i.e., CC for commitment construction; TLX for types of learning experiences; XLC for experiential learning component; XLP for experiential learning process, and F for factors). At first I tried using a numeral for each question but I always had to recall what the number referred to. Sometimes I would code the entire interview for all five questions at the same time. Other times I would go through the interview five separate times coding one question at a time. This second method worked the best for me as I was able to concentrate on one topic at a time. After coding I entered the analysis into the computer using various charts.

The process of entering the coded data into the computer was also part of the process of constant comparison. After entering data from Bob's interview into the computer I wrote the following in my audit trail:

> As I go through the process of coding I am finding that I critique my coding as I go along. Some statements made seem to be a factor and I first label it as such. Then when I go to enter it into the computer I reassess it and sometimes change my opinion. Example: Bob, lines 212-215, talks about interacting with students he was tutoring and through this tutoring learns of weaknesses in the program. At first I labeled this (interacting with students [open coding]) as a factor. However, when I revisited it to put [it] into the computer I thought that this really doesn't relate to his commitment. It relates more to learning about the program and did not directly shape the process towards a commitment. However, a few lines later he talks about "it taught me a lot about what worked and what didn't work." This awareness, I feel, is a factor because it fostered a felt need to know more - thus go to W. for the MA program.

Through the process of constantly comparing the data both within an interview and between interviews I was able to develop themes. Comparing Kate's interview with other interviews demonstrates this. Again drawing from my audit trail:

> Working on comparing Kate's data to the data and common themes. Am finding something interesting. Kate clearly identifies learning experiences with real people and real life context as having impact on her commitment. At first, this seemed to be a new idea but as I reviewed the other data, I see that this is indeed a theme that is coming through in types of learning experiences. Others do not identify it as clearly and forthrightly as Kate does but it is there.

The ideal process for my research would have been to conduct an interview, transcribe the data, code the data within the interview, look for themes or repeated concepts, and develop categories. Following this, I would conduct a second interview. The process for the second and

subsequent interviews would be similar to the first while always comparing the new data with prior data. The constant comparison of data would not only be within the specific interviews but also among the interviews. The findings from this inductive comparative analysis of the data would be in the form of themes or categories that were responsive to the research questions. This ideal process was sought for but adjustments had to be made along the way.

As was anticipated, there were times in which the process needed to be adjusted to allow for a couple interviews to be conducted before coding and comparison. This was necessary because some interviews involving different participants took place within a limited time frame (i.e., a conference or program of study). After a small number of interviews had been recorded on tape I then transcribed, codified, and compared "looking for recurring regularities in the data" (Merriam, 2001, p. 180). This was a rigorous process that kept drawing me back into the data comparing and critiquing as I went along. On one occasion I had finished entering my analysis data from Liz's experiential learning process but it seemed to only show a learning process that affected her teaching methodology and not her commitment. I was looking for a learning process that fostered her commitment to the field of teaching EFL, not a learning process that fostered her knowledge of teaching methods. At the time I wrote about this in my audit trail I was thinking about using different levels of a life process and my audit trail entry depicts this line of thinking:

> My first thought, and what I wrote on the analysis, was that this was due to her lack of commitment to EFL. I then returned to the transcript and paid it another visit to see if I missed anything. I found some more things that pertained to the macro level of her life process and a couple things for the micro level. I will now enter that [new found] data with the previously found data. This is part of the rigor!!

Data analysis accomplished in conjunction with data gathering was the goal but as noted by Weiss (1994) "a conspiracy of forces regularly impedes early analysis" (p. 151). Weiss continues by stating "it is likely to be only after interviewing has ended that the investigator can give full attention to analysis and writing" (p. 151).

Internal Validity, External Validity, and Reliability

Part of what qualitative research aims for is that the results or conclusions are meaningful to others (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). To be meaningful they must be trustworthy. Merriam (2001) emphasizes that "being able to trust research results is especially important to professionals in applied fields, such as education, in which practitioners intervene in people's lives" (p. 198). Validity, both internal and external, and reliability are concepts that, if substantiated in the research, can strengthen the meaningfulness and trustworthiness of the research. Silverman (2000) warns "unless you can show your audience the procedures you used to ensure that your methods were reliable and your conclusions valid, there is little point in aiming to conclude a research dissertation" (p. 175).

Research is valid internally to the degree that the results mirror the social phenomenon being studied. Questions that internal validity address are: "How congruent are the findings with reality? Do the findings capture what is really there? Are investigators observing or measuring what they think they are measuring?" (Merriam, 2001, p. 201). Several methods that strengthen the internal validity of qualitative research were used in my research.

Patton (1990) affirms, "one important way to strengthen a study design is through triangulation" (p. 187). Triangulation involves more than one data collection method. In this study, data was collected through interviews. I had hoped that the documents would have been richer. Another method used for internal validity was to have the participants react to the

findings. These member checks (Merriam, 2001) help to affirm that the findings represent the feelings and thoughts of the participants. I sent documents representing my tentative findings to 12 of the 15 participants. Two samples of these documents are included in Appendix C. I received responses from eight of the 12 participants. The comments, highlighted in Table 3.1, confirmed the findings and showed no major flaws in the analysis. No substantive changes were made after receiving the member check replies. In addition to affirming the findings, the process of member-checking encouraged the participants as they read and reflected on the findings relative to their experiences.

Table 3.1

Member Check Comments

Name	Comments
Bob	"Both documents look great."
Holly	"I think your statements are an accurate reflection of what I said and what my experience has been."
Shauna	"I do believe that the analysis rings true." "It was definitely an enlightening read. . . . It reminded me of certain convictions the Lord had placed on my heart to enter the field in the first place, and I feel encouraged as I look ahead towards my next step in the profession." "My commitment is first to God and His will for my life more so that [*sic*] my profession."
Kate	"It was kind of fun to see a bunch of my own thoughts already categorized into a graphic!" "Change spelling of Bombera to Bambara"
Ann	"I'd say it's pretty accurate. I can't think of anything I would add, change, etc."
Mary	"Everything is right on! I have reviewed the attachments and agree with what is written. The themes are accurate." "I really like the table it was exciting to see my progression through your eyes."
Oliver	"When I left my interview with you I didn't feel like I expressed myself well, but after looking at your documents I think what you have is fine and rings true."
Grace	"I would agree with your categorization of comments." "I'd definitely agree with your conclusions." Charts gave "me greater insight into my own thinking."

Peer examination further strengthened the study by asking my major professor to comment on my findings as they emerged throughout the research. Internal validity is also

strengthened through the clarification of "the researcher's assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation" (Merriam, p. 205). This clarification can be found further on in this chapter. Silverman (2000), who believes that triangulation and respondent validation or member checks are common but "fallible paths to validity" (p. 177), recommends the use of the constant comparative method to strengthen the validity of a research. As highlighted earlier, my data analysis was guided by the constant comparative method. Through this variety of methods the internal validity of my research was strengthened.

External validity is another concept that can strengthen the meaningfulness and trustworthiness of the research. External validity seeks to answer one important question: How can the findings be applied to other situations? Merriam (2001) suggests that this question can be rephrased: "How generalizable are the results?" (p. 207). Of the four ways that Merriam suggests external validity can be viewed this research fits into the *reader or user generalizabiltiy* category. In this perspective, the readers make the transfer of the results to their situation. In order for this transfer to be valid, "the researcher has an obligation to provide enough detailed description of the study's context to enable readers to compare the 'fit' with their situations" (Merriam, p. 211). In-depth interviews, which were used in this research, can provide this rich and thick data that is required.

Another way to enhance the external validity of a research is to "maximize diversity in the phenomenon of interest" (Merriam, 2001, p. 212). Patton (1990) refers to this as "maximum variation sampling" (p. 172). In this research, participants represented six different cultural contexts in which English is taught and learned as a foreign language. The participants also represented seven different organizations or institutions. Institutions from which the participants received formal TESOL training were seven. The ratio of female participants to male participants

was 2:1. The average age was 34 years old. The youngest was 22 years old and the oldest was 55. This diversity of cultural situations, sponsoring organizations, gender, and age allows more readers to apply the findings to their situation.

The third concept that can strengthen the meaningfulness and trustworthiness of the research is its reliability. Reliability in qualitative research "refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated" (Merriam, 2001, p. 205). The question that must be answered is if the study would be repeated would it yield the same results? It is not a question of whether *another* study using the same criteria but different participants would yield the same results, but "*whether the results are consistent with the data collected* " (Merriam, p. 206, emphasis in original). A method of strengthening the reliability of research is through an audit trail (Merriam). An audit trail depicts in detail how the data was collected, how the coding and categories were formulated, and how decisions were reached. Beginning on June 13, 2002 and lasting throughout the research an audit trail was kept to track this process.

The meaningfulness and trustworthiness of research findings, which are fundamental to qualitative research, can be strengthened through verifying that the concepts of validity and reliability are substantiated in the design and implementation of the research. The methods employed in this research (i.e., member checks, peer examination, identification of assumptions, comparing constantly, maximum variation sampling, audit trail, and rich descriptions) were done so with the intention that the concepts of validity and reliability were upheld.

Researcher Bias and Assumptions

To be mindful of one's subjectivity, bias, and personal interest is important to a researcher as these will undoubtedly surface during the development, implementation and writing of a research project. Peshkin (1991) affirms this when he states, "if researchers are

aware of the personal qualities that have been activated during their research, they then can at least disclose to their readers where self and subject became joined" (p. 286). In this section, I will share my personal beliefs and experiences that may have influenced the research.

I approached this research as a professor of cross-cultural studies at a Christian institution of higher education. One of my teaching responsibilities is to train prospective cross-cultural workers in the area of TESOL. Some of my students have, after graduating, pursued a career in TESOL while others have not. I believe that there is a worldwide need for people to commit to a career in TESOL and that the learning experiences of life influence such commitments.

I entered the TESOL field more by default than through a planned career choice. In 1998, the organization that I was working with in the Philippines informed me that there was going to be some redeployment of workers. After being involved in church-based leadership development for 18 years in the Philippines, I was now in line for deployment to another country. During the months leading up to redeployment, an institute of higher education approached me for a teaching position. I was offered a position in one particular cross-cultural field of study unrelated to TESOL and then one week later was asked to teach in the TESOL field. This was an area of work and training that was quite unfamiliar to me at the time. This quick change in the proposed teaching position was a direct result of the unexpected resignation of the TESOL professor. My understanding of the TESOL field was practically non-existent so my decision to accept the teaching offer was influenced more by a variety of experiences than by knowledge of the field. Shortly after accepting an involvement in the training of ESL/EFL teachers I enrolled in TESOL training courses and was catapulted into the field of TESOL.

My view of the relationship between learning and experience is that all learning flows from experience but not all experiences result in learning. Jarvis's (1995) model of the learning

process in which he offers nine possible responses to an experience has helped shape my understanding. As experience is transformed into knowledge and skills, learning can be said to have occurred. An experience can be devoid of learning but learning cannot be devoid of experience.

The theoretical perspective of interpretivism was used to guide my research. An aspect of interpretivism, according to Crotty (1998) is symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism guided this research especially in the area of providing a rich description of the experiences. In the words of Crotty, the researcher must put "oneself in the place of the other" (p. 75). In order to arrive at such depth the research will need to uncover how the participants view and give meaning to their experiences. From the perspective of symbolic interactionism Crotty further states that

> the situation must be seen as the actor sees it, the meanings of objects and acts must be determined in terms of the actor's meanings, and the organization of a course of action must be understood as the actor organizes them. The role of the actor in the situation would have to be taken by the observer in order to see the social world from his perspective. (p. 75)

Approaching this research, I acknowledge a personal desire to help people find fulfillment in life. In conjunction with this I believe that possessing an ability to communicate in English will help many people find greater fulfillment in their life. There are risks involved in learning English however, and I acknowledge them as well. One such risk is losing or misplacing one's natural cultural identity. Along with this desire are several values that influence my research and analysis. I value self-awareness, cultural diversity, truth and justice, excellence in performance, and compassion for all peoples. As participants shared their experiences I needed

to be aware of my own values and either acknowledge them when they were accessed or try to bracket them.

An assumption that I hold that relates to this research is that people cannot know the future yet they have a desire to know their future and make plans to reach a desired end. To hopefully reach this desired end people will join their knowledge gained through academics with their experiences to guide their decisions. This process gives great importance to experiences as they become an integral ingredient of making commitments. I value the experiences of life believing they aid in the shaping of who people are and what they are committed to.

Another assumption that I hold is that adults will also seek out experiences that will help them find meaning and purpose in their life. In many cases, people will seek to find meaning and purpose through mystical or spiritual experiences. I approached this research with a belief that knowledge about one's self and the world can be acquired through spiritual learning experiences. These experiences in turn can influence a person's commitment to and entrance into a particular career.

I understand myself to be a male Caucasian, 49 years old, and married with three children. Part of my training and experience has been in the area of pastoral ministries. I have worked with people teaching and counseling them. When conducting interviews I needed to keep the roles researcher and counselor clear and separate. I needed to bracket my counseling tendencies during these interview times. Another part of my identity relates to culture. As inferred earlier, I have been influenced by the Filipino culture having worked among Filipinos for 18 years. I have also been able to participate in the Chinese and Brazilian cultures having spent a more limited time among these peoples. I am very interested in training cross-cultural workers in a way that will help to ensure their usefulness within the culture they live. I have

learned that learning experiences influence a person to commit to a career in TESOL, specifically EFL. With this knowledge, teacher trainers such as myself, are better equipped to guide and prepare prospective teachers to commit to such a career.

Study Limitations

This study was limited by its methodology in certain ways. The majority of the participants, by the nature of their career, are living in geographical locations distant from the researcher. The time available for face-to-face interaction was limited. The researcher needed to travel to distant locations to conduct some of the interviews. These locations were within the continental United States, however, several hundreds of miles away from the researcher's home. Related to this restriction of having a limited block of time to collect the data was the reality that time and finances prohibited having repeated face-to-face encounters over a period of weeks or months. Follow-up through e-mail was conducted. The study was also limited in that it represented the cultural contexts of the participants and not all the diverse cultural settings in which EFL is being taught. Studying prior learning experiences also had its limitations in that it was not possible to observe such experiences. A longitudinal study wherein the learning experiences can be studied as they happen over time would help to overcome this limitation but time and resources made such a study impractical for this particular research.

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The purpose of this study was to identify how learning experiences foster commitment to a career in teaching English as a foreign language. In order to strengthen the validity of the study a sample with maximum variation (Patton, 1990) was sought. I gathered data through in-depth interviews that I conducted with 15 different participants. Two of the interviews were telephone interviews and 13 were face-to-face interviews. Of the 13 face-to-face interviews, four were conducted during the 37th Annual TESOL National Conference that was held in Baltimore, MD in March 2003. I conducted eight more interviews on the campus of Azusa Pacific University during their summer class session. It was at this time that EFL teachers from various locations around the world gathered to take summer classes in the MA TESOL program.

The research participants ranged in age from 22 to 55 years old with the average age being 34 years old. Female participants numbered 10 while the number of male participants was five. All were native English speakers. Ethnically, one was an American born Chinese (ABC), and one was born in the United States but spent his first seven years in Jamaica, his father being Jamaican. The others were White Caucasians. Countries where the participants are presently teaching include China, Mongolia, Mexico, United States, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. In addition to these countries, one of the teachers was anticipating an assignment to Tibet in the fall of 2003. Represented in the sample are seven different organizations that employ the various participants. In addition, one participant is returning to teach EFL as an independent teacher not officially attached to any North American-based organization. TESOL related degrees held by the

participants include a 15 semester hour certificate, the Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), and the Master's degree. Two participants are presently in their final year of their MA TESOL program. The degrees are representative of seven different formal TESOL programs. These programs are situated in Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA; Biola University, La Mirada, CA; Hamlin University, St. Paul, MN; Monterey Institute of International Studies, Monterey, CA; University of Akron, Akron, OH; University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK; and Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL. In the following sections, I highlight the individual participants in the order in which the interviews took place. Table 4.1 is a summary of the participants' biographical and teaching information.

Table 4.1

Participant Biographical and Teaching Information

Name	**Age**	**Gender**	**Under-Grad. Degree**	**TESOL Degree**	**ESL/EFL Teaching Experience**	**Future Plans**
Ned	55	Male	BA degree prior to Military Training	MA Intercultural Studies: TESOL, Wheaton College, IL	Taught four years in China; Taught EFL before formal training	Teach EFL in China
Doug	51	Male	*Unknown from data*	Certificate, Hamlin Univ., MN	Tutored Japanese in Japan and U.S., taught Vietnamese in U.S.; Taught EFL/ESL before formal training	Teach EFL with wife in Vietnam
Bob	22	Male	Bible Comprehensive with emphasis in Missions, Minor in Management Information Systems	MA, Wheaton College, IL	Taught two and one-half years among Chinese in Ohio; worked with curriculum development at a church based program; Taught ESL before formal training	Teach EFL in Tibet
Holly	44	Female	English	Undergraduate Certificate; CELTA; MA, Wheaton College, IL	Taught adults in Germany; Taught at the University of Akron's Intensive English Program; Taught EFL before formal training	Teach ESL to adults in U.S. then overseas

Name	Age	Gender	Under-Grad. Degree	TESOL Degree	ESL/EFL Teaching Experience	Future Plans
Liz	28	Female	Elementary Education	MA, Azusa Pacific University, CA	Taught two years in China; Taught EFL simultaneous with formal training	Planning to teach overseas but unsure when
Shauna	24	Female	History and Sociology	MA, Biola University, CA	Taught four summers in China; Taught briefly in U.S. to Koreans; Taught EFL/ESL before formal training	Return to China and teach
Kate	32	Female	Romance Linguistics	MA, Monterey Institute for International Studies, CA	Taught six months to homeless immigrants; Short-term teaching in Mali, West Africa; Practicum in U.S. among Mexicans; teacher-training in Mexico; Taught EFL before formal training	Continue teaching and holding administrative responsibilities in Mexico
Ann	25	Female	Anthropology and Italian	MA, Azusa Pacific University, CA	Taught in China for two years; Taught EFL simultaneous with formal training	Teach EFL in China and begin Chinese language study after one more year of teaching
Cathy	24	Female	Elementary Education with Minor in cross-cultural work	MA (final year), Azusa Pacific University, CA	Taught one year in Mongolia; Taught ESL before formal training	Teach EFL in Mongolia
Mary	27	Female	History	MA, Azusa Pacific University, CA	Taught in Inner Mongolia for two and one-half years; Taught EFL simultaneous with formal training	Teach EFL in China/Inner Mongolia. Also teacher-trainer
Oliver	52	Male	Biology	MA, Azusa Pacific University, CA	Taught three years in China; Taught EFL before formal training	Teach EFL in China as an independent foreign teacher
Grace	28	Female	Elementary Education	MA, Azusa Pacific University, CA	Taught four years in Vietnam; Taught EFL before formal training	Teach EFL in Vietnam and study the Vietnamese language
Ruth	25	Female	Intercultural Studies with Minor in Linguistics	MA; Azusa Pacific University, CA	Taught two years in Tennessee, Taught short time in Amman, Jordan; now teaches in China; Taught EFL/ESL before formal training	Teach EFL in China or eventually Arab lands
Tami	31	Female	Social Studies Education	MA (final year), Azusa Pacific University, CA	Taught three years in Mongolia, (non-consecutive years); Taught EFL before formal training	Teach EFL in Mongolia

Name	Age	Gender	Under-Grad. Degree	TESOL Degree	ESL/EFL Teaching Experience	Future Plans
Paul	40	Male	Spanish	MA, Azusa Pacific University, CA	Teaching eighth year in Uzbekistan; Taught EFL before formal training	Teach EFL in Uzbekistan

Ned

As I sat in my office and began my telephone interview with Ned, I soon became aware of an affinity I had with him. I mentioned to him that I would be taping the interview and then transcribing it for my research. "I was in the judge advocate general's corp in the army for about 15 years. We had to transcribe court martial proceedings and things like that. I know, I know about the work." This was going to be a good interview! Ned, at 55 years old, is the oldest of my research participants. During his military service, he lived in both Italy and Korea. Ned places much dependence upon God to direct his life. When he was about to retire from the army he

> Just asked the Lord, OK what do I do now? I wasn't really interested in drawing another paycheck. And ah, the very next day I heard, right on the radio, ah, considering teaching English in China and you don't have to know the language. . . . I just felt like ah, that was the Lord's leading me.

Ned began teaching English in China in 1998 and after two years of teaching entered the Wheaton MA TESOL program. The structure of the program was such that he could continue to teach in China while taking courses. During the summer he lived in Chicago and took resident classes at Wheaton. During Ned's four years of teaching English, 1998 until present, he has taught English to graduate and doctoral students as well as those that were already in their profession or retired. He placed the number of his students during the past year "probably around 750, somewhere between 750 and 900 students." He described his teaching conditions in China as being

> Poor, we only have just basic, basic things, like chalk boards, with the toxic chalk dust and you know, there is no heat, no air-conditioning, you just have the fans overhead, sometimes the lighting is poor, uh, sometimes the, even the desks are put together in such a way that it is very difficult to rearrange the classroom, you know, just to do your teaching. So you have to do. And most of our classes are only 40 minutes in length.

In spite of the poor and challenging teaching conditions, Ned communicated to me his love for the Chinese people and a desire to know them more deeply. He desires to continue to study the Chinese language so that, as he says, "I can get more of the pulse of the Chinese people."

Doug

I received Doug's name through the process of inquiring about potential people to interview who worked for a specific organization. Through my first telephone contacts with Doug I discovered that he was in the United States only for a brief period. He was attempting to find teachers who would go to Vietnam and teach English to Vietnamese teachers for at least one year. The college where I was teaching was planning a conference that I felt would be a venue for him to make some contacts. I invited him to come to the conference and he accepted. Once on campus we sent up an interview in one of the conference rooms. Doug is 51 years old and married. He thrives on helping others succeed. He, along with his wife, teaches at a large language university in Hanoi, Vietnam. The university has asked them to come and train young Vietnamese English teachers in "more current methods and methods that have been successful in the West." Doug and his wife have developed a course that focuses on the communicative language teaching methodology. Regarding this methodology Doug says "Vietnamese students and teachers could tell you about . . . but even those who have gone through, ah the program to

learn about it, ah, they still cannot demonstrate it." During his childhood years of growing up in urban Chicago he would "get shipped up to northern Wisconsin" every summer to "work on a farm all summer where my mom was raised and ah, lived with a Czech speaking grandmother." After working with international students in the United States Doug studied at Hamlin University in Minnesota and received a TESOL Certificate. He sees his work in the field of TESOL as contributing to his wife's success as a teacher of English. His wife has an MA in TESOL and Doug views his role as

> It's not secondary but it's ah, it ah, it contributes something different than what she brings to it. She brings the real, a different set of skills, and ah, ah, level of training, and experience and love for teaching that I think really helps in combination or in tandem together.

Besides co-teaching English with his wife in Vietnam, Doug helps to "facilitate community" in his organization that is composed of internationals. Regarding this aspect of his life, Doug states that

> I just like that process of taking people from different backgrounds and experiences and trying to ah, ah, ah, come around certain values that we can reduce and, ah adapt in their, in the way we express, or the forms that those values take.

Bob

My contact with Bob was mainly through a telephone conversation that comprised one of the two telephone interviews conducted during the study. Bob is 22 years old and identified himself as a "TCK," that is a third culture kid. He was born in South Carolina but his father was Jamaican. Shortly after his birth, his family moved to Jamaica. At the age of seven he returned to the United States with his family and had a difficult time adjusting to the change. When

reflecting on this time of his life he recalled that "right up to that time I only saw myself as a Jamaican. I thought as a Jamaican." In describing his struggle, he stated that "I just couldn't figure things out, I didn't understand why people did things that way, and ah, I was very tired of, ah being the weird student at school, I just hated that." When he was eight years old it was God who "put a burden in [his] life for China." That burden continues to be upon his heart and mind as he affirms that "over the last 15 years nothing else has really taken that passion." This burden for China and teaching English first connected as he prepared for college. Paul explains:

> I heard about an opportunity at my university where people were going to a local Chinese church and teaching English there. And I thought that was a great opportunity so I joined on board as soon as I got to school.

For the next three years Bob taught ESL while attending Cedarville University in Ohio. For one summer he traveled to China and studied in a Chinese school. Reflecting on that summer in China Bob remarks,

> I thought I understood a lot about Chinese culture but I found out I didn't understand much at all. . . . I found a whole new level of Chinese culture while I was there. Ah, being in a classroom, being taught by a Chinese teacher, was something I was completely unprepared for.

As he was leaving China at the end of his summer he visited a Tibetan village and "just enjoyed every minute of it." Upon his return to the United States, he enrolled in the MA TESOL program at Wheaton College in Illinois. Having recently received his MA TESOL degree, he plans to return overseas to teach EFL in Tibet for one year then begin his study of the Tibetan language.

Holly

"I spent a month at the bookstore in Chicago, and ah, then got on a plane on my 18th birthday and went to Germany. That one year turned into 11 in Europe." Holly, 44 years old, has had a life full of travels from country to country as well as from job experience to job experience. She turned down an almost full scholarship to Indiana without her parents saying anything. Although she could not understand why they did not say anything, she commented to me that "they probably figured I wouldn't listen to them, and I probably wouldn't have." After a year in Germany she thought, "Oh, I'm here in Europe, I could go to France and learn French." So she traveled to France, worked for a family and attended classes at a university in Paris to get her associate's degree. While in France she met her husband, who was German and then moved back to Germany. In Germany, a friend offered her an adult education job teaching English at an international company. First, Holly declined the offer stating, "Oh, no, I'm not at all interested in teaching. I'd be a terrible teacher. No thanks." After some convincing Holly took the job and began teaching English. During her time in Europe, she was able to receive some training in teaching English that her company offered. She was also able to receive the Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults or CELTA. In 1987, Holly and her young daughter returned to the States. She was able to teach in the Intensive English Program at the University of Akron although she did not have a Bachelor's degree. The university allowed her to finish her Bachelor's degree and in 1992 received her BA in English with a certificate in TESOL. In 1998, needing a full-time job, she began working for a non-government organization as their Educational Coordinator. She held this job for about a year and then went back to teaching English at the University of Akron. A year latter she began a Masters of TESOL at Wheaton College in Illinois. Holly is presently teaching ESL at a community college and is "100%

committed to teaching either ESL or EFL." As for teaching EFL she stated, "I'm sorta waiting to see where God wants me to go."

Liz

Liz and I held our interview in a lobby of the convention center where we were both attending the 37th Annual TESOL Convention. Before my interview with Liz, she requested that I send her some of the questions so that she could be thinking about them. When she showed up for our interview, she had a notepad with a list of items, she wanted to be sure to mention. Liz is 28 years old with an undergraduate degree in the field of Elementary Education. During her undergraduate studies, she enrolled in an elective course in TESOL that her university was offering for the first time. During that semester, she heard about an opportunity to earn a Masters degree while teaching in China. Shortly after graduation she left to teach English in China and began her MA TESOL program with Azusa Pacific University in California. In her words "it was a great opportunity and I just took it." Traveling to China was not the first time Liz had been outside of the United States. While in high school she spent a short time in Tanzania doing church-based work. Other countries she had visited before going to China were Ecuador, Kenya, Thailand, and Nepal, none of which involved teaching English.

Although she had little experience in teaching English, she described herself as "someone who really appreciates, like literature and the arts and who, I mean English, and creativity, and all that kind of goes together." When asked how she saw herself as a teacher she gave this description:

> As a teacher I am someone who gives students opportunities to practice and expand their, their knowledge of language and it's meaning and it's use, and basically to become more comfortable and confident in it. Ah, and, I'm someone who recognizes students as people

> or individuals who have different learning styles and um, as a language teacher I'm, I'm an empathetic listener, and I'm able to diagnose specific problems or possible road blocks students may have in learning language and, I'm conscientious in helping them to learn new strategies for learning on their own.

For the past three years, Liz has been teaching ESL fulltime at Kings College in New York. She has a desire to teach overseas and is open to the exact location. If she were to go overseas and teach she would like to teach college age or adults. "I really like the college level and adults. I mean I did one [adult] program in Pennsylvania where, um, it was like factory workers, and I really enjoyed that." She also likes teaching classes composed of a mix of cultures. "And there's some, some kind of learning that takes place on, that mixing is going on, that I, likes sparks are going off all over the place." Her present New York setting provides this mixing in the classroom. As for her future, she states that

> Right now I'm kinda paying off my school loans and I'll see if I can have the chance to go back overseas as some point. I'm sure that I will. At some point go to another country but I'm not sure when.

Shauna

Shauna is a 24 year old American born Chinese who had no interest in teaching English for most of her life. "Well for me TESOL and ESL and EFL was never on the radar screen until about, I think four years, four or five years ago now." It was not until her junior year at the University of California, Davis, while majoring in History and Sociology, that she experienced teaching English. This experience involved teaching English in Macao, China for four weeks. However, although she loved the teaching and "loved being in an environment were students were so warm," she "still didn't want to pursue it as a career." A year later she took another trip

to Macao to teach English. She loved it, but concluded "[I] still didn't think I was going to pursue it as a career." When she tried working in the field of marketing, she discovered she did not enjoy the field so she began considering the field of TESOL. The Chinese environment of San Francisco where she grew up shaped part of Shauna's personal identity. She thought of herself, as Chinese but when she went to Macau the Chinese there did not see her as Chinese. Some thought she was Japanese while others saw her as an American. She wrestled with understanding her identity and concluded that foundational to her understanding was her identity as a child of God, "you know as a Christian," and then she added, "all these other things . . . were added into my life." As she was reflecting on that first experience in Macao, she remarked that "for the first time I realized that I was truly bi-cultural." Shauna finds it hard to speak to her parents, especially her mother, about her desire to teach English in China long term. Her mother was born in China and in reflecting on her mother's perspectives she stated:

> She sees that kinda, I feel that she sees that kinda, you know she left China um, to come to America to find opportunity, I'm going back to China. That's kinda self-defeating because, you know after she worked so hard to get here.

In spite of the difficulty explaining her desire to her parents and family, she believes that her identity as an American born Chinese is a valuable commodity that can be of great use in the field of TESOL. Shauna has received her MA TESOL from Biola University in California in 2003 after teaching in China for four summers. Her goal is to teach long term overseas but for now, she is unsure of what she should do. Referring to her education she mentions,

> At this point I'm kind of like, this is actually, I need a break. It's been good but like I feel like I've been going to school almost straight, you know, years of my life. I can go ahead

> and have practical experience, but that could be a possibility that I pursue my education further.

Shauna's immediate future is uncertain but the interview itself might have helped her along in the process of discerning what to do next. She concluded our interview with this reflection of the experience:

> I think it's helped me process like, really ask why, you know, where is, you know why it is that I'm still in the field and why is it I ever started this field, and sometimes it's hard to really pin down, you know, it's not till you begin reflecting or talking about it that you understand that, you know, its, "Oh, yeh, This is my story. This is how it all fits together." So, thank you again.

Kate

Kate is 32 years old and fluent in Spanish. She traces her interest in Spanish back to her childhood days and watching Sesame Street on television. Through watching and hearing Spanish in the program, she began to use "little bits of Spanish." This early experience with Spanish remains with her. "It stayed in my mind. It's recorded there permanently." Describing this period in her life she states, "I was so little I really didn't understand the concept that there were these different languages that other people didn't know. And that was very fascinating to me." At one point during our interview she apologized and stated, "Sorry, I'm starting to think in Spanish because I am thinking of my Spanish language contacts." We can see a little glimpse into her personality as she tells why she began studying Spanish in high school. "I always have [liked Spanish]. And I think it was also a rebel thing because my mother wanted me to take, to learn French. So, of course, I was going to choose Spanish. That kinda thing. I later studied French." Kate is a lover of languages. Following her studies in high school, she went on to study

Romance Linguistics in her bachelor's program. Her interest and knowledge of Spanish lead her into a number of cross-cultural, community development experiences in Spanish speaking countries where she was "not necessarily focused on learning Spanish but using Spanish as a necessity of what I was doing." Following graduation from college, she signed up for the Peace Corps. The recruiter recommended that she volunteer to teach English so she began teaching immigrants and homeless immigrants. "I taught them about once a week for about six months. That was my first formalish English teaching and ah, I loved it." Later the Peace Corps assigned her to teach English in Mali, West Africa because of her training in linguistics. Through her teaching experience in Mali, she learned more about her own abilities as well as language learning:

> I found out that I knew a lot about language and I knew how I learned it, but I could see that other people weren't going to learn it the same way that I learned it. And I was going to need to know a lot more.

She went on to receive her MA TESOL degree from the Monterey Institute for International Studies in 1999. During her studies, she designed and implemented a yearlong, teacher-training program for English teachers. Kate is presently living in Mexico where she is in charge of the English Department at a university in Torreon. During her three and a half years in Mexico, she has been involved in training Mexican English language teachers. She is a dedicated and passionate EFL teacher. While describing herself as a teacher she remarked, "I'm not the kind of teacher that says, 'Oh no, we have to study grammar!' 'Oh no, this is the linguistics class!' 'Sorry, we will have to supplement that,' because I'm teaching what I love." The day after our interview Kate was a presenter at the TESOL Conference where she spoke on language programs and administration.

Ann

Ann, 25 years old, graduated from college in 1999 with a double major in Anthropology and Italian. Shortly after completing her undergraduate studies, she went to China to teach English. It was at that same time she began her studies towards an MA degree in TESOL from Azusa Pacific University. She has now completed two years of teaching EFL in northern China to university and Ph.D. students. It was a good experience:

> I just love teaching, I love teaching English to people who don't speak English because I just love reaching out to other cultures. I love teaching EFL ah, in China because, I just, China's always been on my heart. And so being an English teacher in China is just ah, very special to me.

Her love for teaching and reaching out to other cultures grew during her early childhood years. She was born and partially raised in southern California. Reflecting on those early years she says, "I've moved around a lot, so I moved also to, I've lived in Washington State and Arizona." She considers herself "a west coaster, definitely." Ann grew up with her grandparents and mother. Her grandparents greatly influenced her spiritually and they "lead [her] to the Lord and everything." Her mom, did not influence her like her grandparents did, but she instilled in Ann an openness and love for languages and cultures. Her mom would say to her, "Learn other languages, travel, learn about other cultures . . . don't close yourself to other people, no matter where they are from." Ann recalled watching her mother work with different types of disadvantaged people and "um, just always seeing her talk to, in America, foreigners." Ann has a love for China that, in her words, "is something special that I think God has given to me. And that means I need to use it. I need to do something with this." Having been teaching EFL for two

years, she still considers herself an inexperienced teacher. As she looks to the future, she anticipates growing as a teacher:

> I have so much room to grow. So, you know, if I just keep sticking with this and just trying to, you know, be open and learn, and learn from other teachers and everything. And learn from my students. You know I can grow as a teacher.

Ann's desire is to continue teaching for one more year and then begin Chinese language study with the hopes of becoming proficient in the language.

> I don't want to be one of the foreigners in China that is just there forever and with terrible Chinese. It really makes a difference ah, students, when they talk about other foreigners, they'll comment on their language skills. And they really respect people who speak well.

Cathy

Cathy is 24 years old and has taught EFL for the past year in Mongolia among the Kasak people. Describing her students she reflects, "Most of them were in their 25 to 35 age range. Um, for the most part. And many of them had families. Some of them had jobs. Some of them were not working at the time." During this time, she has been able to fulfill the practicum requirements for her MA TESOL program that she is pursuing through Azusa Pacific University. Cathy has always had a desire to work in a cross-cultural situation. As a child, she "just always loved to hear about different cultures and talk to people that have lived in different parts of the world." When she entered North Central University in Minneapolis to pursue a degree in elementary education, she selected a minor in cross-cultural work. At that time in her life, she felt God leading her "towards doing some kind of work with other cultures and children especially that were in need." Her decision to become involved with teaching English came during her college years when she had an opportunity to become involved with organizations

helping refugees that had come to the United States. She tutored adults in English and "realized it was just a real need that those people had to become able to live their own lives in the United States, they needed to have English." Because of that experience, she began to look into opportunities to teach English overseas. That process led her to where she is teaching in Mongolia today. Her stated life's goal and desire is

> To work in and help people that don't live in the United States, and may never, probably never visit here, live here, and so for me it's about developing relationships and working in another culture helping them in their life there and not, not even encouraging them so much to come to the United States or learn so you can study in the United States, but working with people in their own lives, in their own culture, and helping them there.

For the next two or three years she envisions herself continuing to teach EFL. According to her, this will be "in the same area of Mongolia because of the Kasak culture, that's the language I am learning, that's the culture I am focusing on, people that I'm developing relationships with."

Mary

Mary has been teaching EFL in Inner Mongolia, China for the past two and a half years. At 27 years of age, she holds classroom teaching as well as supervisory responsibilities. Describing her most recent teaching context, she states,

> I teach small classes, usually they're adults. I teach, most of them are older than I am, predominately I teach speaking and listening to the students, a lot of them are taking it for exams so it's very exam-based. . . . I teach non-English teachers, so might have, you know, physics teachers, some are business, some are what we call *guanzi* in Chinese, which is like a relational thing, you know, the director or they're government officials that say, "I want to be in the class."

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, she is supervising 33 other foreign English teachers teaching at other locations within China. Teaching English overseas was not always in her plans although she loves literature and is "passionate about overseas work." Her undergraduate studies were in History, a field of study that she also describes herself as being passionate about. She almost elected to major in English. "It took all the way up to the deadline, whenever that was in college and in your sophomore year to declare a major, and my struggle was between English and History."

During her junior year in college, she went to Russia for a semester in a study abroad program. For her this was a "very positive four months" and for a while she wanted to return to Russia. For reasons not mentioned in the interview, Mary felt that returning to Russia was impossible. Having a desire to work overseas and an interest in English and literature, she pursued teaching English in Asia:

> I really felt the opportunity was presented to me to go ah, overseas again was through teaching English and it wasn't like I said, a big step, it was OK. I've always really enjoyed English and literature and so this is a great way for me to go teach.

Her first day of teaching in Inner Mongolia was an exciting and confirming day for her. "I walked into the classroom. I knew that I had found my home. It was that when I stepped on that podium, it was just like I had been waiting all my life for that moment." As she reflected on her future, she envisioned

> I see myself in two more years, with EFL possibly transitioning, like I said more to a teacher training role . . . but just possibly just doing what I am doing. And just continuing on. I'm there as long as God wants.

Oliver

We sat across from each other at a small table situated in a tree-shaded courtyard on the campus of Azusa Pacific University. As Oliver began to share his story, I discovered that we held something in common. He had graduated from the same seminary as I had although years separated us. Before seminary, he majored in Biology on the undergraduate level. After his undergraduate studies, Oliver had several work experiences, which, ironically, during college he said he would never do. With a slight chuckle in his voice he recalled,

> When I was in college I can remember, there's an ad, an adage, that says, "Never say never." And I went by the Education department and said, "I'll never be a teacher." Walked by the CE [Christian Education] department, I'll never be involved in CE, and I thought . . . I don't want to be a pastor. So I was a pastor, I was in charge of Christian Education, and now I am a teacher.

In 1999, he went to China for the first time having never taught English before. Recalling his thoughts at that time he said he was thinking, "I don't know how I am going to do this. You know, I've not taught English before, but I found that it wasn't difficult, and the organization that I was with gave training." Oliver has now been in northeast China for four years. After teaching during his first year, he spent his second year in Chinese language studies after which he returned to teaching English. It was at this time, after being in China for two years, that he began his MA TESOL program at Azusa Pacific University. The structure of this Masters program allows the student to continue teaching EFL while earning the MA. For Oliver, teaching in China at one of the top 10 universities in China has brought enjoyment. "I've enjoyed myself there very, very much. I have a good, an excellent, excellent rapport, relationship with the school. . . . I have so many friends, besides students that are there, that I consider [it] my second home." Oliver's

interest in China goes back to his childhood days. As far back as he can remember, he had heard about China. Both his great grandparents and his grandparents lived in China. "I've always had an interest [in China] and actually when the Lord, when I became a believer, I felt a call to missions." He talked about wrestling with this call trying to figure out "is this my following God's call or am I just following a desire to follow in my grandfather's footsteps." Two months after my interview with Oliver I received an email from him in which he stated, "I'm back in China. It's a fifteen minute walk to the beach!" Oliver anticipates teaching in China for many more years.

Grace

Grace, 28 years old, teaches EFL in a city located about two hours north of Hanoi, Vietnam. She is now beginning her fifth year teaching at a regional teacher-training center. Although she calls it "a fairly large city," she also referred to it as being "very, very rural."

> Like they have two main roads that are paved and have a lot of shops along them, but basically if you turn off the main roads and walk back a couple yards you can find a rice patty, or you can find, you know, I have water buffalo that wander by my courtyard.

During her four years teaching in Vietnam, she has taught at the same teacher-training center. The Vietnamese government fully pays the tuition for education majors and, according to Grace, it is the poorer students that take advantage of this. Some of the students that Grace teaches "don't really want to be a teacher, but because their family is so poor and they can't afford to send them to another university . . . this would be the one they would go to." In this teaching context, Grace finds fulfillment. "I really like the field [of teaching English], and I love to teach." She also loves literature and creative writing; a love she believes she got from her parents both of whom "write very, very well." Grace affectionately refers to the mother as "the

queen of grammar" stating that she knows every grammar rule there is. When Grace was a child, her mother would read stories to her and her siblings at bedtime. She recalled that

> There were five of us that were five and under, and as we going up through that age each child could pick one story before bed, a bedtime, and then my mom picked one story that she liked, and so there were like, that meant we got read six stories every night before bed.

Grace always felt she was going to live overseas. Her first experience overseas was when she was 16 and spent two and a half months in Egypt. During her college years, she visited Indonesia on two separate occasions. While in college she developed a desire to teach EFL. She tried out a couple different majors and settled on Elementary Education, which she loved. "Actually I was an Elementary Ed major but I knew I really wanted to go into EFL, but they just didn't have an EFL major at my school." After graduating from college, she joined an organization that was involved in teaching EFL and came to Vietnam. Struggling with being a woman in the Vietnamese culture, and not having a Master's degree, she enrolled in the MA TESOL program at Azusa Pacific University after her second year in Vietnam. Having finished her MA degree, she now plans to begin Vietnamese language study and continue teaching EFL.

Ruth

Ruth is 25 years old, married, and has been teaching EFL to university students in central China for two years. Her husband also teaches EFL. She graduated from Lee University in Tennessee with a Bachelor's degree in Intercultural Studies and a minor in Linguistics. During college, she spent a summer in Jordan teaching English. In addition, during her college years, she spent two years teaching ESL to Portuguese immigrants living in Tennessee. She refers to her

teaching English as "part of the calling that I feel I got from the Lord, it is something I can't imagine not doing." When I asked her to develop her understanding of this calling, she said,

> For me a calling was God, kinda asking me if I would be willing to get out of my comfort zones and live in a different culture and in a different country doing things that I didn't expect that I would be doing, if I would be willing to do that for the rest of my life because he simply wanted me to.

Ruth's description of her first day teaching in China is an exemplification of her living out this calling:

> I just remember being so nervous, like Ha!, 16 year olds, this is a whole different ballgame from anything I've ever done, 36 kids in the class, low motivation, younger, my heart was pounding, pounding, pounding! I felt like everyone could hear it. And I'm just like praying all the way, My God, Lord help me out here! What did I get myself into. And the minute I walked into that classroom and I said, "Good morning" I just got so excited and the students were just excited and it just went on from there. We had a great time together that first day.

Ruth went directly into teaching EFL in China following college graduation. At that time, she also began her studies for an MA TESOL degree from Azusa Pacific University. Ruth's interest in other cultures was evident early in her life when she was a child. "I didn't really have American friends. All of my friends were from Taiwan, or ah, Korea, Japan, India, or Russia." She recalled a time when she was "a really young kid" that she went to go see an Indian movie with some Indian friends and "that was really cool to, they danced really neat, and it looked so fun." This sense of wanting to discover new things has carried over into the English classroom. "There's always this sense of discovery, and no matter how much I'm trying to help my students

discover, I always discover things with them." Ruth is not sure how long she will be teaching in China as she and her husband have a desire to transfer to a Middle Eastern country. While it will be a different cultural context, she will still be teaching English. "I think it is the greatest job in the world, teaching English in foreign countries, and I really hope I have a long future in it."

Tami

Tami is 31 and teaches EFL in Mongolia. She first went to Mongolia to teach in 1996, one year after graduating from college as a Social Studies Education major. She taught in Mongolia for two years and then returned to the States. Three and a half years later she went back to Mongolia. For one semester, she was involved in language study. She returned to the States in the summer of 2002 to begin her MA TESOL degree at Azusa Pacific University. With her MA program started she relocated to Mongolia and has just completed one year of her two-year TESOL program. Tami's interest for cross-cultural work has been with her since childhood:

> As far as going and working in another country, um, I just think even as far back as Sesame Street, I mean my mom always says, how I grew up on Sesame Street and Mr. Rogers and I learned a little Spanish.

In addition to Sesame Street, Tami recalls having books about kids in Japan and China when she was in nursery school. "I still remember like the Japanese socks." While in college she took an opportunity to go and live in Mexico. Remembering that experience she states, "I felt really comfortable there and just had an amazing time and I wanted to do it again." This interest in other cultures continues to be strong. She now talks about a love she has for Mongolia and the people there. Although her interest in other cultures has been with her for a long time, her desire to teach English overseas has not. Reflecting back on her early years of college, she explains her feelings:

> Oh, I don't want to go teach English cause then, not only is it sort of imperialistic but then you can't learn about their culture because you are just teaching them yours, you can't learn their language because you are always speaking yours.

In spite of these feelings, she went to Mongolia because she saw teaching English as a way to go overseas. Once in Mongolia teaching English to university students, she found that her beliefs about teaching English did not apply in her situation. "In Mongolia I found that that wasn't that way . . . and I learned tons about the culture, even if we talked about it in English." An aspect of her love for Mongolia is the relationships that she has been able to build. Due to a difficult family situation, Tami looks to friends to depend on and to be her family. She found that family in Mongolia. "For me, part of what makes EFL attractive is the relationships that I can build with people from other cultures and EFL has been a really great way to build relationships." Looking back to her first year in Mongolia she acknowledges, "My first year gave me a lot of relationships that are still going on today. People that I've kept in touch with, wrote letters to, one of my friends writes to my mom." Tami is in her fourth year of teaching EFL in Mongolia and is looking forward to spending more time in studying the Mongolian language once her MA TESOL degree is completed.

Paul

At 40 years of age, Paul's seven years of teaching EFL in Uzbekistan represents the longest period of teaching in one country of all the research participants. Paul's first year in Uzbekistan was 1995. It was after his fifth year of teaching that he began his MA TESOL training at Azusa Pacific University. He has not always had an interest in teaching EFL. He majored in Spanish in college and then went to Seminary. Following his seminary training, he worked in a church as Director of Christian Education and Music. He did that job for a little

while "and then didn't like it." He substitute taught for a while and taught Spanish. While talking about how he entered the field of teaching English he stated that, "I've kinda stumbled on this field." The desire to be a teacher came first but he was not sure what subject to teach. Then, in his words, "I felt like I found something that I happened on, and just love it." As he referred to it, teaching English became his "niche." Reflecting on that first year of teaching, he commented, "One thing I remember from my very first year was thinking, this is the first job I've ever had where everyday I wake up and I'm happy to go to work." Living in Uzbekistan in 1995 was not Paul's first time to experience another culture. He studied in Mexico for a semester and lived with a Mexican family. He lived with a Black family in Detroit for three summers. After college he spent a year living in an Eskimo community. He also spent one semester in England fulfilling the requirements for his seminary internship. Paul attributed his interest in living overseas in part to his parents:

> My parents kind of instilled in us somehow, and I don't even know exactly how this happened but all, there's five kids in my family, and all of us have either traveled or worked overseas or lived overseas for some length of time at some point in our lives.

Paul sees his teaching not only as his "niche" in life but also as his calling. The work that Paul has been doing in Uzbekistan has centered on teaching English to high school and university students at a business college. In this particular college, the English language is the medium of instruction for all subjects. Within this context of teaching, Paul has been able to establish relationships not only with students but also with those outside of the classroom, which is something he loves:

> I think, teaching also, one thing I like, one hand I think it keeps me younger cause I am hanging out with people a lot younger than I am most of the time, but also meeting their

families, my colleagues, other teachers that I have been able to meet have had good relationships with them as well.

Looking towards the next two or three years Paul envisions, "I imagine I will still be a classroom teacher of EFL."

Summary

Each of the 15 participants has experiences unique to him/herself and together offer a good variety of learning experiences. A couple of them refer to teaching as a calling while others do not mention it as such. Some entered the field of EFL directly from college while others were engaged in other types of work before teaching EFL. Some received formal TESOL training after teaching EFL for a period of time, while others got their training before teaching EFL. Three of them (i.e., Shauna, Grace, and Paul) specifically mentioned trying out other careers and not liking them before pursuing a career in EFL. In the midst of this variety are commonalties such as having experience teaching EFL, having formal training in TESOL, being native speakers of English, and seeing teaching EFL as a part of their continuing careers. The next section presents the findings of the study in relation to the specific research questions.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to identify how learning experiences foster commitment to a career in teaching EFL. Five research questions guided the study:

1. How do participants construct their commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?
2. What types of learning experiences have impacted a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?
3. How has an experiential learning component of a formal teacher-training program fostered a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?
4. What is the experiential learning process that fosters a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?
5. What factors have shaped the experiential learning process that fosters a commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?

The study was a basic or generic qualitative study and employed a criterion-based selection process (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Fifteen participants composed the sample. In-depth interviews served to provide the data for the study. An interview guide helped to direct the questions and keep the focus of the interview on the research questions. The means of gathering the data was through telephone and face-to-face interviews. The average time for a taped interview was 56 minutes. I personally transcribed all the interviews. Each interview started with an explanation of the three-fold focus of the interview, that is experiential learning, commitment,

and teaching EFL as a career. The interview tended to follow a sequence that began with the participant explaining his or her current teaching situation and then proceeding to questions about their commitment. The interview progressed toward identifying different types of learning experiences the participant encountered. One of the learning experiences that the study was particularly interested in was the experiential learning component of the participant's formal TESOL training. While sharing about his or her commitment and learning experiences, the participant would also identify factors that shaped the learning process. Along with this, the participant was able to clarify the sequence of learning experiences that fostered one's commitment to teach EFL as a career. At the end of each interview, the participant shared information that she or he had not been able to talk about, information that to them was important. The analysis process was through constantly comparing the new data with previous data. Tentative findings were sent to 12 of the 15 participants; member-checking confirmed the findings. In addition to confirming the findings, the participants expressed a personal benefit from reading the findings generated by their own data. Reflecting on the analysis of her interview, Grace mentioned that the information gave her "greater insight into [her] own thinking."

As can be seen in Table 5.1, the findings correspond to the five research questions with research question five subsumed under question four. First, the findings demonstrate that the construction of commitment to a career in teaching EFL takes place in three ways. One way is in relationship with other commitments that the participant holds. A second way is with a focus on other people's development. The third way that commitment is constructed is in alignment with the individual's personality and abilities. Secondly, the findings show that the types of learning experiences that influenced the participant's commitment to teach EFL as a career were formal

and informal. These learning experiences occurred before, during, and after the making of the commitment. Among the formal learning experiences was the experiential learning component of

Table 5.1

Findings

I. Commitment Construction

    A. In relationship to other commitments

    B. With a focus on other's development

    C. In alignment with personality and abilities

II. Types of Learning Experiences

    A. Formal learning experiences

    B. Informal learning experiences

III. Experiential Learning Component

    A. Enhancing knowledge

    B. Developing skills

IV. Experiential Learning Process

    A. Embedded reflective learning cycles

    B. Life stages

    C. Factors that shaped the process

a TESOL teacher-training program. Findings relating to the experiential learning component correspond to the third research question. The experiential learning component fostered the participant's commitment in two areas: one area was by enhancing his or her knowledge and a second was by developing skills in teaching EFL. Fourthly, the study identified an experiential learning process that fosters a commitment to the field of teaching EFL. The process involves

multiple reflective learning cycles embedded into three stages of the participant's life. The analysis of data from the fifth research question depicts that shaping this experiential learning process are two sets of factors: personal factors and contextual factors. The following sections present these findings in detail.

Commitment Construction

Participants construct their commitment to a career in teaching EFL in three ways. These three ways are in relationship to other commitments, with a focus on other's development, and in alignment with their own personality and abilities.

In Relationship to Other Commitments

Participants link their commitment to teach EFL as a career in tandem with other commitments they hold. Linked with the participant's commitment to teach EFL as a career is a variety of other commitments with no specific commitment common to all. Two of the more common commitments linked by the participants to their EFL commitment were also identified as being fundamental to the commitment to teach EFL as a career. These two more common commitments are a faith-based commitment and a commitment to live in a cultural context different from their own.

The most common of the related commitments is the faith-based commitment. Of the 15 participants, 10 relate their teaching EFL with their spiritual life commitments. Ned sought spiritual guidance when he began to consider the career options available to him: "When I got ready to retire from the military, I just basically, you know, just asked the Lord, OK what do I do now?" Holly expressed a 100% commitment to TESOL; however, for teaching EFL she commented, "I'm sorta waiting to see where God wants me to go." She talked about her commitment as combined: "So, a combination of interests, and um, mission, call to missions I

guess." When Ruth was considering teaching EFL, she linked it with her religious beliefs: "I just thought that was interesting from a Biblical perspective, that God loved diversity, and that He made diversity and that intrigued [me] more than anything so I think it was tied more with religion." This tie with her religious beliefs was also evident when she talked about teaching English: "For me I don't really have a vision of ah, missions work separate from teaching English. To me the academic side of what I do is just as important. So it's more of a holistic view of ministry."

Some of the participants identified this faith-based commitment not only as combined with their commitment to teach EFL as a career but also as a more fundamental or foundational commitment than teaching EFL. Ann expressed this deeper, more fundamental commitment to obey God when she responded to a question regarding what she would be doing in the future: "I definitely want to keep teaching, I would say probably for the rest of my life, unless God moves me in another way. Ah, and I see myself probably in China, again unless God moves me another way." Mary expressed this more fundamental commitment this way: "I'm there as long as God wants." Shauna made the clearest expression that her commitment to live out her relationship with God was more fundamental than her commitment to teaching EFL. In her reply to the member check she emphasized, "My commitment is first to God and His will for my life, more so than my profession."

The second most common commitment that the participants relate with their commitment to teach EFL is a commitment to live in a cultural context different from their own. This commitment, like the faith-based commitment, is also, fundamental to their commitment to teach EFL. Seven out of the 15 make mention of a desire to work overseas. When I asked Ann what motivated her to teach EFL she stated, "I think it was just mostly my interest in, in English itself,

and then, and then wanting to go to China." Cathy talked about a coming together of her desire to teach English and live overseas. "Just those two came together teaching English and living overseas, and that works best with EFL, so I decided to pursue that in a Master's degree area." She also referred that her commitments "kinda blend together." She referred to a feeling that teaching EFL "fits with a lot of other things in my life." When asked what some of those "other things" were in her life she responded: "Umm. I felt, since I was very young that I would, I was suppose to work with people cross-culturally. And so, being able to live overseas is a part of that."

As with the faith-based commitment, this commitment to live in a different cultural context was fundamental to the commitment to teach EFL as a career. For Tami, while she talked about enjoying teaching EFL, working cross-culturally was, in her words, "My passion." She referred to her passion for cross-cultural work as her "strongest motivation" to be teaching EFL. Having a passion for living and working overseas was also evident in Mary: "Because I'm passionate about uh, overseas work and it is, I really felt the opportunity was presented to me to go ah, overseas again was through teaching English." Shauna sees teaching English as a way to fulfill her desire to go overseas and be a missionary:

> I wanted to pursue um, overseas work and being a missionary but I thought I would take another route by perhaps getting a degree in Christian Education or perhaps doing ministry here, um, didn't really think of ESL until I went, until I reflected more on my two experiences overseas.

Related to these two more common commitments (i.e., a faith-based commitment and a commitment to live in a different cultural context) is the concept of being chosen or called. Five

of the participants specifically referred to this concept. Paul expressed his perception in the following dialogue:

> Paul: It's [i.e., teaching EFL] not just a job to be done and you're here so you can do it, but the fit is, it's almost supernatural, um, not almost, that it is, that supernaturally there's ah, it's a sense of being chosen I guess, to a certain work.
>
> Jarvis: And that would be you're chosen to teach English overseas?
>
> Paul: Yeh
>
> Jarvis: Chosen by whom?
>
> Paul: By God.

Another participant, Ruth, described her commitment to live overseas as part of a calling that both she and her husband have experienced: "We feel a call to be overseas, to live cross-culturally, to, you know, to do that." Later she expounded on her understanding of the concept:

> I think calling evolves over your life but it does have a beginning point that kinda leads to the rest. But, for me a calling was God, kinda asking me if I would be willing to get out of my comfort zones and live in a different culture and in a different country doing things that I didn't expect that I would be doing. Um, if I would be willing to do that for the rest of my life because He simply wanted me to, and whatever weakness I had He would be using me to show His grace.

In addition to the two more common types of commitment linked by the participants to their commitment to teach EFL as a career, the participants related their commitment to teach EFL with other commitments that were unique to an individual. Doug referred to a commitment to his wife. He talked about his commitment to teach EFL as secondary to his commitment to his wife:

> Where I get involved in the ah, the more formalized ah, TEFL training picture is not necessarily out of a, a keen personal interest to do that, but ah, more as a way to facilitate what was ah, how my wife was developing and her interest.

Bob expressed a commitment to the Chinese people. He referred to a meshing of commitments, a commitment to reach out to Chinese people meshed with a commitment to teach English:

> I think, initially I was committed to it [teaching EFL] on a very, very low level. I saw it as more of an opportunity for me to interact with, ah, Chinese and Tibetans. But then the more I got into it, ah, the more I realized just what a great field it is and how much I enjoyed it as a field. Enjoyed it as a, just for what it has as on its, its own. Um, so that really deepened my commitment to it. Ah, I've always had a, well, since I was about eight years old, I've had a lifelong commitment, as far as living and working in China.

Holly referred to being 60% committed to teaching EFL and 40% committed to teaching ESL. Kate expressed a passion for the Spanish language, while Shauna talked about the importance of building relationships. Liz is committed to teaching English to speakers of other languages irrespective of the socio-cultural context wherein the teaching takes place. Her commitment is first to the field of TESOL.

In summary, one of the ways by which the participants construct their commitment to a career in teaching EFL is in relationship to other commitments. This relationship is characterized as being blended or combined. Of the commitments mentioned by the participants, which they link to their commitment to teach EFL as a career, the study identified no common commitment. However, a faith-based commitment and a commitment to living overseas, although not mentioned by all, were the most common of the commitments blended with the commitment to teach EFL. Another finding was that these two commitments were more fundamental to the

participants' life than their commitment to teach EFL as a career. Associated with a faith-based commitment and a commitment to living overseas was the concept of being called or chosen. Less mentioned commitments that were linked to the participant's commitment to teach EFL as a career were a commitment to one's wife, a commitment to a particular people, a mixed commitment to EFL and ESL, a commitment to the Spanish language, a commitment to building relationships, and a commitment to the TESOL field in general.

With a Focus on Other's Development

The second way by which the participants construct their commitment to a career in teaching EFL is with a focus on other people's development. Cathy mentioned that "since like junior high" she had a desire "to help people effect change in their lives." Kate pronounced that she was not teaching English in Mexico for the money but because she loved teaching and found great enjoyment in it. When I asked her whether there were any other reasons that kept her committed to the field of EFL she replied:

> Generally the feeling that what I do for a living is important . . . it feels important to me, but also that it's something that could make a difference to somebody else at some point in their life. Which could make a difference to somebody else, etc. etc. etc.

Bob, also found that teaching English provided opportunities to make a difference in people's lives:

> Ah, I've always enjoyed teaching others. And I think that a lot of that comes out of a deeper enjoyment of helping others. Ah, I just find a lot of fulfillment in being able to help someone else. Seeing their needs and helping them through them. Ah, being a deeper friend through ah, helping them. And I saw English as a real opportunity to do that.

Liz's desire to help people focuses on the poor. Reflecting on her trip to Tanzania she said, "I think, um, it gave me a desire to help people who came from countries that maybe where they, they didn't have as many opportunities as I had. Maybe poor countries."

The data revealed a commitment on the part of the participants to help students develop in their ability to communicate in English. Ann expressed a desire to help students to speak clearly so to be understood by others when they spoke in English. "If a student says, 'yourely,' I know they are saying 'usually,' but how can I help them say it correctly so that another American, who's just visiting China, will understand them." Shauna, as she reflected on her teaching in Macao, shared she felt she was meeting a need of the students:

> And I saw also that um, it was, it was meeting a real need of the students . . . because they needed English to go to the university and I felt that for them I was meeting a real need for them to need to go to, to learn English.

Helping students to meet this felt need to develop linguistically in the English language was also expressed by Liz:

> Well, I mean, I've always been someone who really appreciates like literature and the arts and who, I mean English, and creativity, and all that kind of goes together. So it's, it's a part of me that I can share, I feel like I do have some strengths in that area. Um, and it is something that people need around the [world]. There's a great demand for it.

The preponderance of the data shows that the participants are concerned for not only the linguistic development of their students, but also the development of their life beyond the realms of language acquisition. Bob expounded on this expanded role of the teacher:

> I think that passion is something that guides me, that something that pushes me on. A burden for, to watch my students grow in life and have new opportunities in life. . . . I

> would talk about ah, the way that I want to be more than just an English teacher. I want to be ah, I want to be ah, a friend to my students, in the sense that I want them to feel free to, to share their concerns with me, to share their life with me. . . . I think it's still a part of who I want to be. Ah, I don't want to just be the person in front of the classroom ah, during class hours. I want them to also know that I, that I am someone they can talk to. Ah, that ah, they can share their ah, their issues in life, someone they can share those with. Ah, I think that is a part of who I am as a teacher. Ah, and I think, one of my values as a teacher is just to be the best teacher I can be. Ah, not just to get by in the classroom, not just to fill-up the, the class hour, but to be a teacher who is interested in watching his students grow.

Ann expressed her desire to prepare the student "in every way." Ned, in explaining his concept of the role of teacher, did not limit the role to teaching the English language: "In the classroom I think that helping students form opinions and shaping their lives is very significant." Doug reflected on his "multidimensional and holistic" view of his own life where the spiritual, mental, and physical aspects of life are "integrated." As a foreign teacher living in Vietnam, he carries this worldview with him. Although he expressed being limited in his ability to address all areas of a person's life, he did express a desire and commitment to help people develop so they can be successful in their environment:

> I think living in Vietnam, I'm more limited to address a Vietnamese person's whole, whole life but ah, being the fact that we're in a university setting and interfacing with these young teachers. Ah we're addressing their professional lives. And ah, there is also a desire to address their spiritual lives. Ah, but that comes, I think most naturally through ah, the context of, of life, as they're living it. And ah, as they are developing as teachers

> and interacting and helping them to be successful in their environment. Ah, it's a very ah, dignifying way to ah, serve people ah, in ah, hopefully their best interest.

Ruth encapsulates this commitment to help people develop both in their linguistic abilities as well as in other areas of their life:

> You're not just teaching grammar, and walking away and going home for the day. Like maybe if I was a math teacher in America. Maybe I would [be] teaching Math and go home. . . . You're dealing with the mess of the human soul. And so I am dealing with student's emotions, I'm dealing with their cultural backgrounds, with um, things they think about me as a western teacher that they need to overcome, or insecurities that they have about their own abilities, the different religions that make up my classroom, all those things affect what happens. . . . For me EFL is not just about language, it's about the heart, and the culture, the mindset, the thinking skills, just the mentality, the worldview, altogether, so any, I think any EFL teacher who thinks that their job is just teaching English and then going home, they're really going to miss that component which is the majority of the class, of the heart and the minds that are always working together and influencing everything that those students do. . . . We're people, we engage each other, we have relationships, we have a community together.

The participants of this study demonstrated that they construct their commitment to a career in teaching EFL with a focus on other's development, as well as in relationship to other commitments they hold. A third way the participants demonstrated how they construct their commitment was in alignment with their personality and abilities.

In Alignment with Personality and Abilities

Of the 15 participants interviewed, nine explicitly linked their commitment to teach EFL as a career with their personality and abilities. For these, teaching EFL matched or aligned with who they are. When reflecting on her commitment to teaching EFL Grace stated, "I really feel like it matches my own abilities and my gifts. Like as a teacher, and um, I just think it's very well-suited for my personality." Shauna described herself as being a person who enjoyed being creative. Teaching EFL provided a good venue for her to apply her creative personality:

> I do like that aspect of just being able to pick and choose and do it, do it in a way that fits my personality and my style and I feel that um, that creative expression is also something that goes really well with my personality and is strongly attached to teaching.

Ann aligns teaching with her entire self: "To me it's like this is what I am. I am a teacher. And I'm not just, you know, a teacher in quotations." Mary links being a teacher with her personal identity, an identity that has its roots in her childhood. She shared that she had an interest in teaching ever since she was a child. Teaching was a part of growing up. She recalled, "I always taught school as a child, you know to my dolls, (chuckle) or to whatever, you know friends."

This alignment with their personality and abilities was described by others in ways such as "I've found my niche" (Paul), "teaching language would fit for me" (Kate), and "one of the options that would suit me well" (Tami). Over half of the participants constructed their commitment to teach EFL as a career in alignment with their personality and abilities. Teaching is seen as a part of who they are. For Mary, she could trace her identity with teaching back to her childhood experiences. For Ann, teaching encompasses who she is, she is a teacher. For nine of the 15 participants, teaching had an affinity to how they understood themselves.

In summary, the findings of this study identified three prominent ways as to how the participants construct their commitment to a career in teaching EFL. One way that the participants constructed their commitment was in relationship with other commitments, some of which were more fundamental than teaching EFL. A second way this construction occurred was with the view of other's development. Commitment to teaching EFL as a career involves an interest in addressing the needs of others. The third way that many of participants demonstrated that they construct their commitment was in alignment with their own personality and abilities.

Types of Learning Experiences

In addition to addressing the question as to how the participants construct their commitment to teach EFL, this study also sought to identify the types of learning experiences that impacted this commitment. Identified in this study were two general types of learning experiences: formal learning experiences and informal learning experiences. Situated within an academic context, a formal learning experience is intentional. Informal learning experiences may be either intentional or unintentional and the context is a non-academic setting. The informal learning experiences are sub-divided into self-directed learning experiences and incidental learning experiences. Self-directed learning experiences are experiences where the individual intentionally designs the learning process. Incidental learning occurs when learning takes places although the structure of the experience is not intentionally designed for learning; learning is a by-product of the experience. Within the incidental learning experiences are two categories of learning experiences. For one category (i.e., context-driven learning experiences), the major factor in shaping the learning outcome is the context of the experience. For the second category of incidental learning (i.e., relationship-driven learning experiences), the major factor in shaping the learning outcome is a personal relationship or personal interaction.

Learning experiences do not always fit neatly into only one type of learning experience. There is a degree of messiness or overlapping of a learning experience into two or more types of learning experiences. An example of this messiness is Bob's experience with his advisor during his formal TESOL training. During his formal TESOL training his commitment to live and work in China deepened. He linked this deepening of his commitment to his relationship with his advisor. As he reflected on this adjustment to his commitment, he stated:

> Ah, I think my advisor definitely, that's his passion as well, that you've got to be committed to your classroom, you can't just ah, treat ESL or EFL as a, ah, passport to your place that you want to go. He believed strongly in that view. That we need to be committed to the classroom. And so, I think I adopted it after studying under him for awhile.

This learning experience is both a formal learning experience as well as an informal learning experience. The experience took place within the framework of the formal TESOL program and it occurred in the context of an informal relationship. The identification of this experience as a formal learning experience is because it was a part of the formal training program. Mary comments specifically about this overlapping of the types of experiences as she connects her formal TESOL learning experience with self-directed learning: "And . . . I think through this field-based type of program you have to be a good independent learner."

The various types of learning experiences are located within three periods relative to the making of a commitment to teach EFL as one's career: pre-commitment, commitment formation, and post-commitment. Pre-commitment learning experiences take place up to the time when the participant begins to consider teaching English as a second or foreign language. Learning experiences during this pre-commitment period may take place in a participant's childhood or

during high school. They may also extend into adulthood. These pre-commitment learning experiences act to prepare the participant for the time he/she will begin considering teaching EFL as a career.

The period of commitment formation begins with the participant's considering teaching of English as a second or foreign language and concludes when the participant decides he/she wants to pursue teaching EFL as a career choice. Twelve of the 15 participants were able to identify an actual teaching experience that initiated their consideration of the field as a career. The three exceptions to this beginning time were Liz, Ann, and Grace. Liz identified the taking of an elective course in TESOL during her undergraduate studies as triggering her consideration of teaching EFL. Ann referred to her first time becoming aware of the field when she read an ad in a magazine about "teaching English in Eastern Europe or something." Although she quickly added that she "didn't think about it until . . . after college," her recollection of the event resulted in her pursuing teaching EFL. Grace's incidental learning experience of watching a video in high school started her thinking about the possibility of teaching English overseas:

> When I was in my senior year of high school, we watched a video, . . . it was talking about the global influence of English and the desire of people to learn English. And I guess the opportunities that are available and so, I really liked it and I felt like, Oh, I can go overseas and do something else. I thought [I] just had to be a nurse, but actually, I really like this a lot more.

The period of post-commitment is after the participant decides he/she wants to pursue teaching EFL as a career. For 13 of the participants, this decision came before their enrollment in a MA TESOL program. For two of the participants, Bob and Holly, the decision that teaching EFL was a field they wanted to pursue as a career came during their MA TESOL program.

Formal Learning Experiences

All of the participants identified formal learning experiences that had an impact on their commitment. Ruth identified the earliest of all the formal learning experiences mentioned by the participants; an experience during her pre-commitment period. As a child in fourth grade, Ruth was intrigued with other cultures. She had an assignment to study a foreign county. Several of her classmates chose France but for Ruth, France "wasn't weird enough" because she knew where France was. She did not know where Bangladesh was, so she did her study on Bangladesh while all her classmates did theirs on France.

Cathy looks back upon her high school experience as preparing her to consider a commitment to teach:

> I guess some of my teachers actually were instrumental in leading me kinda towards teaching. . . . They kinda lead me towards education, being an educator. . . . We had a program where I was able to work with a teacher my senior year and teach. . . . It was in some lower grades so it lead me towards education, um and then, showed me that I did want to work with children as well, and so that did influence me um, a lot of really supportive educators in my past.

Language education programs in high school were influential for both Kate and Holly. Kate, who is now teaching EFL in a Spanish speaking culture, stated: "I always liked Spanish ever since I was, ever since I can remember. And as soon as I had the chance in high school I started learning Spanish." Holly's German and French classes in high school prepared her to go to Germany shortly after graduating from high school. When I asked her why she went to Germany she responded simply with, "I liked German." Later she talked about this interest:

> I'd taken German and French in high school. I had um, well, it may have been just a matter the teacher we had, we had consistently good teachers for German. And uh, in junior high I had a very good French teacher but then once we got into high school, the first two years we had a terrible French teacher. And then she was killed in a car accident and they never replaced her. So they had the Spanish teacher trying to teach French but it wasn't a good thing, and so my French kinda fizzled. German, pretty good, so, and I did well at it. Enjoyed it.

Ann referred less to her formal high school education and more to her formal undergraduate experiences. Her studies in the fields of Anthropology and Italian influenced her decision to teach English in China. Her Italian major gave her an interest in living outside of the United States. "My degree is in Italian, and Anthropology. I had a double major. So the only other country I considered living in was Italy." Further into the interview she picked up the topic of her studies in Anthropology with these comments: "Never really thought about teaching English too much, but I think just studying Anthropology and studying the linguistic side of Anthropology. I was really interested in that."

Six participants identified a formal learning experience during their period of commitment formation. Bob and Holly, whose commitment to teach EFL as a career formalized during their MA TESOL program, understandably identified the MA TESOL formal learning experience as impacting their commitment. Bob's professors in his MA TESOL program challenged his knowledge about what motivates people to become involved in teaching ESL/EFL. He talked about how his professors, and one in particular, was passionate about "being the best professional you could be." He continued by stating that this professor "really tried to strip us of this mentality that you can just use ESL for, for other means."

In addition to the MA program, Holly also identified some formal training that she received while in Spain:

> I should mention in '85 I did the CELTA [Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults]. So I did that in Spain. And that was hard work, very good. And so, we came back here in '87 and um, I knew I wanted to teach, there were no jobs, apparently no jobs.

As Holly continued to tell her story, she revealed that for the next 14 years her commitment to teach ESL/EFL was not firm. In 2001 when she entered the MA TESOL practicum, she was thinking, "I'm going to decide if I am going to do this or not."

Undergraduate programs also helped in the formation of the participant's commitment. Cathy, in conjunction with some self-directed learning experiences during her undergraduate studies, intentionally "took some classes, more on language acquisition and that sort of thing, and became more interested in teaching English as a way of helping people." Ruth identified a similar experience during her undergraduate studies. Reflecting on a course she took on second language acquisition, she stated, "I learned so much about the history of language learning and just [the] impact that it can have and all these just great things, um, and so that made me think more about teaching English." Kate identified her formal undergraduate studies in Romance Linguistics and a semester of studies in Spain as having an impact on her pursuing a career in teaching EFL. Liz, who at the time was majoring in elementary education, took an elective course in TESOL that her college was offering for the first time. As she "got into that" she heard about an opportunity to teach English overseas and, "It sounded exciting."

For a majority of the participants, after they had made a commitment to teach EFL as a career formal learning experiences continued to impact their commitment. These formal learning experiences relate primarily to their MA TESOL program. Many of the participants recently

concluded their MA program and have had little opportunity for additional formal learning experiences. Courses in the program broadened the knowledge base and developed the TESOL skills of the participants.

Although Ned had been overseas with the military and had lived in cross-cultural situations prior to his formal TESOL training, it was these graduate courses that helped him have a greater understanding of the dynamics of cross-cultural interactions. He made this suggestion for the U.S. military, "You know I would recommend it to the United States Army for when they are sending people outside, you know overseas."

During Mary's MA courses she learned more about her role as a teacher. On the day of our interview, she was in the midst of taking her final courses in the MA program. She had this to say about the day's lessons:

> Even today in class we read an article about how one of the major roles we have as teachers is giving our students a voice. And there was, in the article we read, it was about a student who didn't know how to protest in e-mail about something that was going on that was not right.

In addition to broadening the participant's knowledge base, these post-commitment formal learning experiences also aided in developing teaching skills. Oliver referred to classes in which "you learn how to teach grammar, you learn how to teach pronunciation." Liz talked about discovering new teaching methods that she could implement in her own classrooms:

> Like one that they have been mentioning that I haven't done yet, a new idea for me, is audio-journaling where they, they have to record themselves, and self-monitor their pronunciation. Because I have students who have very fossilized pronunciation. I'm not sure that is something you can change but um, I'll have to experiment with that.

The formal MA TESOL programs developed both the knowledge and skills of the participants, which in turn strengthened the participants' commitment to teach EFL as a career. In addition to the formal TESOL programs, one participant identified another formal learning experience that strengthened her commitment. Kate, who is becoming more involved in the administrative side of teaching EFL in Mexico, referred to training in administration: "that is something I didn't mention. I studied, while I was doing my Masters, I studied [for] a Language Program Administration certificate."

In summary, the academic programs of elementary, high school, undergraduate, and graduate studies were all noted as containing formal learning experiences that impacted the participants' commitment to teach EFL as a career. Learning in these experiences was intentional. In relation to their commitment to teach EFL as a career, the formal learning experiences during elementary, high school, and undergraduate studies prepared the participant to make the commitment. During these formal learning experiences the participant learned about such things as linguistic diversity, opportunities for careers in teaching and education, and their own personal interests and abilities. Formal learning experiences during graduate studies impacted the participants' commitment by giving them the knowledge and skills needed to live out their commitment to a career in teaching EFL.

Informal Learning Experiences

The study also found informal learning experiences that impacted the commitment of the participant to teach EFL as a career. Informal learning experiences were more numerous in the study than were formal learning experiences. In these informal learning experiences, the learning can be either intentional or unintentional and the context is non-academic. The informal learning experiences are sub-divided into two categories: self-directed learning experiences (i.e., learning

intentional), and incidental learning experiences (i.e., learning unintentional).

Self-directed Learning Experiences

The participants availed of several different methods as they intentionally sought for information that would help them learn about a problem or concern they had. Reading was one method of self-directed learning referred to by many of the participants. During Liz's undergraduate studies in elementary education, she began looking for "things teachers could do." As she searched for ideas, during this commitment formation period, she read about teaching English as a foreign language in "some kind of brochure, paper." This experience started her thinking about the possibility of teaching EFL.

Students would often ask Oliver questions about grammar just as he was about to go to class and teach. Being curious about their questions and not knowing exactly how to answer the intriguing questions, Oliver said, "I would go dig up the grammar books, and stuff." Ruth learned that it was OK for her to have a teaching methodology that was between a pure communicative approach and a lecture approach. When I asked how she learned this she replied, "Actually I read a lot of literature in our field, *TESOL Journal*, *TESOL Quarterly*." Kate described some of her self-directed learning experiences as "autonomous" learning experiences. In conjunction with her formal training courses she said that, "We were expected to be very autonomous. We were expected to read a lot . . . and to take the [responsibility of] applying that information to what we needed to do."

Mary's use of the Internet was another method of self-directed learning but that was not the only method she accessed. During the post-commitment period, she used a mixture of self-directed learning techniques:

> If I felt that I was getting in a rut, and because I didn't have the training . . . I would go to the Internet, or I would go to the books we had and look for new ideas, and ask my teammates. So, I would look for new ideas or new methods.

Like Mary, Tami found talking to people a helpful method but, unlike Mary, this was during Tami's commitment formation period. During Tami's last year in college, she began to think about some things that she could do, and for her she already knew she wanted to go overseas. In the course of her thinking, she revisited a concern she earlier had that teaching EFL was imperialistic. "I had to investigate it further and really consider you know, here's an option, do you really disagree with it or is it something you would consider doing." Her investigative process involved "talking to people who knew more." Because of this self-directed learning experience, she "came up with a different conclusion" that allowed her to consider teaching EFL.

During her post-commitment period, Ruth highlighted trial and error as a method she employed to find solutions to problems. She desired to learn about what worked and what did not work in the classroom: "Some things were kinda trial and error, you know like I thought that would be great but wow, that was a bad idea."

Although Paul did not mention the particular method he used, he did identify a self-directed learning experience during his pre-commitment period. With a belief that "languages are so connected to the people who speak them," Paul "spent a year living in an Eskimo community and learning their language." During this time, he lived with an Eskimo family on a small island off the Canadian coast.

The participants intentionally self-directed their learning about a question or concern through several methods: reading literature, using the Internet, talking to other people, trial and error, and living with people to learn their language. In addition to these methods, five

participants shared they talked to God to learn about a concern they were facing. The participants intentionally planned and implemented the experience with learning being an outcome goal.

In the midst of trying to decide whether or not he should go to China to teach English, Ned not only searched for teaching opportunities in magazines but also asked God to show him if he should go to China. One day, while listening to the radio, Ned heard an announcement about an organization working in China that interested him. However, when the announcer gave the address and telephone number of the organization, Ned was not ready to write the information down. Ned talked to God and said, "OK Lord, if you really want me to do this you have to do this again." As Ned shared this experience, he stated that "on Wednesday I heard it again, This time I was ready." Ned learned through this experience that he should go to China to teach English.

Mary shared that while she was in college she did not know what she should do after graduation. She was confused and wanted to learn what God wanted her to do. She intentionally sought God for an answer:

> I feel that God has really moved mightily in my life. It's not something that is kinda vague, ah, I asked Him to show me directly and humble me and He does. And so when I asked, you know, I wanted to go into Russian history, ah, when I graduated and, wanted to go to grad school, I asked Him . . . "Is this from you?" And it was slammed [shut].

Seeking a spiritual answer to her confusion through self-directed learning not only resulted in the closing of doors but also in directing Mary where to go: "I asked for closing of doors and opening of doors in very specific ways, and so I really feel that it's been guided by God that I go [to Inner Mongolia]." Just as Tami "talked to people who knew more" to find a solution to her concern, Mary intentionally talked to God to find a solution to her confusion.

Oliver also shared an experience in which he was confused about what he should do in the future. As he thought about going to China to work in some capacity, he wanted assurance that his decision to go to China was not just "following a desire to follow in my grandfather's footsteps" but was "my following God's call." Oliver "wrestled with it for four years" and as he recalled, "it was a process." This four-year learning process involved both reflection and action:

> And I thought, "Why is this keep coming up?" You know I, I was, I had my, my mind was ah, open in the sense that I'm willing to accept the call, and so I just wanted, you know, but I've put my doubts there, but it just kept coming back, and kept coming back. If the Lord wasn't calling me, He wouldn't be pestering me all the time.

During college, Oliver acted by attending weekly meetings of a "para-church organization" that encouraged students to become a part of the organization. He thought that he might learn something during these meetings held in a home "just off campus." Oliver reflected on those days, "So I would go to those, and, but I was wrestling, wrestling, wrestling." It was not until his Biology professor shared a story that "pulled at [his] heart" that the four-year learning process concluded. Through intentional reflection and action Oliver learned that, for him, going to China was in response to a "call" and not just following his grandfather's footsteps.

Incidental Learning Experiences

In addition to self-directed learning experiences where the learning is intentional, this study also identified informal learning experiences where the learning is unintentional or incidental. The study found that two major factors shaped the learning outcomes of these incidental learning experiences: the context of the experience, and the relationships between the participant and others.

Context-driven learning experiences.

Some of the participants identified learning experiences wherein the context drove the learning. For some, living in a culture different from their own brought about learning experiences. During Mary's junior year in college she spent four months in Russia living with a Russian family and learning about Russian history, language and culture. Reflecting on her experience in Russia she said, "I got to know their extended family and um, just felt this desire to know more about these people." Mary learned through a context-driven incidental learning experience that she could live in a culture different from her own. She describes this experience:

> I think one of the biggest things that people do in another culture is they have no boundaries, they just become, "Oh, yes, yes, we're trying to be culturally sensitive." And we loose our own identity at first, where I just became, whatever you want to do, you know, because I am totally out of my own comfort zone. So you just say, "yes, yes, yes, yes, yes" and then, um, your life is spiraling out of control. Whatever the family does you do. Uh, so I was realizing that, and um, the family wanted to go to a Russian bathhouse. Which is men and women, you know bathhouse, communal, and there is nudity and it's just a communal bath house and that's very, a Russian experience. And that's when I said, "Um, I'm very sorry but I, that's out of my comfort zone," and I began to see, I don't have to do everything they do. And I began to see how, that was like an eye-opening experience, of "Yes! I can live here!" 'cause I think that was towards the end of my experience. And I had been, you know, having great experiences but also just saying "Yes" to everything because I didn't know how to negotiate and say, "No" in that culture because I was trying so hard to be culturally sensitive. And that was I think a very poignant experience of "Oh, you can live in another culture but you can also have some

> what of a backbone and have boundaries and not do everything you don't want to." So that was like, "Oh, there is [*sic*] ways of negotiating in another culture."

Living in a different culture was also the driving factor for Bob's incidental learning during his pre-commitment period. Born in South Carolina, raised in Jamaica, and then moving back to the United States, Bob had opportunities to learn from the diverse contexts. Recalling this time of adjustment, he stated, "Going from being a Jamaican, to moving to the U.S., ah, was a huge change in life for me." In this context, he was able to learn about himself. Identifying himself as a third-culture kid (TCK) he explains:

> Ah, but I think the, you know there's just the phenomenon of being a third-culture kid. I think just in general that TCK's have ah, a deeper interest in intercultural ah, life. Ah, kinda of ah, what's the word I am looking for, discontent with just living an American life the rest of their life. They want, they know there is more to the world than America. And you get fed up with just being around people who only think of life inside the 48 states. Ah, because your mind has been taught to see the world in a very, very different way. Ah, you've been taught different priorities, . . . but ah, but I just don't feel that kind of connection or commitment to, actually any place that I have grown up or developed. Ah, I guess I feel like a, like a pilgrim in many ways in life. . . . Ah, yeh, I think that whole experience of adjusting to the U.S. shaped me in that way.

Later in the interview Bob returned to talk about this incidental learning in the context of encountering diverse cultures. He shared that the "whole experience put in me a desire to help others adjust to society well."

As Kate shared about experiences during her commitment formation period, she referred to "going to Africa, a French speaking country, and working in a health program which was not

related [to teaching English], but I continued teaching English to interested people in my community." During this time in Africa she learned that she "needed to know a lot more about how to teach language." This incidental learning prodded her on to pursue further training in teaching EFL.

Ned offers an example of a context-driven, incidental learning experience in which he learned not only about the lives and questions of the students but also about America. The context is an event called "English Corner" where Chinese gather together to practice their English in a non-threatening environment. For Ned, going to these, what he called "voluntary classrooms," motivated him to continue to teach. He mentioned, "I had more invitations to go to English Corners than I could actually do."

> And so, normally we would gather about eight o'clock in the evening on Saturday and ah, that was the best time for the students. And then I would just be available and any person could come and talk about any subject. They could ask about any kind of questions. So for the average English Corner uh, I would have such a large number of people standing around me, wanting to listen, or talk, that I really couldn't move.

Relationship-driven learning experiences.

The relationship-driven learning experience is the second type of incidental learning experiences. During the pre-commitment period, the participants identified family relationships as shaping the learning experience. Grace referred to bedtime stories told to her by her mother:

> But she is like, she reads really fast, but we were all used to it, you know, 'cause she would read us these six stories every night and so many of them had like an international ah, she really loved to read stories about overseas, and a lot about missionaries, but a lot about other things overseas too. So like the reading had a distinctly international flavor.

> And I just remember ever since I was a child always loving to hear these stories about the little boy in India, or the little, you know, like all these different things.

When Cathy was a child, she learned about different cultures from people who would stay in her home:

> My family is very, uh, internationally focused, both of my parents love different cultures, I've had friends from different cultures, and that was a part of my early uh, just growing up years, different people from different cultures in my home, different, an exchange student living with us, I just always loved to hear about different cultures and talk to people that have lived in different parts of the world. So I had that early love for different people and different parts of the world.

Cathy described her relationship with the exchange student, a Somalian, as being "a key" relationship in her learning: "She was like an older sister, and we talked a lot and I had an incredible relationship with her."

Doug referred to several different relationships his wife and he had with people during the commitment formation period; relationships in which learning incidentally occurred. One of these relationships was with a Vietnamese refugee who was studying at a university where Doug worked. Doug and his wife became the foster parents of this student and for four years the student lived with them as their son. Before becoming foster parents, Doug was involved in teaching English to various international students from Africa, Jordan, and Japan. Through learning about "the extreme amount of struggle and adjustment that [their new foster son] faced" in coming to the U.S. as an unaccompanied minor, Doug and his wife began to inquire about possibilities of working in Vietnam. Eventually Doug and his wife committed to go and teach

English in Vietnam. Doug identified this relationship with their Vietnamese foster son as helping to form that commitment.

During her post-commitment period, Shauna learned incidentally about changes taking place in her students by spending time with them:

> So, ah, but that's, that's what I enjoy and I enjoy a lot of the informal time too, outside of the formal class time, and just talking with them after class, and getting to know them on a real level. And I think that, you know there is a change you can see with students when you realize how much they, they are not used to that and they appreciate that, so, kinda yeh.

As to the impact that seeing positive change in her students had on her commitment, she later talks about what compels her to teach EFL:

> I want to be able to kind of change those negative attitudes so that they can be positive language learners, um, so I think ah, that's what um, really kinda compels me even in terms of just caring about you know, the language student . . . seeing the change happen.

To review, the second question that this study researched was, What types of learning experiences impacted a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career? The study found that there were two major types of learning experiences: formal and informal. The study also found that these same types of learning experiences impacted (a) the period of life prior to the participant beginning to think about the possibility of teaching EFL, (b) the period during which the commitment was formed, and (c) the period after the commitment was made to teach EFL as a career. Although the types of learning experiences were consistently present in all three periods, the experiences themselves varied. Formal learning varied from learning about Bangladesh in the fourth grade to, during a Masters level program, reading an article about the

role of teachers. Informal learning was in the forms of self-directed learning and incidental learning. Self-directed learning occurred as the participants intentionally sought solutions to problems or concerns. In this process, they used a variety of methods such as reading and trial-and-error. Incidental learning occurred as context-driven experiences and relationship-driven experiences.

Experiential Learning Component

One experience that this study required of all its participants was the participation in an experiential learning component (i.e., teacher-training practicum) of a formal TESOL teacher-training program. The study sought to answer the question, How has an experiential learning component of a formal teacher-training program fostered a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career? When referring to "fostered" this study uses the understanding that to foster means, "to help to grow or develop; stimulate; promote" (Neufeldt, 1997). With this understanding, the research question assumes that the experiential learning component did indeed nurture or promote the development of a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career. In describing this fostering effect, the participants used the following verbs in direct association to their commitment to teach EFL: encouraged, deepened, clarified, affirmed, hardened, strengthened, and solidified.

The majority did affirm that the experiential learning component of their EFL teacher-training program fostered their commitment to teach EFL as a career. The study found that the experiential learning component of the participants' EFL training fostered their commitment in two ways. One way was that it enhanced their knowledge in the areas of personal identity, cultural awareness, and TESOL methodology. The second way the practicum fostered the participants' commitment was through developing their skills to teach EFL professionally.

Enhancing Knowledge

Through the experience of the practicum the participants' knowledge of their own identity and natural abilities was sharpened. Bob saw his concept of himself change from that of being a student to that of a teacher:

> I think going into the practicum I still just saw myself as a student. I had gone straight from my undergrad to my graduate studies, so I had been a student for 17 years. Ah, so, my whole mentality was "I'm a student," but by the end of it I felt like "I'm an English teacher now."

Mary began to see herself as more of a professional after being observed and assessed by a professional teacher. As she recalled the practicum she highlighted the observation time:

> It was difficult to have a teaching practicum but I so welcomed being humbled and being able to have someone honestly observe me. Instead of saying "great job," to give me point by point feedback of saying, "This is great, this needs, you know, I see this," and dialoging with her. I began to feel like, I became more of a professional teacher.

Some discovered that teaching EFL was something they found enjoyable. Bob was one of those but so was Cathy. She entered the practicum not really being sure about teaching adults but by the end she stated, "I discovered that I do like teaching them." She went on to comment, "So I know now that I do, I enjoy it, I enjoy teaching adults." Related to this joy of teaching was Tami's expression that through the practicum experience her desire to teach increased.

In addition to sharpening the participants' knowledge of their own identity and natural abilities, the practicum provided the context for enhancing their cultural knowledge. One of Cathy's assignments during her practicum was to "interview 5 to 10 people who had information about language policy" in the country she was teaching, Mongolia. She interviewed "several

teachers, um, methodologist, [and] some people in the community" about how they felt towards Mongolia's language policy. In recalling her learning through this experience she states:

> I learned a lot about people's attitudes towards English. What they think about their children learning English for five, six years of their schooling. How it's affecting the country as a whole and their relationship with other countries, and that helped me to see outside of my classroom, and understand a little bit more where my students may be coming from, what expectations they may have about English helping them in their lives . . . so it helped me to become a better teacher and understand my students better.

Although Kate mentioned that when she thinks about her commitment to teach EFL the practicum "doesn't jump out at her," she did mention that perhaps her commitment to teach in a Mexican cultural context did increase. Her brief description of how her cultural knowledge increased and her interest heightened follows:

> I remember I actually did ah, an exercise with [my students] where they had to write advice to me because I was going to Mexico. It was a writing activity. And that might have ah, given me a lot of motivation to how I am going to work effectively in Mexico and what a great time I was going to have in Mexico. Also, that may have given me more commitment to the Mexican English teaching environment.

A by-product of Ned's TESOL practicum was that he began to "understand many of the aspects of crossing cultures and that carries over into the classroom." Although he had been in the military and had spent time in different countries he now, as a result of his TESOL training, stated, "I'm far more aware of what it [culture] is and why it is."

The study found that not only did the experiential learning component enhance the participants' knowledge in the areas of personal identity and cultural awareness, but it also

enhanced their knowledge of TESOL methodologies. The participants mentioned several different categories related to this area of enhancement. Both Ruth and Bob talked about gaining a new approach to teaching. Referring to her practicum, Ruth expressed that "it varied the way that I thought my students needed to learn" and "I had a whole new approach to teaching listening to my students." Bob's comments showed that his new approach pertained to the entire TESOL field: "I think I had a big transformation in my approach. I began to look at, at TESOL as ah, I'm having a hard time putting this into words, but basically, seeing it as a field of its own." Oliver's comments coincide with Bob's: "It's changed my perspective to realize that it's much more professional than I thought." Mary also began to feel more of a professional teacher and stated that "the practicum, the observation practicum, the teaching practicum, gives me the tools that I can go use now in my classroom." For Ruth these tools were tools that a teacher cannot gain through the process of trial and error alone:

> I think that if I was still not in this program I would still be unaware in that sense, even though I know I would have learned a lot through trial and error, there's just details that you don't get when you're not in a program like this that forces you to see what you are really doing in the classroom.

The formal TESOL practicum enhanced the knowledge of the participants by helping them gain a fuller understanding of their desires and abilities, by expanding their awareness of cultural issues in the cross-cultural teaching environment, and by providing new perspectives of EFL teaching practices.

Developing Skills

In addition to enhancing the knowledge base of the participants, the study found that the experiential learning component of a formal TESOL program developed the teaching skills of the participants.

Three of the participants referred to becoming more of a reflective teacher. For example, Shauna stated:

> What occurred, I think, during my practicum was as I began to learn more and reflect more I became more of a reflective teacher in terms of being able to see things in the classroom and being able to process them.

Holly was another one who talked about becoming more reflective and she talked about other skills that developed during the practicum:

> Ah, also just some practical terms I think um, made me think about professional development more, made me more reflective, um, there's some concrete things, I would probably write lesson plans better than I did before.

Ned's skills developed in a way that made him less apt to be boring: "I think from my practicum, I realized that there are certain things, activities that I can do that break up the classroom time so that the students are still learning but it's interesting and not boring." In Bob's practicum he had "a lot of freedom to try out new things." He "toyed with some of the stuff" that his master teacher did and learned from those experiences. Through the critique of his master teacher Bob learned that he needed to hold a high standard for his students and be willing to correct them.

In summary, the experiential learning component of a formal TESOL program fostered the participants' commitment to teach EFL as a career by enhancing their knowledge and

developing their skills. Tami linked commitment, knowledge enhancement, and skill development in her own experience in the following way: "The more I grow as a teacher the more I'm comfortable as a teacher, the more I learn the more I feel like [it's] something that I do well, enjoy doing. Increasing professionalism." Then she added, "The better I do something the more it is something I want to do."

Experiential Learning Process

The fourth question that this study sought an answer was "What is the experiential learning process that fosters a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?" The study found that this experiential learning process is multiple reflective learning cycles embedded into three life stages. Of the 15 study participants, 13 followed the three life stages sequentially while two experienced the final two stages concurrently. Situated within these three life stages were multiple reflective learning cycles. These cycles, varying in duration from a few hours to several years, were composed of four steps. This study found that the process of multiple reflective learning cycles, embedded into three life stages of the participant, fostered a commitment to teach EFL as a career. Figure 5.1 displays the full process. Embedded reflective learning cycles (ERLC) are present in Stage A, Developing Awareness of Cultural Diversity; Stage B, Immersion into a Different Culture; and Stage C, Formal TESOL Training. As the participant progressed from developing an awareness of cultural diversity to formal training in teaching English to speakers of other languages, he/she encountered numerous reflective learning experiences that fostered a commitment to teach EFL as a career. The next section explains the embedded reflective learning cycles.

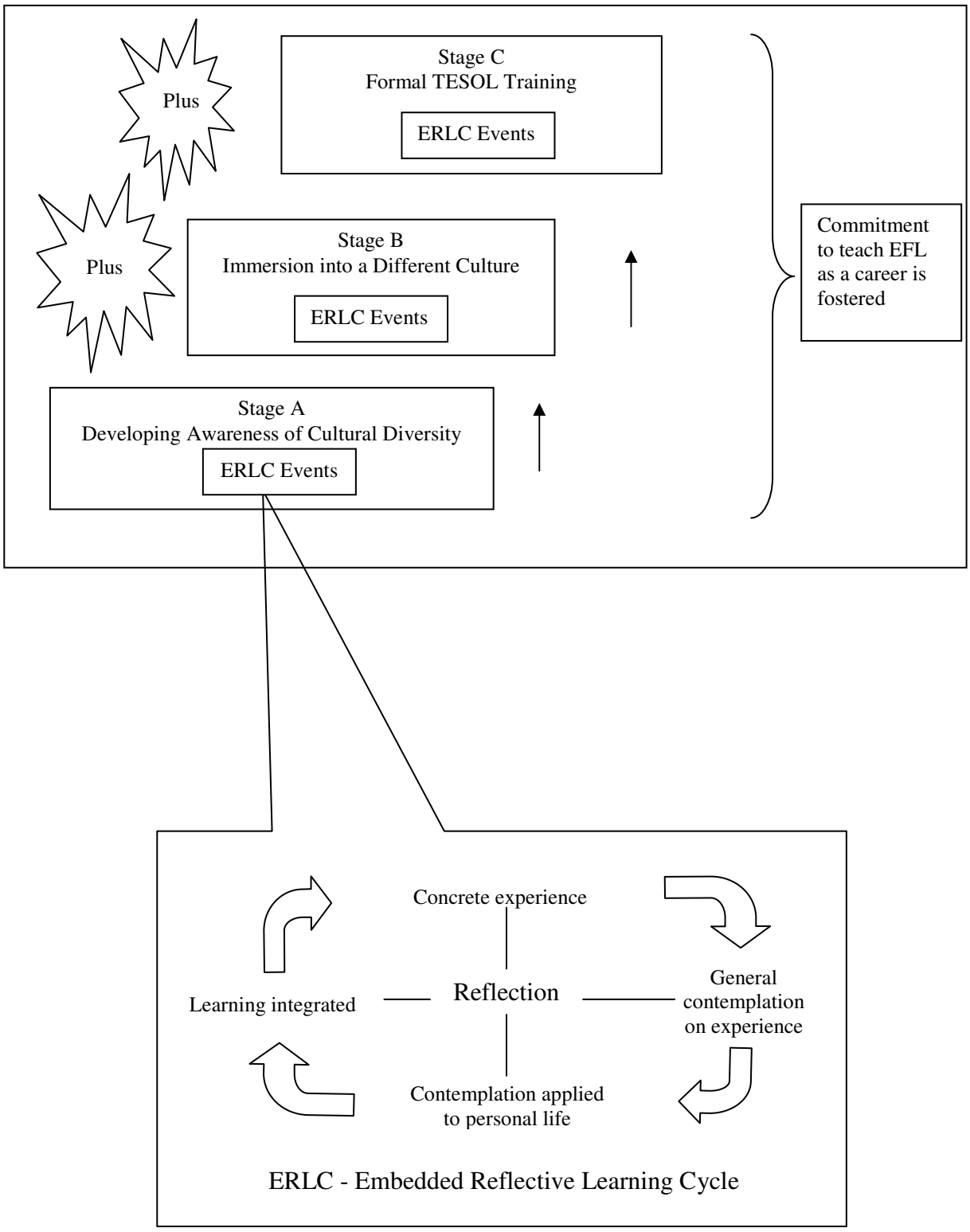

Figure 5.1. Experiential learning process that fosters a commitment to teach EFL as a career.

Embedded Reflective Learning Cycles

To begin this section, Kate's interview provides data illustrating a reflective learning cycle. This particular cycle spreads out over several years and takes place during the life stage in which she becomes aware of cultural diversity, that is Life Stage A. In Kate's words,

> I remember as a kid Sesame Street had little bits of Spanish, *uno, dos*, and so I remember the little school house with a, the door and they would say "*abreto*" and all the kids would run out. It stayed in my mind. It's recorded there permanently. I ah, remember that and I remember asking, at some point asking my mother, "How do you spell *uno*?" And she said, "I don't know, that's Spanish." And I, I was so little I really didn't understand the concept that there were these different languages that other people didn't know. And that was very fascinating to me but, maybe that was when my interest from early on, Sesame Street. But, there was almost no one, who spoke Spanish in my community. And very few Spanish speaking immigrants.

In another part of the interview, Kate mentioned, "I always liked Spanish ever since I was, ever since I can remember. And as soon as I had the chance in high school I started learning Spanish." In this narration the four steps of the reflective learning cycle are present (i.e., concrete experience, general contemplation on experience, contemplation applied to personal life, and learning integrated). Throughout the process reflection is on going.

When Kate was a child, she watched the television show, "Sesame Street." This concrete experience (i.e., Step One) is the beginning of the reflective learning cycle. Specifically, through watching this program, she heard the Spanish language for the first time. This experience triggered her thinking about the language and the meaning of the individual words. This general contemplation on the experience (i.e., Step Two) is the second part of the reflective learning

cycle. Contemplating on an issue, in this case language and the meaning of words, brings the issue to the forefront in an individual's thinking where the individual can address it. For some, the issue may be in the form of a problem or challenge that confronts them. For Kate, there were no Spanish speakers in her community so this language was new and intrigued her. She began thinking about languages other than English, which was familiar to her. As she thought about, mulled over, or contemplated on the experience and the issue of people speaking Spanish she became fascinated with languages. As Kate continued to reflect on the issue, her awareness of language diversity increased and she began to possess a heightened level of consciousness for it. In this heightened level of consciousness, Kate began to learn some Spanish words and tried using them. She was now applying her contemplation to her own life. She verbally expressed some of the words, and she searched for their meaning. "What does *uno* mean?" she asks her mother. She continued to learn and use the Spanish language and decided, "I like Spanish and languages." It is this heightened state of awareness and focused contemplation as she personally experiments and interacts with the language that is the third part of the reflective learning cycle (i.e., Step Three). The fourth part of the cycle takes place when the participant integrates his/her new learning into his/her life in a manner that shapes and defines what he/she does or how he/she thinks. For Kate, in this particular reflective learning cycle, she entered high school and took the first opportunity she had to take a Spanish class (i.e., Step Four).

The reflective learning cycle is thus a four-part cyclical interaction of an individual with a concrete experience through progressively deepening reflection that leads to an integration of learning to the participant's life. In many of the cycles, the integration of learning involved a change in behavior; however, the integration could be of a cognitive nature where the learning is integrated into prior knowledge with little to no immediate behavior change. An example of this

cognitive integration would be Shauna's increased understanding of what makes a good EFL teacher.

This example of an ERLC takes place during Life Stage B where Shauna immersed herself into the Chinese culture of Macau through teaching EFL. Before leaving for Macau to teach, Shauna finished "one year of [TESOL] methodology and training" and was "approaching the summer with all the gusto of a new teacher." In spite of her training and enthusiasm, once she was in the teaching position she "found it difficult to be able to apply what [she] had known in theory and studies . . . to practical realization in the classroom." Because of this concrete experience, she found herself very frustrated and in her general contemplation on the experience "couldn't reconcile . . . teachers who went with [her] having more success in the classroom." Shauna stated "I wanted them [i.e., students] to learn" but "just felt like I'm more just baby sitting them like four hours a day in the classroom" doing "fun things." When she returned to the States and met with her professors she explained her frustration to them and was encouraged to "kind of probe that issue and . . . why was it so difficult to apply my graduate studies into practice." At this point in the reflective learning cycle, her contemplation focused more intentionally on applying it to her own life. As she probed the issue, she reflected more and contemplated on why she felt like a "horrible teacher." In the paper she wrote that identified the results of her probe, she "argued that we have the perceptions of good that we do and . . . there [are] often times that mismatch between student expectations and teacher expectations." Shauna integrated this new learning into her life, in a cognitive manner, as expressed by her statement, "I was able to reflect on it more and just see how it could, you know, in the future not discourage me from not wanting to do this long term." Through this reflective learning cycle, embedded into Stage B of the overall process, Shauna came to understand more clearly what a good EFL teacher is.

Several of the participants revealed ERLCs that took place during Stage C, the Formal Training stage. When Doug and his wife began training Vietnamese teachers of English in Vietnam, they attempted to incorporate reflective journal writing in the training. Doug and his wife asked the Vietnamese teachers-in-training to write down "their thoughts, or questions, or even disagreements" about their own teaching and learning and submit these written journals to Doug and his wife. This assignment was not going well and the students were not submitting their journals. As Doug and his wife contemplated on why this might be happening they "realized they [i.e., the students] didn't know how to do that [i.e., write down thoughts even if the grammar is not perfect]." Upon coming to this realization, their thoughts and reflection turned towards the assignment that they had given and were expecting the students to complete. As they began to apply their contemplation to their own life and teaching practice they "started breaking this down and innovate that process." The final step of this reflective learning cycle was when Doug and his wife integrated this learning into their life by changing their teacher-training methods.

As with the above examples, many of the ERLCs take place during one life stage. However, a few take place during more than one life stage. Bob provides an example of this in that the concrete experience and contemplation occur during Stage B, the Immersion stage, but the learning integration does not take place until Stage C, the Formal Training stage. Bob referred to an experience in which he helped to tutor Chinese English language learners in the U.S.:

> I would help out at the Chinese church. It was basically one-on-one tutoring. I was, ah, I just continually felt like there's got to be a better way of doing this. And I kept searching for training that I could get, in a school, a little bit training here, little there. But I couldn't

> find any. Um, which was very frustrating. And, so that drove me to, I guess that raised my awareness of my incompetence, um, and . . . when I thought about teaching in China, being responsible for a classroom, I just knew I didn't have what it took.

A few lines later in the interview Bob mentioned "I was way over my head . . . and that made me aware that I needed more than what I had." Contemplating on the concrete experience of tutoring Chinese students Bob thought, "there's got to be a better way of doing this." As he continued in the reflective learning cycle his contemplation applied more specifically to his own personal life as expressed by the statements: "I just knew I didn't have what it took"; and "I needed more than what I had." The final aspect of the reflective learning cycle, that of integrating the learning into his life, did not take place until a couple years after this tutoring experience. This happened in Stage C, the Formal Training stage. He enrolled in the MA TESOL program at Wheaton College and started the process of receiving formal training in teaching English.

The four parts of the reflective learning cycle are a concrete experience, general contemplation on experience, contemplation applied to personal life, and learning integration. The study found that all the participants specifically mentioned reflection or inferred that reflection played a part in the experiential learning process. In addition, the study found these cycles embedded in each of the three life stages. In a few instances, the cycle spanned different life stages. Appendix D displays samples of embedded reflective learning cycles taken from each of the 15 participants.

Life Stages

The study identified three life stages that all the participants went through in the process of fostering their commitment to teach EFL as a career. The initial stage was a time of developing an awareness to cultural diversity. This was a time of growing sensitivity to the

diversity of cultures throughout the world. When the participants discussed the development of their commitment they all recalled experiences that exposed them to cultures different than their own. During Mary's reflection, she identified a relationship that she had as a child through which she was introduced to an African culture.

> [The commitment] started when I was a child and there was a woman from my church who was, ah, in Africa for two years. And she was like my hero, and that made a big impact on me, . . . when I began to dialogue back through my life, [I] realized that that was, had made a huge impact on my life.

A few examples highlight the presence of this initial stage in the participant's life. Ruth identified times when she was in high school during which she was becoming aware of cultural diversity. "I didn't really have American friends. All of my friends were from Taiwan, or ah, Korea, Japan, India, or Russia." As she spent time with these friends, she became intrigued with "the foods they ate, the way they worshipped, and the way their family unit worked."

For Ann this initial stage of cultural awareness lasted from her childhood through her college years. She talked about "as a child" watching her mother interact with foreigners. It was from her mother that she received encouragement to learn about other cultures: "Don't close yourself to other people," her mother would say. "No matter where they are from." Her Italian heritage spawned an interest in her to major in Italian and Anthropology in college, which further developed her awareness of different cultures. Then one day in college while she was waiting for her friend, a service concluded at a large Chinese church nearby. She recalled thinking at that time as she saw all the Chinese, "I wish I could meet those people."

This initial stage also lasted over a period of years for Doug. He talked about spending summers with his Czech-speaking grandmother as a child, and working with international

students as an adult. In talking about his work with international students here in the U.S. he mentioned that the "ongoing contact and exposure to internationals . . . just further acquainting us and kinda sensitizing us to internationals."

Each of the 15 participants identified a time in their life, usually during childhood and teen years, during which they developed an awareness of cultural diversity. This stage of life set up the context for the second stage of life: a time of immersing one's self into a specific culture other than that of the participant. This is a time of living in a cultural context that is different from one's own. These times of immersion are different from times of developing an awareness to the diversity of cultures in the context of one's own cultural environment. Times of interaction with people of a different culture in one's own safe, cultural environment are included in the initial stage of developing cultural awareness. Ned, Oliver, and Grace referred to visiting another country but not interacting in a meaningful way with those who lived there. Although Ned lived in Korea for two years, his contact was with English speaking military and did "not [have] much interaction with Koreans." Oliver went to Europe with a group of Americans and gave this description: "[We] had culture clash but we were basically isolated because we were altogether as a group, and so it was like this little America was going all over. . . . Our culture wasn't challenged." In a similar vein, Grace spent two and a half months in Egypt with a group of Americans. In describing that time she said, "it was like little America." This second life stage of immersion is more than just visiting another culture; it is living in and interacting with the practices, beliefs, and language of the host people. The participants mentioned several such cross-cultural immersion experiences.

When Mary was in college, she "went to Russia for a study-abroad program for a semester." She said, "[I] just immersed myself in the culture and really felt a love for the Russian

people." It was during this four-month time of immersion that she realized she would probably be living abroad. Later she would find herself living and teaching in China. Grace referred to two different times that she spent in Indonesia and lived with Indonesian families. Also, before her formal TESOL studies, she lived and taught English in Vietnam for two years. Another participant, Liz, mentioned living for short periods in four different countries during the expanse of time from high school through college: Tanzania, Ecuador, Thailand, and Nepal. She described her time in Tanzania as "living in the village and you know, not having running water, and everything like that." She went on to talk about the slow pace of life in the countryside and that, she "loved being able to sit around the fire at night and just sit there."

Following this second life stage of immersion is a stage during which the participant matriculated in a formal TESOL training program. For two of the fifteen participants, Ann and Cathy, this stage was concurrent with their immersion stage. They were able to immerse themselves into a different culture through teaching EFL while at the same time taking TESOL classes. This was possible due to the module nature of their TESOL program. The structure of the program was such that they did readings and assignments while teaching EFL. Then when they were not teaching, such as the summer, they took formal residential classes for a few weeks. For the other 13 participants, they experienced both the initial stage of developing awareness to cultural diversity and the second stage of immersion before their formal TESOL training. A complete table identifying the three life stages of all the participants is available in Appendix E.

Through the three life stages all participants experienced multiple embedded reflective learning cycles. The first stage is a period of perhaps several years' duration during which the participant develops an awareness of the diversity of cultures in the world. Their understanding of the world broadens to include the acceptance, and at times, the love of other cultures that exist

in this world. The second life stage is a period of time during which the participant is able to immerse him/herself in a culture different from his/her own. This is more than simply visiting another country or culture. This stage involves meaningful interaction with the customs and language of the host culture. These two stages lead up to the stage of formal TESOL training. Although an individual may experience the second and third stages concurrently, the preponderance of the data shows a sequential stage by stage process.

In summary, this study found that the experiential learning process that fostered the participants' commitment to teach EFL as a career was multiple reflective learning cycles embedded in three life stages. The participants tended to progress through three life stages in a sequential manner from becoming aware of cultural diversity, to immersing into a culture different from that of the participant, and concluding with formal TESOL training. Within these life stages, the participant encountered reflective learning cycles that involved the participant interacting with a concrete experience in a reflective manner. As this reflection developed, the participant's contemplation was applied to the participant's own life and new knowledge was acquired. The participant then integrated this new knowledge into his/her life. This experiential learning process nurtured and developed the participant's commitment to teach EFL as a career.

Factors that Shaped the Process

Related to the experiential learning process, this study also sought to answer the question, "What factors have shaped the experiential learning process that fosters a commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?" The study found two sets of factors, personal and contextual. The personal is composed of an interest in cultural diversity, enjoyment of teaching, and a meaningful spiritual life. The contextual factors shaping the process are enduring interpersonal relationships, support from others, and exposure to the EFL teaching profession.

Table 5.2

Factors Shaping the Experiential Learning Process

Personal	Contextual
Interest in cultural diversity	Enduring interpersonal relationships
Enjoyment of teaching	Support from others
Meaningful spiritual life	Exposure to the EFL teaching profession

Personal Factors

Personal factors that shaped the experiential learning process are an interest in cultural diversity, an enjoyment of teaching, and a meaningful spiritual life.

Interest in cultural diversity.

All fifteen participants expressed an interest in cultural diversity and demonstrated that interest by living in a culture different from their own. Paul expressed that he had "always been interested in learning about other cultures and experiencing them." Tami stated her interest this way, "I think I have been interested in different cultures for a really long time." Grace, while reflecting on her time teaching in Vietnam, shared, "I think I'm really intrigued with learning about different cultures and seeing the way they perceive things differently." Holly, who left for Europe when she was 18 years old and ended up spending 10 years in France and Germany remarked:

> I have always been interested in going back overseas, and I don't relate that to a certain time but maybe all that. You know the international experience together, I think does make me tend to lean towards that a lot more than some people might.

She went on to add, "It's just fun to see people from, you know walk into your classroom one morning and see your level one Chinese student and your level one Arabic student or Palestinian student talking to each other." Having this interest in cultural diversity was common in all the

participants and was a factor that helped shape the experiential learning process that fostered their commitment to teach EFL as a career.

Enjoyment of teaching.

A second personal factor that the study found was that all the participants expressed an enjoyment in teaching. Bob discussed how his enjoyment for teaching fostered his commitment to teach EFL:

> I think, initially I was committed to it on a very, very low level. I saw it as more of an opportunity for me to interact with, ah, Chinese and Tibetans. But then the more I got into it, ah, the more I realized just what a great field it is and how much I enjoyed it as a field. Enjoyed it as a, just for what it has . . . on its own. Um, so that really deepened my commitment to it.

For Shauna, teaching EFL is something she looks forward to even though at times she may feel scared: "It's something that I enjoy and it's not something that I feel that I have to dread doing each time, even though I do get scared about teaching." Oliver links his love for teaching with whom he is:

> So, I found out that I loved teaching English. I think by nature I'm a teacher. Ah, as a child I liked to play teacher but I noticed when I am with my students, even outside of class I am teaching them.

Even in the midst of a very heavy teaching load, participants still enjoyed it. Ned shared that during one of his years of teaching in China he would teach at one school during the week, teaching "probably around 750 students," and then travel 60 miles to another school on the weekends to teach there. At this second school, he would teach "probably in the 150 to 200 category each weekend." Referring to this teaching year he stated, "so it really was a very, I

enjoyed it, but it was very taxing, you know traveling, spending the night in another school location."

For the participants of this study, enjoying teaching was a factor that helped them develop a commitment to teach EFL as a career. In spite of scary teaching moments and being over-worked, the participants continued to teach. Some perceived this enjoyment as an integral part of their nature while others grew to enjoy it as they learned more about the field of TESOL.

Meaningful spiritual life.

A third personal factor that shaped the experiential learning process was a meaningful spiritual life. Ten of the fifteen participants referred to practices or beliefs of a spiritual nature that shaped their experiential learning process.

Praying for guidance was a practice that Ned, Holly, Cathy, and Mary each mentioned. Mary entered her first EFL class having "prayed a lot." While teaching that class, with her boss as one of her students, she "had a sense of peace that was just, surpasses all understanding, and an excitement that this [i.e., teaching EFL] is it." After graduating from college with a degree in Elementary Education, Cathy was "just praying about what [she] was suppose to be doing next." As she continued to tell her story, she mentioned that she decided to pursue a Master's degree in TESOL.

In addition to praying for guidance, Holly, Shauna, Ann, and Oliver each expressed a belief that God had worked in their lives to get them where they are in teaching EFL. Shauna, when she responded to the question as to what led her to go to Macau and teach EFL, regarded that it was "just God working in my life where He, I wanted to do something different." Oliver, in his closing statement during the interview, offered this advice that reflects the role God has had in his life, "Don't say ‘no’ to God about anything. Ah, because what He has done with me in

my life, He's taken me places I thought I would never go. Or do." For Shauna and Oliver, as well as others, God had worked in their lives directing them toward the field of teaching EFL.

Another way that the participants demonstrated their meaningful spiritual life was through their expressed belief that some of their teaching abilities and practices are from God. Ned referred to his practice of asking thought-provoking questions to Chinese desirous of learning English as having come from God. This belief shaped his experiences as he describes here:

> So, I was always very active in English Corner. Uh, in fact I would go to every English corner that I could go to because one of the things that God, I think, has given me is the ability to go to a group and begin just conversation and asking questions which generate a lot of serious thought.

Ann expressed a belief that her teaching practices could be enhanced by God as He taught through her. According to her there were "countless times" while preparing lesson plans and teaching that she would pray for clarity and,

> For you know, just that God would use me even in teaching. Just to teach through me, even though yeh, it's just English, but I think He can communicate so much more through a teacher that is diligent and on track and trying their best.

In summary, having an interest in cultural diversity, finding enjoyment in teaching, and having a meaningful spiritual life contributes to the shaping of the experiential learning process that fosters a commitment to teach EFL as a career.

Contextual Factors

Factors relating to the context of the experience also shape the process. Three contextual factors the study identified are enduring interpersonal relationships, support of others, and an exposure to the EFL teaching profession.

Enduring interpersonal relationships.

Personal relationships with students, teachers, professors, friends, and relatives helped to shape the experiential learning process. Ruth identified being friends with her Chinese colleagues as a strong factor in shaping her commitment. She explains why:

> Because you talk to teachers with very different views of teaching in and of itself, and so to me it's like a whole new ball game, like a new area to explore, so I find [it] encouraging just trying to talk to teachers in China.

While talking about continuing in her teaching EFL in Inner Mongolia, Mary talked about the importance of having personal relationships with the students:

> And so uh, teaching EFL is so rewarding, because your students are so eager, so motivated and so willing to get to know you, and to uh, to teach you about their culture and their language and to have wonderful cross-cultural discussions.

Tami, one of only a few foreigners in a Mongolian town, shared that the impact of her relationships with people of that culture "are still going on today." These relationships formed shortly after her initial arrival in the foreign culture:

> I had a lot of opportunities to do things that connected me with the culture and I also started building relationships with um, my students had free time. They kinda knew the routine. They knew that the foreign teachers want to know them and so since there had

> been teachers in that place for a while ah, it didn't take long for people to start, ah, following the pattern of coming over, or meeting together.

Paul, when reflecting on what made his first two years of teaching EFL in Uzbekistan a good experience, stated, "I think it was largely the relationships that I developed, um, while I was there." Later in the interview he became more philosophical as he shared what helped motivate him to pursue teaching EFL:

> Well, one thing, you know it's so, I've compared first of all education in my mind to some other fields that I could be in, in serving overseas and thinking that one thing that is great about education is that it's all, it works towards relationship.

As Paul continued to share his thoughts, he expressed his belief that language teaching in particular is an area of education that "is all about communication" and therefore, lends itself to building relationships. For the participants of this study, having enduring interpersonal relationships with those being taught or with those living in the area helped to shape the experiential learning process of the participant.

Support from others.

A second contextual factor that helped in shaping the process was support that the participants received from others. The source of this support was from family, teachers, institutions, or the organization for which the teacher worked. Cathy referred to "family and friends" who "just supported me as a person in a new cultural context in a lot of firsts." Ned, who found the English Corners to be a wonderful place to teach and build relationships, shared that these English Corners and his presence at them had the support of the institution where he was teaching. "Actually, it is partly promoted by the school because the school also sees it as being a thing to encourage the students and give them extra opportunities to practice their English."

Kate shared an experience in which she received support from her supervising teacher at a part-time ESL teaching job she had. While at her teaching location, she learned that they were interested in developing a BA program in language teaching. Kate shares what happened next:

> I thought it was interesting. I took it up. I wrote up a very simple initial proposal. Gave it to her after spring break, and she said, "Wow, let's do it. Let's develop this. Let's look at this, whatever, but let's do it."

This support was very encouraging to Kate and consequently she continued to work on the proposal and later became the full-time director of the program she developed.

Along with several of the participants, Liz mentions the support she received from her mentor teachers during her teaching practicum. Teaching overseas in a new culture is challenging but the support Liz received helped her to succeed:

> And, just the fact that there was support, that there was a mentor teacher, even though I was overseas, there were people around me who, who could help me. I had, I had two mentor teachers when I was over there. That, I had people come and observe me. I went and observed other people. So it wasn't like I was, I was just over there by myself teaching without any support.

Grace highlighted receiving support from the parents of her Vietnamese students: "Even the parents, like the parents sincerely would do anything to help the teacher, or you know, are just so supportive of your efforts." This experience encouraged her to continue teaching in Vietnam.

Most of the support mentioned by the participants related to support demonstrated through words and approval. Ned, as he answered a question asking what support encourages

him to continue teaching, referred however, to support in the form of prayer and finances: "I also have other people who were [supporting], you know in [through] prayer and finances."

Exposure to the EFL teaching profession.

A third factor relating to the context of the experience was the participants' exposure to the EFL teaching profession. Although all the participants had this exposure to the EFL teaching profession, some specifically mentioned that this exposure shaped the experiential learning process that fostered their commitment to teach EFL as a career. Shauna, being an American-born Chinese, came to realize through her exposure to the EFL profession that bi-cultural teachers like her were needed in the field. Holly explained the impact that exposure to the EFL teaching profession through her TESOL training program had on her commitment: "Um, as for EFL commitment I think, anything, that [i.e., the commitment] came more when we, would hear . . . visiting, um, EFL teachers."

Exposure to the EFL teaching profession by way of teaching English in China caused Oliver to see that having a commitment to teach EFL would, for him, mean additional education. He talked about this as a confrontation: "Yeh, confronted with the ah, with the reality that I should know more than what I do. This is a, you know at this level of education you should be highly professional." After becoming aware of this reality, he entered an MA TESOL program. Bob's exposure to the EFL teaching profession also led him to further studies. While teaching English in the U.S. and reflecting on his future of teaching in China, he began to realize his inadequacies for teaching EFL. This realization drove him to further studies. He describes the experience this way:

> [Teaching ESL] was very frustrating. And, so that drove me to, I guess that raised my awareness of my incompetence . . . ah, when I thought about teaching in China being responsible for a classroom, I just knew I didn't have what it took.

In summary, the two sets of factors that shaped the experiential learning process that fostered the participants' commitment to teach EFL as a career were personal factors and contextual factors. Personal factors that shaped the process were interest in cultural diversity, enjoyment of teaching, and a meaningful spiritual life. The factors relating to the context of the experience were enduring interpersonal relationships, receiving support from others, and exposure to the EFL teaching profession. These factors did not carry the same weight of influence in shaping the experience of each participant. Some participants identified one factor as having greater significance than other factors. For example, a factor identified by Doug, as having a strong influence was his relationship with his wife. Kate, however, refers to her love for teaching languages as being a strong factor: "I do it because I love it, because I love languages." Some other factors that influenced individual participants more so than other factors were a steady reliance upon God, being a third-culture-kid, and having financial debt.

Summary

This study sought to address the problem as to how learning experiences foster commitment to a career in teaching EFL. The data analysis identified a number of findings related to this problem. The study found that the participants constructed their commitment to teach EFL as a career in three ways: in relationship to other commitments they held, with a focus on other's development, and in alignment with their own personality and abilities.

Impacting this commitment to teach EFL as a career were learning experiences of both a formal and an informal nature. Informal learning experiences were either self-directed or

incidental. One formal learning experience that the study required of all the participants was the experiential learning component or the teacher-training practicum. This component was a part of the participants' formal TESOL training. The study found that this experiential learning component enhanced the knowledge of the participants in the areas of personal identity, cultural awareness, and TESOL methodology. The experiential learning component furthermore fostered the commitment to teach EFL as a career by developing the participants' skill to teach more professionally.

As for the experiential learning process that fosters a person's commitment to teach EFL as a career, the study found that multiple embedded reflective learning cycles were central to the process. The experiential learning process began early in the participants' life progressing, for most participants, in a sequential manner from developing an awareness of cultural diversity, through immersion into a different culture, and on to formal TESOL training. Personal factors, such as an interest in cultural diversity and a meaningful spiritual life shaped the experiential learning process. Also contributing to shaping the process were three contextual factors: enduring interpersonal relationships with people such as students and peer teachers, support from others such as mentor teachers and family members, and exposure to the EFL teaching profession. Based on these findings the next chapter presents the conclusions, implications, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify learning experiences that foster commitment to a career in teaching EFL. The research questions that guided this study were (a) How do participants construct their commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career? (b) What types of learning experiences have impacted a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career? (c) How has an experiential learning component of a formal teacher-training program fostered a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career? (d) What is the experiential learning process that fosters a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career? and (e) What factors have shaped the learning process?

Fifteen participants were purposely selected for this basic qualitative study. In-depth interviews were conducted with each of the participants; two were telephone interviews and thirteen were face-to-face interviews. These interviews provided the primary data for the study. The constant comparative method for analyzing the data was used and member-checking confirmed the findings. In this chapter, conclusions, implications for practice, and suggestions for future research are presented.

Conclusions

Two conclusions as to how learning experiences foster commitment to a career in teaching EFL are drawn from this study. One conclusion is that career commitment to teaching EFL is a developmental process that occurs within a supportive environment. A second

conclusion is that learning experiences are central to the process that fosters commitment to a career in teaching EFL.

Conclusion One: Career Commitment to Teaching EFL is a Developmental Process that Occurs Within a Supportive Environment

Traversing throughout the world today are EFL teachers who invest a short time in one location to teach English. Although governments and institutions continue to employ these short-term EFL teachers, language programs and students alike can benefit from EFL teachers committed long-term. Johnston's (1997, 1999) qualitative study on 17 EFL teachers in Poland revealed that the commitment of the participant was "day-to-day" (1999, p. 275). According to Johnston, the "long-term features of professionalism . . . including a lifelong commitment to the particular job" (p. 275) were absent. In contrast to this, all my participants were looking at no less than two to three more years of teaching EFL. Some, like Mary, were specific, "I'm not in this for a two year commitment. I'm very open to staying long term." Ruth referred to teaching EFL as her "career" and Bob is looking at learning the Tibetan or Mandarin language and becoming a faculty member in a Chinese university.

Johnston (1997) also stated that "no teacher made any discursive appeal to a 'calling'" (p. 695). In contrast to Johnston's study, my study included five participants who specifically referred to the concept of being "called" or "chosen" to teach EFL. Johnston's (1997) study further "suggests that assumptions about . . . the possibility of careers in this field are highly questionable. It serves as a prompt to look beyond the classroom for an understanding of how teachers' lives develop" (p. 707). In response to Johnston's call to look beyond the classroom for how teachers' lives develop, this study makes the conclusion that career commitment to teaching

EFL is a developmental process that occurs within a supportive environment of variables and factors.

The findings demonstrate that the career commitment is a developmental process. The fostering of a commitment to a career in teaching EFL takes place over time, from developing an awareness of cultural diversity to developing a knowledge of the EFL field through formal EFL teacher-training. Embedded in this developing process is the reflective learning cycle; itself a four-stage process that happens multiple times throughout a learner's life as the learner reflects on a concrete experience. The learner first encounters a concrete experience, then contemplates in a general way about the experience. Third, the learner thinks about the experience in terms of his/her life, and then integrates the learning into his/her practices and beliefs.

Johnston's (1999) study would seem to contradict my findings. Johnston concluded from his 1994 study of the life histories of 17 EFL teachers in Poland that "life history narratives were fragmentary and lacking in progression" (p. 259). In contrast to Johnston's (1997, 1999) findings, my study provides evidence of a progression from an awareness of cultural diversity, through immersion into a cross-cultural context, and on to formal TESOL training. A possible reason for the difference in the findings may be due to the unstable socio-political context from which and in which the majority of Johnston's participants were situated. Twelve of the 17 participants were Poles teaching in their own country. Johnston (1997) conducted his interviews "5 years after the fall of communism in Poland" (p. 688). In describing the context of Poland at this time he states, "The Poland of today looks hardly anything like the Poland of 10 years ago. Virtually every aspect of the society has changed, from the economy and the political system to the lifestyles of families and individuals" (p. 688). This unstable environment, lasting several years, may be a

contributing factor as to why the life history narratives "were fragmentary and lacking progression."

A second reason for the difference in findings might be that the first two life stages identified in my participants (i.e., developing awareness to cultural diversity, immersion) are apparently absent in the lives of Polish teachers of English. Johnston does not highlight such an exposure to and an immersion in diverse cultures by the Polish teachers. For my participants these two stages were evident and demonstrated a progression in their lives leading towards a commitment to a career in teaching EFL.

Much of the literature describes learning as a process (e.g., Boud & Walker, 1995, 1996; Fenwick, 2001; Jarvis, 1987b; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1991; Saddington, 1992). A part of this process is reflection. Schön (1983, 1987) and Brookfield (1995) provide a good foundation for the understanding of reflection in the learning process. Other writers incorporate reflection into their models of learning. Kolb's (1984) model identifies reflection as one of the four concepts of the model. Boud and Walker (1992) affirm that reflection and experience cannot be separated in the learning process. Jarvis' (1995) model of experiential learning demonstrates three routes from an experience that involve reflection. Other models such as those represented in the writings of Hutchings and Wutzdorff (1988), and Hunt (1987) also incorporate the element of reflection.

In addition to reflection, another aspect of the experiential learning process identified in this study is that the process, particularly in regards to reflection, involves a personalizing of the experience. Tami, for example, spent some time investigating the career options that might be open to her, one of them being TESOL. While investigating, her reflection became personalized and she concluded that teaching EFL "would seem to suit me very well." This personalizing of

the experience, although not seen as strongly in the literature as the concepts of linkage between experiences and reflection, is also discussed in the literature.

Weil and McGill (1989b) include this personalizing of the experience in their description of four villages in which experiential learning is used. In their *Village Four* the use of experiential learning is for personal growth and development. In other literature, Boud and Walker (1992) describe reflection as including, among other things, intervening. They define intervening as "action taken by the learners . . . which can affect the . . . learners themselves (including learners acting on themselves)" (pp. 167-168). Prochazka (1995) makes inference to this personalizing of the learning when he identifies the fourth stage of learning as being internalized. A final example from the literature that infers this personalizing of the learning process comes from Jarvis (1995). Jarvis talks about learning as being a "matter . . . of modifying the individual biography" (p. 67). He continues by stating that the learning experience is "not merely of something external, but of the fusing of the external with the individual biography" (p. 67).

An aspect of this first conclusion is that the developmental process occurs within a supportive environment of variables and factors. The variables are (a) in relationship to other commitments, (b) with a focus on other's development, and (c) in alignment with personality and abilities. The factors that influence the career commitment process are both personal and contextual. The personal factors identified in this study are (a) an interest in cultural diversity, (b) enjoyment of teaching, and (c) a meaningful spiritual life. The contextual factors are (a) enduring personal relationships, (b) support from others, and (c) exposure to the EFL teaching profession.

This first conclusion confirms the literature on career development and choice. Guiding this discussion is literature drawn from the developmental theory of Super, the trait and factor theory of Holland, and the social learning theory of Krumboltz.

Super's Life-span, Life-space Theory

Pertinent to this first conclusion is Super's Norman arch. The Norman arch portrays factors that influence career development and choice with the two columns representing a different set of factors; one set being biographical (e.g., needs, values, intelligence) and the other set being geographical (e.g., society, school, family, the economy) (Osborne, 1997). In my study, the variables supporting the construction of the commitment that align with the biographical column are (a) in relationship to other commitments, and (b) in alignment with personality and abilities. Factors impacting the process of this construction that also fit into this biographical column are the personal factors (i.e., an interest in cultural diversity, enjoyment of teaching, and a meaningful spiritual life). In the geographical column of Super's Norman arch the variable of focusing on other's development would find its place. Joining this variable in this geographical column are the contextual factors that influence the process of constructing the commitment (i.e., enduring personal relationships, support from others, and exposure to the EFL teaching profession).

Super's theory noticeably represents a developmental process that takes place throughout the life of an individual from birth to death. The participants of my study confirm this lifelong process by identifying learning experiences from childhood (e.g., listening as a child to culturally diverse stories at bedtime) to adulthood (e.g., having a Vietnamese foster son).

The first three stages of Super's developmental process are also confirmed by my study. In the Growth Stage, experiences provide a "background of knowledge of the world of work that

ultimately will be used in tentative choices and in final selections" (Isaacson & Brown, 2000, p. 31). All the participants in my study had experiences that developed in them a knowledge of the cultural diversity of the world in which they live. Cathy exemplifies this in her sharing about the "different people from different cultures" in her home during her growing up years. These experiences lead her to conclude, "I had that early love for different people and different parts of the world." Eventually this love would be used to direct her into teaching English as a foreign language in Mongolia.

Data from my study that confirm the second stage of Super's process, the Exploratory Stage, is that all the participants immersed themselves in a culture different from their own. During this immersion, the participants were able to narrow down their career options and identify some of their abilities and preferences. Mary's time in Russia is a good example of this. During this time, she learned that she could live in a culture different from her own and still hold her core values. She realized that after four months in Russia she would probably be living abroad.

Super's third stage, the Establishment Stage is also confirmed by the findings of this study. During this stage the individual has "encounters within actual work experiences" (Isaacson & Brown, 2000, p. 31). An example of this is the affirming and solidifying effect that the experiential learning component of the TESOL teacher-training program had on the participants.

The developmental perspective offered by Super's theory in respect to the Norman arch, the process taking place throughout the life of the individual, and the first three stages of his career development process are confirmed by my study. In addition to Super's theory, elements of Holland's trait and factor theory are also confirmed by my study.

Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice

A characteristic of Holland's theory is the importance placed upon the interaction of the personal traits with the various factors of the environment (Isaacson & Brown, 2000). As the personality interacts with the environment, congruency is sought. The seeking of congruency between the personal traits of the individual and the environment is confirmed by the data of this study. The participants of my study constructed their commitment to teaching EFL as this commitment came into congruency with (a) their other commitments, (b) their interests in other's development, and (c) their own personality and abilities. This congruency between the individual and the environment is portrayed in the data through the use of phrases such as "it matches my . . . abilities and my gifts," "it's very well-suited for my personality," and "teaching language would fit for me."

The variables, which support the participants' construction of their commitment, and the factors that influence the experiential learning process, align well with Spokane's (1996) description of Holland's theory. In discussing Holland's theory, Spokane states that as persons live out their lives, they search for environments that will allow them to do three things. One is that they will search for an environment that will "let them exercise their skills and abilities" (p. 39). My study shows that the participants' commitment to a career in teaching EFL is fostered in the context of a supportive environment that aligns with their personality and abilities. Their commitment to teach EFL was congruent with their personality and abilities. The environment of teaching EFL also allows the participants to exercise a personal factor that shapes the experiential learning process: enjoyment of teaching.

A second thing individuals seek for in their environment is that they can "express their attitudes and values" (p. 39). My study shows that the participants believed they could express

their attitudes and values through the environment of teaching EFL. The variable of constructing their commitment in relationship to other commitments demonstrates this belief. These other commitments represent values they hold. Some of the values the participants hold are a value of religious faith, of cross-cultural living, of a spouse, and of building relationships. The participants were able to live out these other commitments or values in the environment of teaching EFL. Supporting this variable is a personal factor that helps shape the career commitment process. This personal factor is having an interest in cultural diversity.

The third thing that individuals seek in their environment is that they can "take on agreeable problems and interests" (p. 39). This aspect of Spokane's description of Holland's theory corresponds to the variable of focusing on other's development. Through this variable, the participants are able to help people through problems; problems that are of personal interest to the study's participant. Related to this variable is the contextual factor of having exposure to the EFL teaching profession. Through this exposure, the participant interacts with problems and interests relating to the teaching of English as a foreign language; an interest in which they find enjoyment.

Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) critique Holland's theory stating that the theory explains that people look for a congruent environment but it fails to "explain how or why they develop their . . . orientation to begin with" (p. 105). The findings of my study add to the literature by explaining that finding congruency between ones traits and the environment is through a developmental process of learning experiences that are embedded within a supportive environment of variables and factors.

In summary, the variables and factors that support the construction of a commitment to a career in teaching EFL correspond with, and thereby confirm, the three things identified in

Holland's theory that individuals seek as their personal traits interact with the environment. The findings also add to the literature on Holland's theory by providing a process through which congruency is found. A third theory related to career development and choice is the social learning theory of Krumboltz.

Krumboltz' Social Learning Theory

Krumboltz' identification of four factors or variables that influence career decision making is germane to the first conclusion of this study. His first factor is the genetic endowments and special abilities of the individual (Isaacson & Brown, 2000). This factor aligns with one of the variables that supports the construction of a commitment to the field of teaching EFL. This variable is that the construction of a commitment is in alignment with the individual's personality and abilities. An acknowledgement made by Ann can be an inference to teaching as a genetic endowment. She states that being a teacher "is what I am." In another interview, Grace refers to teaching as matching her abilities and gifts. Her use of the word "gifts" may be a reference to an ability she was born with (i.e., a genetic endowment), but this was not followed up in the interview. Grace further stated that teaching EFL was "well-suited for my personality." Krumboltz' factor of genetic endowments and special abilities is confirmed by this study.

The second factor identified by Krumboltz' theory that influences career decision making is the environmental conditions and events that the individual faces (Isaacson & Brown, 2000). This factor is confirmed by the contextual factors that shape the experiential learning process that fosters a commitment to a career in teaching EFL. These contextual factors are enduring interpersonal relationships with students and peer teachers, support from others such as supervisors and parents of students, and exposure to the EFL teaching profession through actual teaching experiences.

The third factor influencing career decision making in Krumboltz' theory is various learning experiences encountered throughout life. Isaacson and Brown (2000) state that "Krumboltz sees the individual as constantly encountering learning experiences" (p. 39). This factor is strongly confirmed by this study as represented in the experiential learning process where the participant encounters multiple embedded learning experiences throughout his/her life.

The fourth factor that influences career decisions is also confirmed by this study. This factor refers to the skills that the individual has to address a task or problem. In this study, these skills are identified as being acquired during the experiential learning component of the TESOL teacher-training program, and during other teacher-training experiences.

The four factors of Krumboltz' Social Learning Theory that influence career decision making are confirmed by this study. In the construction of a commitment to a career in teaching EFL, variables and factors interact in a supportive manner, confirming Krumboltz' theory. This process makes the commitment long-term.

In summary, the findings of this study, relative to this first conclusion, contrast with the findings of Johnston's 1994 study in which he found no career commitments among the 17 EFL teachers he interviewed. In addition, in contrast to his study, this study had participants who referred to a "calling" to the field of teaching EFL. The study further confirms the important role of reflection in the developmental process that fosters career commitment to teaching EFL. The study adds to the literature by reinforcing the importance of making the reflection personal. In addition, the study adds to the knowledge base of experiential learning and EFL career development by identifying a model that incorporates both areas of study. This model incorporates the existence of a progression of development, among EFL teachers, in the fostering of their commitment to teach EFL. The conclusion that career commitment to teaching EFL is a

developmental process that occurs within a supportive environment confirms and adds to the literature on career development and choice, specifically the literature relating to Super, Holland, and Krumboltz.

Conclusion Two: Learning Experiences are Central to the Process that Fosters Commitment to a Career in Teaching EFL

The findings of this study identified two types or categories of learning experiences that are central to the process that fosters commitment to a career in teaching EFL: formal and informal. Formal learning experiences (e.g., Holly studying German in high school and learning that she liked it) are characterized by learning in formal educational institutions such as elementary schools or universities. Informal learning experiences, characterized by being self-directed or incidental, were diverse. An example of informal learning experiences of an incidental nature is Cathy learning about different cultures from people visiting and staying for short periods of time in her home when she was a child.

Merriam and Caffarella (1999) identify three contexts in which adult learning takes place: "formal institutional settings, nonformal settings, and informal or self-directed contexts" (p. 26). Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) refer to experiences being formal or informal. Usher (1993) highlights a distinction between learning from experience, which is more of an everyday informal experience, and experiential learning, which is a formal way of discussing and theorizing about learning from experience. Marsick and Watkins (1990) discuss informal or incidental learning experiences while acknowledging the existence of formal learning experiences.

Another type of learning experience identified in the literature is self-directed learning where the learning is planned and directed by the individual learner. While self-directed learning

has often been "used interchangeably with informal learning" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 32) the literature shows a deep reservoir of literature specifically given to the understanding of self-directed learning. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) devote a chapter to self-directed learning in which they discuss the various goals and models of this type of learning experience. An example of self-directed learning in this study comes from Mary using the Internet to learn about new ideas in teaching methods.

This study also involved understanding how an experiential learning component of a formal TESOL teacher-training program fostered a commitment to the field of teaching EFL. The study found that this formal learning experience fostered the student's commitment to teach EFL through enhancing the knowledge base of the learner and developing his/her TESOL skills. This finding confirms Marso's (1971) conclusion drawn from his research on 37 students enrolled in a non-TESOL teacher preparation course. He concluded that the experience of observing and teaching in the classroom during a student's formal teacher-training program will help them "feel more prepared to become a teacher" (p. 198).

Also relating to an experiential learning component or internship with career choice and development is Neapolitan's (1992) study of 30 students majoring in sociology. One of his conclusions was that the formal learning experience had "a significant effect on improving career choice certainty" (p. 226). Participants of my study stated that the experiential learning component "encouraged," "affirmed," and/or "solidified" their commitment.

Corresponding to the types of learning experiences identified by the participants in this research (i.e., formal and informal learning experiences) is the finding that the learning experiences were linked together over time in fostering a commitment to teach EFL as a career. When I inquired of the participants as to learning experiences they had that fostered their

commitment to teach EFL they recalled a variety of experiences that occurred throughout their life. Doug linked "ongoing contact and exposure to internationals" in the U.S. with taking a trip to Japan for a summer. These two experiences were further linked to his TESOL training at Hamlin University in Minnesota. This aspect of the learning experiences being linked confirms the literature on learning experiences.

Dewey (1938), for example, emphasizes that for an experience to be educative it must have continuity and interaction. Continuity is relative to our discussion in that for an experience to be educative it must take up "something from those [experiences] that have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (p. 35). Knowles' (1978) second principle of andragogy describes a maturing adult as accumulating "an expanding reservoir of experience that causes him [*sic*] to become an increasingly rich resource for learning" (p. 56). Boud, Cohen, and Walker (1993) describe a learning experience as being "inextricably connected with other experiences" (p. 7). Jarvis (1995), in describing what he identifies as primary and secondary experiences, states that primary experiences occur "only in the light of previous experiences" (p. 66). Bateson (1994) describes learning experiences as spiraling in such a way that previous lessons are reinterpreted from a different perspective. As formal and informal learning experiences link together over time, a process takes place that fosters a commitment to a career in teaching EFL. These formal and informal learning experiences are central to the process that fosters commitment to a career in teaching EFL.

Although much of the findings relating to this conclusion confirm the literature about learning experiences, what the findings add to the literature is an identified process in which learning experiences are central to fostering commitment to a career in teaching English as a foreign language. Kolb (1984) suggests that experiential learning can be applied to lifelong

learning and career development. This study supplies a model in which Kolb's suggested application is demonstrated. van Aalst (1979) acknowledges that "an affinity exists between experiential education and career development" (p. ix). My study confirms this affinity through the findings relating to the experiential learning component of the formal TESOL teacher-training program. In addition, the findings expand the affinity to include not only learning in association with an educational institution (i.e., formal learning experiences) but also learning experientially throughout one's life through informal learning experiences. Learning experiences throughout life, both formal and informal, are central to the process that fosters commitment to a career in teaching EFL.

In summary, the second conclusion drawn from this study is that learning experiences are central to the process that fosters commitment to a career in teaching EFL. In reference to this conclusion, this study confirms the literature on formal and informal learning experiences and the role they play in career choice and development. The study further confirms the linkage between learning experiences in the process that fosters career commitment to teaching EFL. The study adds to the literature on learning experiences a process model that has learning experiences as central to the process.

Implications for Practice

Four implications for practice are drawn from this study. Two of the implications relate to the training of prospective EFL teachers. The other two implications relate to the hiring and securing of EFL teachers by organizations and educational institutions.

Training Prospective EFL Teachers

One implication for practice drawn from this study is that EFL teacher-training programs need to guide students to make their reflection on learning experiences personal. The findings of

this study show that the reflective learning process that fosters a commitment to teaching EFL involves reflecting or contemplating on an experience in a personalizing manner. This is seeking to understand how the experience relates to the individual's life. In the interview with Grace, she describes how one of her teachers helped her to apply her learning to her own life through a reflective process. Grace was taking a course in language arts during her undergraduate studies towards a degree in elementary education. Her teacher knew that Grace was interested in teaching ESL/EFL and in Grace's words, "she just so much encouraged my desire to be in EFL." In describing how she did this, Grace stated that "she would always ask me questions, like, 'How does this apply to the ESL setting?' . . . She just knew that that was my goal and so . . . she would kinda challenge me to think beyond."

As EFL teachers-in-training reflect on their experiences they need to go beyond reflecting in a general manner as to how an experience would apply to others or the field of teaching EFL in general. They need to ask questions such as, How does what I am learning inform my teaching? What could I do to implement this in my classroom? What do I need to change in my behavior that would better place me in a position to excel in this area? Brookfield (1995, 2000) has written much on reflection, particularly as it pertains to the field of teaching, and can give guidance to the teacher and teacher-in-training who wants reflection to be more personal.

The second implication for practice is that EFL teacher-training programs need to incorporate cross-cultural learning experiences for all their teachers-in-training. Characterizing these experiences is the teacher-in-training immersing him/herself into a culture different from his/her own. In many situations, this immersion experience will include teaching English as a foreign language. The findings of this study demonstrate that immersion into a different culture is part of the process that leads to a commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career.

Furthermore, when the immersion involves teaching EFL, the teacher is confronted with concrete experiences in teaching EFL. Through reflecting on these concrete experiences, the teacher becomes more knowledgeable and skilled in teaching English in a cross-cultural setting. Ned explained that he had to "learn how to use the chalkboards better. You have to learn how to do things in class that you are limited to use. . . . You're using their resources, you're using their system." Liz shared an experience she had in the classroom in China. During one of the activities she prepared for the class, the situation became "absolute chaos." The reason she gave for this was "they [the Chinese students] were used to a very rigid, um, you know, sitting at your desk kind of learning." When I asked her what she did, she replied, "I learned I had to talk them through it maybe, and show them a model." Through concrete experiences in the EFL classroom knowledge is gained and skills are developed.

Preparatory to this immersion experience, simulated or virtual learning experiences can be designed and implemented in the formal teacher-training classroom. In these experiences the cross-cultural teaching environment would be staged or set-up. Some possible scenarios would be that students role-play as students from a different culture(s), tables and chairs be imagined as being in a permanent location, and a non-English language be incorporated into the class dynamics. The benefit of this type of experience would be that by placing learning in a safe and lower-risk context the student's knowledge and self-confidence develops before a "real-world" experience. This environment can also allow for interaction with the teacher through discussion and reflection times on cross-cultural issues related to teaching EFL. These issues may include topics such as classroom management, conflict resolution, communication challenges, and current topics in the field of TESOL (e.g., linguistic imperialism, native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers, using the native language of the student in

the classroom or not, and culturally diverse learning styles). Discussing these issues in a formal teacher-training class provides the advantage of having time to discuss the issues before the student is confronted with them in an actual teaching context. Shauna shared that during her EFL teaching practicum she was so busy with lesson planning and teaching that she had little time to reflect on issues she was facing. Only when she returned to the teacher-training classroom, following her practicum, was she able to discuss the issues.

These simulated or virtual learning experiences need to link with teaching English in a cross-cultural context. The cross-cultural teaching experiences can take the form of internships or practicums where the learning is supervised and the student has access to a mentor. The mentor may be on-site or at a distance. If at a distance, technology (e.g., e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms) can help to bring the supervisor / mentor closer to the student. Mary had an on-site mentor who, over the course of practicum, pointed out to her that she had a "nanny voice" and challenged Mary to make adjustments in her teaching voice. Mary shared that "I so welcomed being humbled and being able to have someone honestly observe me . . . and give me point by point feedback."

Teacher-training programs can, in addition, encourage students to involve themselves in cross-cultural immersion experiences whether or not they teach EFL. The data of this study show that multiple cross-cultural immersion experiences are beneficial in fostering a commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career.

In summary, the study identified two implications for practice that apply to the training of EFL teachers. One implication is that teacher-trainers need to guide their students to make their reflection on the learning experiences personal. A second implication is that EFL teacher-training programs incorporate cross-cultural learning experiences for their students. The second

set of implications drawn from this study relates to the hiring and securing of EFL teachers by organizations and educational institutions.

Hiring and Securing EFL Teachers

Organizations and educational institutions that are looking to hire EFL teachers committed to a career in teaching EFL need to consider the personal factors identified in this study when interviewing applicants. The personal factors identified in this study are (a) an interest in cultural diversity, (b) an enjoyment of teaching, and (c) a meaningful spiritual life. All the participants of this study acknowledged an interest in cultural diversity. To identify an interest in cultural diversity of a prospective EFL teacher, the interviewing agent can inquire as to any evidence of such an interest. Based on the experiences of the participants in this study, the agent would want to prod for positive answers to the following questions: Has the interest in cultural diversity been felt for several years? Is there a sense of intrigue or fascination with diverse cultures? Has the individual lived in a culture different from his or her own for at least two to three months? Has the prospective teacher spent time in more than one culture?

Just as all the participants in this study had an interest in cultural diversity so did they all enjoy teaching. Drawing from the data in this study, questions that may be useful in identifying this enjoyment of teaching are: Does the participant express a joy of teaching? In referring to his/her feelings towards teaching does the participant use terms such as, "enjoyment," and "love?" An amount of flexibility needs to be exercised here as the data shows that, for some, this enjoyment increased with active involvement in teaching EFL. Another avenue can be taken to discern the enjoyment of teaching. This is to inquire as to examples in his or her teaching where problems and challenges were encountered but the prospective EFL teacher pressed on and did not quit. This inquiry could be in the form of questions asked directly to the prospective teacher

or to a previous employer. Some participants in my study expressed being scared or overworked but they continued teaching, and found enjoyment in doing so.

The third personal factor that shapes the experiential learning process that fosters commitment to a career in teaching EFL is a meaningful spiritual life. Of the 15 participants in the study, 10 referred to practices or beliefs of a spiritual nature that shaped the learning process. In pursuing prospective EFL teachers with a commitment to the field as a career, organizations and educational institutions may want to investigate the role that the spiritual plays in the life of the prospective teacher. Should an organization or institution feel it is appropriate to pursue this personal factor, several questions could be asked based on the responses of the participants in this study. What evidence can the person supply demonstrating he/she regularly seeks for spiritual guidance in making decisions? Does he/she have a practice of spiritual disciplines such as praying? Does he/she attribute any of his/her teaching abilities or skills to God?

In summary, based on the findings of this study, organizations and educational institutions seeking EFL teachers that possess a commitment to a career in teaching EFL should inquire into the following personal factors: an interest in cultural diversity, an enjoyment of teaching, and where appropriate, meaningful spiritual life. Questions specific to the findings of this study can be used to ascertain the degree to which these factors are evidenced in the life of a prospective EFL teacher.

A second implication for organizations and educational institutions that desire to facilitate a long-term commitment by their EFL teachers is that they need to address the contextual factors identified in this study. The contextual factors identified in this study are (a) having enduring interpersonal relationships, (b) receiving support from others, and (c) having exposure to the EFL teaching profession. These three factors impact the experiential learning

process that fosters a commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career. Organizations and educational institutions desirous of having their EFL teachers remain teaching with them should try to satisfy these contextual factors to the best of their ability.

The first contextual factor is that EFL teachers have enduring personal relationships. The organization or educational institution should seek to provide opportunities for their EFL teachers to interact with students outside of the formal classroom. English Corners, prevalent among some universities in China, are an example of this type of opportunity. EFL teachers should also have opportunities to interact with national teachers in order to establish friendships and share different views of teaching. Allowing EFL teachers to have time in their schedule to invite or host nationals in their home or apartment is another way that this contextual factor is addressed. EFL teachers can also use this time to spend with nationals outside of the classroom connecting with the culture.

The second contextual factor is that EFL teachers receive support from others. To address this contextual factor, the organization or institution can help by facilitating the EFL teacher having access to e-mail, should that be available in the area. This would be so that the EFL teacher can remain in contact with supportive family members, friends, and colleagues. Another way that this factor can be addressed is by encouraging the supervisors of the EFL teachers to provide appropriate and timely words of encouragement and support. Kate found that this verbal support was very encouraging and strengthened her desire to continue teaching. Liz found that having people around her that could help was very beneficial. An institution could provide individuals that would be available to help the EFL teacher when questions and problems arise. In addition to the ways mentioned to this point, an organization or educational institution could also see that those who were in positions to notice the English language development of the EFL

teacher's students be introduced to the teacher. Grace found receiving support from the parents of her Vietnamese students to be very encouraging.

The last contextual factor is that EFL teachers are exposed to the EFL teaching profession. For some of the participants in this study, being exposed to the EFL teaching profession helped to foster their commitment. Often this exposure created a desire to know more about teaching and address problems they were facing in their teaching. For Oliver, he described his exposure to the EFL teaching profession as having raised his awareness of his own "incompetence." This awareness drove him to want to know more. Organizations could address this contextual factor by providing incentives for professional development and having guest EFL teachers come and provide workshops or seminars for the EFL teachers. Shauna specifically mentioned hearing visiting teachers as one way her commitment was fostered.

In summary, organizations and educational institutions that have a desire for EFL teachers committed to teaching English as a career can be helped by the findings of this study. By addressing the personal factors the hiring agency can be helped in ascertaining the level of commitment a prospective EFL teacher has. Having an interest in cultural diversity, enjoying teaching, and possibly having a meaningful spiritual life are personal factors the hiring agency would want to be looking for. By addressing the contextual factors the organization or educational institution that employs or uses EFL teachers can hope to facilitate their EFL teachers to remain with them for a longer time. Organizations using EFL teachers can aid in fostering a long-term commitment by providing opportunities for the EFL teacher to establish enduring relationships. The organization can also show concern that the EFL teacher receives support from friends, family, and fellow teachers. Finally, organizations can help develop an EFL teacher's long-term commitment by providing opportunities for the teacher to be exposed to

the EFL professional field. In addition to the two conclusions drawn from the findings of this study, and in addition to the four implications for practice, there are suggestions for future research.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study focused on how learning experiences foster a commitment to a career in teaching EFL. After reviewing the findings, two conclusions were drawn. One conclusion is that career commitment to teaching EFL is a developmental process that occurs within a supportive environment. A second conclusion is that learning experiences are central to the process that fosters commitment to a career in teaching EFL. During the process of data collection and data analysis concerns surfaced that are suggestions for future research. The six suggestions that follow build upon the findings and conclusions of this study.

1. Variables and factors that were found in this research fostered the commitment to be long-term. Further research can examine EFL teachers who teach EFL on a short-term basis to see if these findings are the same. In addition, the findings can be compared to see if learning experiences are similar and if the ERLC, if present, supports the same three-stage progression.

2. Fourteen of the fifteen participants of this study held a Master's degree in TESOL and all participated in a formal TESOL practicum. Further research might include participants with less formal training in TESOL, yet have been in the field for over two years.

3. An implication of this study is that organizations and educational institutions need to facilitate a supportive environment if they desire to have EFL teachers remain with them on a long-term basis. Further research might examine what supports, if any, short term TESOL teachers had before withdrawing from the field.

4. All the participants of this study communicated a commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career. Although they all are continuing their involvement in the field of TESOL, the longest any of the participants had been in the field of teaching EFL at the time of his interview was seven years. Further research can test the vitality of an expressed commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career by researching, in a longitudinal manner, if teachers maintain a commitment to the field of TESOL.

5. The experiential learning process model uncovered in this study might be applied to other careers. According to Osborne (1997), Donald Super, the career choice and development theorist, expressed a desire before his death that all major career development theorists would come together and draw up an integrated view of the process. Further research can test the experiential learning process model developed in this study with other careers to see if an experiential learning process provides the integrated view of career development that Super desired would be formed.

6. An interesting type of learning experience identified in this study is spiritual learning. The participants of this study described spiritual learning experiences when they prayed asking God to guide them and teach them what they should do. Further research into spiritual learning experiences can address concerns such as: how adults learn through spiritual experiences; and how spiritual learning experiences compare to formal, nonformal, and informal learning experiences.

Summary

In researching how learning experiences foster commitment to a career in teaching EFL, two conclusions are drawn. The conclusions confirm and add to the literature. One conclusion is that career commitment to teaching EFL is a developmental process that occurs within a

supportive environment. Two themes in the literature are confirmed by the findings relative to this conclusion: learning as a developmental process, and the role of reflection in the learning process. The findings add to the literature by reinforcing the personalizing of reflection, by identifying a model that incorporates both experiential learning and EFL career development, and by providing a process through which congruency between an individual and his/her environment is found. This conclusion is set in contrast to Johnston's (1997, 1999) study that found no career commitments and no reference to a "calling" among the participating EFL teachers.

The second conclusion is that learning experiences are central to the process that fosters commitment to a career in teaching EFL. This second conclusion confirms the literature on formal and informal learning experiences, the role learning experiences play in career choice and development, and the linkage between learning experiences. The conclusion adds to this literature a process model in which learning experiences are central to the fostering of a career commitment to teaching EFL.

Two implications for practice drawn from this study pertain to training EFL teachers, and two implications pertain to organizations and educational institutions that desire to hire and secure EFL teachers who are committed to a career in teaching EFL. Pertaining to the training of EFL teachers, teacher-training programs need to guide students to personalize their reflection on concrete experiences. These programs also need to incorporate cross-cultural learning experiences for the students matriculating in the TESOL program. As for organizations and educational institutions desirous of hiring EFL teachers, they can be benefited by investigating the personal factors of having an interest in cultural diversity, enjoying teaching, and where appropriate, having a meaningful spiritual life. This investigation takes place during the hiring

process. Once the EFL teacher is hired, the organization or institution would do well to address the contextual factors of enduring relationships, receiving support from others, and having exposure to the EFL professional field.

In addition to these implications, I suggest future research to test the findings of this study. New research can confirm or add to this study by focusing on short-term EFL teachers, participants who do not hold a Master's degree in TESOL, or EFL teachers who withdraw from the EFL teaching profession. In contrast to this study, which sought to identify past learning experiences that fostered the participants' commitment to the field of EFL, a longitudinal study of teachers who maintain a commitment to the field of EFL would expand the findings of this research. The experiential learning process model of this study is limited to EFL teachers. Research to see if this model could be applied to other careers is worth pursuing. A final suggestion for future research is to research spiritual learning experiences and compare them to formal, nonformal, and informal learning experiences identified in the literature.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

A. Types of learning experiences

(Research Question: What types of learning experiences have impacted a person's entrance into the field of teaching EFL as a career?)

1. Describe your present EFL teaching situation.
2. Tell me about what has led you into the field of teaching EFL.
3. What experiences have you had that motivated you to pursue an EFL teaching career?
4. What experiences have you had that caused you to question your pursuit of an EFL teaching career?
5. Tell me about an early life experience that you feel prepared you for considering teaching EFL as a career.

B. How the experiential learning component facilitates entrance into teaching EFL

(Research Question: How has an experiential learning component of a formal teacher-training program facilitated a person's entrance into the field of teaching EFL as a career?)

1. If I had been in the program with you, what would I have seen you doing?
2. What were your emotions as you anticipated teaching in the program?
3. Could you walk me through one of your early teaching experiences of the program?
4. Describe your feelings towards teaching EFL at the end of the program.
5. What experience within the program confirmed in your mind that teaching EFL was right for you?

C. The experiential learning process

(Research Question: What is the experiential learning process that facilitates a person's entrance into the field of teaching EFL as a career?)

1. Could you tell me about the first time you remember thinking about teaching EFL?
2. What experiences would you identify as being key in bringing you to the point you are presently at in your career?

D. Factors shaping the learning process

(Research Question: What factors have shaped the learning process?)

1. Tell me about the support you have experienced from others in teaching EFL as a career.
2. Describe how you perceive yourself as an EFL teacher.
3. If someone were to draw a picture of your cultural identity what would that picture look like?

APPENDIX B

REVISED INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

Introduction:
Describe your present EFL teaching situation? Where are you teaching? Who are your students? How long have you been in this location?

A. Understanding their commitment and the learning experiences that have impacted that commitment.
(Research Question:
CC: How do participants construct their commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?)

1. How would you explain, to another person, your commitment to the field of teaching EFL?
2. How would you finish this thought, "I am committed to the field of teaching EFL because…?"
3. What is it about teaching English (not other subjects) that attracts you to be committed to the field of teaching EFL?
4. Describe how you envision yourself two or three years from now in relation to teaching EFL?

(Research Question:
TLX: What types of learning experiences have impacted a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?)

5. What experiences have you had that motivated you to pursue an EFL teaching career?
6. What experiences have you had that caused you to question your pursuit of an EFL teaching career?
7. Tell me about an early life experience that you feel prepared or aided in preparing you to consider teaching EFL as a career?

B. How the experiential learning component fosters commitment to teaching EFL.
(Research Question:
XLC: How has an experiential learning component of a formal teacher-training program fostered a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?)

1. What were your emotions as you anticipated teaching in the practicum?
2. If I had been in the program with you, what would I have seen you doing?
3. Could you walk me through one of your early teaching experiences in the program?
4. What experience, if any, within the program confirmed in your mind that teaching EFL was right for you?

5. Describe your feelings towards teaching EFL at the end of the program?
6. In what ways has your level of commitment to teaching EFL changed as a result of your teaching practicum experience?

C. The experiential learning process
(Research Question:
XLP: What is the experiential learning process that fosters a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career? - [How did you learn what you learned that helped shape your commitment?])

1. Could you tell me about the first time you remember thinking about teaching EFL?
2. What experiences would you identify as being key in bringing you to the point you are presently at in your career?

D. Factors shaping the learning process.
(Research Question:
F: What factors have shaped the experiential learning process that fosters a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?)

1. Tell me about the support you have experienced from others in teaching EFL as a career.
2. Describe how you perceive yourself as an EFL teacher.

Closing:
Is there anything that we have not talked about that you believe you would like me to know about?

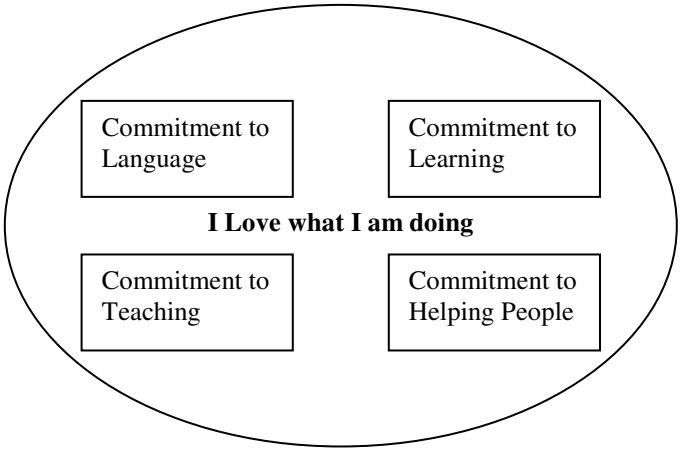
APPENDIX C

SAMPLES OF TENTATIVE FINDINGS SENT FOR MEMBER CHECKS

Sample 1: Tentative findings relating to research question one for one specific participant.

CC Open Code [participant name]	CC Themes [participant name] How do participants construct their commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?
Spanish language a passion x Commitment is verified by feelings x Not teaching for the money x I love it x I love languages x I love learning x I love seeing people learn x Interested in language x Teaching English is a good fit x I'm doing something important x Doing something that could make a difference to someone x Has a domino effect of one helped helping another x Commitment to teach for coming years x Need to keep grounded in reality of classroom x Dedicated and passionate teacher x Teaching what I love x	Commitment flows from affection Commitment is verified by feelings I love it Dedicated and passionate teacher Teaching what I love Commitment not based on financial remuneration Not teaching for the money Commitment is long term Commitment to teach for coming years Commitment to learning I love learning I love seeing people learn Commitment to language I love languages Interested in language Spanish language a passion Commitment to teaching Teaching English is a good fit Need to keep grounded in reality of classroom Commitment to helping people I'm doing something important Doing something that could make a difference to someone Has a domino effect of one helped helping another

My interpretation of [participant's name] construction of his/her commitment to teaching EFL:



Sample 2: Tentative findings relating to research question two for one specific participant.

TLX Open Code [participant's name]	TLX Themes [participant's name] What types of learning experiences have impacted a person's commitment to the field of teaching EFL as a career?
Observing mother interact with culturally diverse people x	Formal Learning Experiences Formal undergrad degree in Anthro and Italian Formal MA TESOL program Incorporating readings with teaching experience Learning from textbooks Self-Directed Learning Experiences Reading books on China Reading grammar books Searching the internet for help Researching on the internet for EFL teaching opportunities Personal prayer and Bible reading Learning from the teaching example of Jesus Reflecting through a teaching journal Found journal to be really good Reflecting on the future Informal Learning Experiences Brainstorming with peer teachers Discussing with others their observations of teaching Learning from Chinese teachers Being tutored in Chinese language study Learn from other teachers and students Relational Learning Experiences Observing mother interact with culturally diverse people Talking with Chinese people in America Helping Chinese solve English translation problems Email interactions with past student's problems Learning from Chinese friends comments Talking to foreigners in America Contextual Learning Experiences Just living in China
Reading books on China x	
Talking with Chinese people in America x	
Formal undergrad degree in Anthropology & Italian x	
Helping Chinese solve English translation problems x	
Email interactions with past student's problems x	
Reading grammar books x	
Searching the internet for help x	
Brainstorming with peer teachers x	
Researching on the internet for EFL teaching opportunities x	
Personal prayer and Bible reading x	
Learning from the teaching example of Jesus x	
Learning from Chinese friends comments x	
Formal MA TESOL program x	
Reflecting through a teaching journal x	
Discussing with others their observations of teaching x	
Found journal to be really good x	
Incorporating readings with teaching experience x	
Learning from Chinese teachers x	
Learning from textbooks x	
Just living in China x	
Being tutored in Chinese language study x	
Reflecting on the future x	
Learn from other teachers and students x	
Talking to foreigners in America x	

APPENDIX D

EMBEDDED REFLECTIVE LEARNING CYCLE SAMPLES

ID/Name & Stage	Concrete Experience	General Contemplation on Experience	Contemplation Applied to Personal Life	Learning Integrated
Bob Life Stage B and into Stage C	Tutoring Chinese in U.S.	Reflected on own teaching and felt "there's got to be a better way"	Searched for help but couldn't find any; "raised my awareness of my incompetence"; "I was way over my head"	Enrolled in MA TESOL program at Wheaton College.
Doug Life Stage C	ESL/EFL teacher-training in Vietnam and trying to use reflective journalling in training	Reflected and "realized they [i.e., students] didn't know how to do that" (write down thoughts even if grammar is not perfect)	Reflected on assignment and "started breaking this down and innovate that process"	Teacher-training method changed; "it makes it (teacher-training) more labor intensive"
Ned Life Stage C	Teaching practicum in MA program at Wheaton	Reflected on other's teaching style of playing games with students during class.	Reflected on own personality and realized "I'm very serious"; "realized there are certain activities that break up the classroom time . . . and not be boring."	"My style of teaching" was changed.
Holly Life Stage C	Offered job of "Education Coordinator at an agency for refugee immigrants"	Reflected on job description and said, "I'm really not qualified" and said "No."	Reflected more deeply and thought, "Well, you know maybe this is a door opening."	Contacted the organization and said, "I might have been a little hasty in my decision," and she got the job.
Liz Life Stage C	First time teaching in China and having students do a partner activity which resulted in "absolute chaos"	"Reflected on [it] in my mind" and wondered why the activity did not work.	Reflected and learned "I had to talk them through it . . . and show them a model."	Used students whose knowledge of English was better than rest to model activity in class.
Kate Life Stage C	Encounters real life problem of designing new EFL curriculum	Reflects on problem and what might be done about it	Reflects while gathering data and developing new curriculum	Implements new curriculum into EFL teaching.

ID/Name & Stage	Concrete Experience	General Contemplation on Experience	Contemplation Applied to Personal Life	Learning Integrated
Shauna Life Stage B	Encounters a problem teaching in Macau and not being successful	Reflects on the problem and questions why	Reflects while seeking to solve problem through talking with professor and doing research	Adds knowledge to her understanding of what makes a good EFL teacher
Ann Life Stage A through Stage B, concluding at Stage C	As a child sees mother interact with foreigners and then, as an adult, sees Chinese outside of a church.	Reflecting while watching Chinese: "I wish I could be a part of that"	Reflected on own desires; "I don't think everyone has this interest, and this love for Chinese culture and people." And "all of a sudden I realized, I need to do something about this."	Did research on the internet and "looked at 10 different organizations"; A year later was in China teaching EFL.
Cathy Life Stage C	While teaching in Mongolia, a Kasak friend's husband died	Reflected on what she should do since she was in Kasak culture. "I didn't know what to do . . . and I had a lot of questions."	Reflected while trying to figure out what to do; Asked a lot of questions to her friend and "she taught me a lot"	Has greater love for Mongolian people and has "been able to develop a lot of relationships."
Mary Life Stage B	Living in Russia with a Russian family; immersion into a new cultural environment	Reflects on living overseas	Reflects on other people's response to living overseas and concludes "I will live abroad long term."	Goes to teach in China before enrolling in the MA program.
Oliver Life Stage B and into Stage C	Teaching EFL in China	Reflected on teaching abilities after one year teaching; "I realized I needed better education."	Reflected while in TESOL program; "how being a teacher in itself has such an impact on people's lives."	Knowledge integrated and commitment to teaching increased; "so that's why I am committed to [teaching EFL]"
Grace Life Stage B	Being asked to stay with research organization in Indonesia and be their research coordinator	Reflected on research work and "felt like, I spent a lot of time in front of a computer, etc."	Reflected on own personal likes and desires and "When I thought about it, I was like, I don't really have a passion for that."	Declined the offer to stay in Indonesia to do research
Ruth Life Stage C	Teaching EFL in China during practicum and taking course on Action Research	Reflected on need to "really focus on one method" of teaching.	Reflected in teaching; I really began thinking about the ways I test my students in relationship to what I do in class.	"It varied my teaching methods, it varied the way that I thought my students needed to learn."

ID/Name & Stage	Concrete Experience	General Contemplation on Experience	Contemplation Applied to Personal Life	Learning Integrated
Tami Life Stage B	Didn't know what to do for her future but knew she wanted to go overseas	Reflected on a variety of options; then began to think about teaching English overseas	Reflected about teaching English and "investigated it further" and came up with the conclusion that it "would seem to suit me very well"	Went to Mongolia to teach EFL
Paul Life Stage B and Stage C	Teaching students in a New Testament Seminar in U.S. and also teaching English in Uzbekistan	Reflecting on teaching topic and realizing that "this is kinda complicated"	Reflecting while teaching and trying to make it simpler and then seeing "it on a student's face, all of a sudden they go, 'Oh' and they get it."	Learns he likes teaching and "finds this thrilling." Stays in teaching field and continues teaching in Uzbekistan.

APPENDIX E

LIFE STAGES OF PARTICIPANTS

ID / Name	Life Stage A Developing Awareness of Cultural Diversity	Life Stage B Immersion into a Different Culture	Life Stage C Formal TESOL Training
Ned	Had missionaries in home as a child / youth; "grew up knowing about missions"; family went to Canada every year; U.S. Military service in Italy and Korea; most contact in Korea was with English speaking military; "not much interaction with Koreans"	Spent two years teaching EFL in China before formal training. Experienced life and challenging teaching situation in China	MA TESOL, Wheaton; this was after two years in China
Doug	Spent summers as a child with Czech speaking grandmother; worked with international students in U.S.; "ongoing contact and exposure to internationals…just further acquainting us and kinda sensitizing us to internationals"; Africans, Jordanian, Japanese	Took group of students to Japan for a summer (this overlapped with Stage A); Foster son from Vietnam for four years; "began to live and again enter into his story of what it is like to come to U.S. as unaccompanied minor"	TESOL Certificate; graduate level; Hamlin University, St. Paul, MN
Bob	Jamaican father; born in U.S.; living in Jamaica till seven; moved to U.S.; taught ESL to Chinese in America during college	Lived in China for one summer; studied in Chinese school; spent time visiting Tibetan village	MA TESOL, Wheaton
Holly	Took German and French classes in high school; Liked German and was pretty good at it; French fizzled out.	Went to Germany at age 18; Spent one year in Germany then moved to France, then back to Germany; (first formal TESOL at this time); lived in Europe for 11 years - Germany and France; worked, studied, taught English.	CELTA formal training after living in Germany and France for a couple of years; Certificate in TESOL from University of Akron in 1992; MA TESOL, Wheaton
Liz	When six years old had a Chinese man live with them for several months; "had other people from other countries come and stay too"; experiences with classmates when younger "that didn't know English"	Short term immersion - Went to Tanzania in high school; lived in Ecuador; Thailand; Nepal - (during college)	MA TESOL, Azusa Pacific right after college graduation; at same time taught EFL in China;

ID / Name	Life Stage A Developing Awareness of Cultural Diversity	Life Stage B Immersion into a Different Culture	Life Stage C Formal TESOL Training
Shauna	Grew up in Chinese American culture in San Francisco; she is American Born Chinese; during first experience in Macao realized she was bi-cultural	When Jr. in College went and taught English in Macao for four weeks; Taught English in China for four summers total, then MA TESOL	MA TESOL, Biola University
Kate	Watched Sesame Street on television and heard Spanish; Studied Spanish in high school; no one in community spoke Spanish but "there were a lot of Asian immigrants"	"Lot of travelogue work"; Went to Ecuador when 17 years old; Studied in Spain during college; Back to Ecuador for visit; community development. In Paraguay '97, Honduras '98, Mali with Peace Corps	MA TESOL, Monterey Institute for International Studies, CA; now teaching in Mexico.
Ann	"As a child" watched her mother interact with foreigners in America; Italian family background; mother encouraged her to learn about other cultures; "Don't close yourself to other people, no matter where they are from"; Studied Italian and Anthropology in college; standing outside of large Chinese church waiting for friend "I wish I could meet those people"	Immersion and Formal training Concurrent Went to China to teach at same time of MA TESOL from Azusa Pacific	
Cathy	Both parents love different cultures"; "part of my growing up years, different people from different cultures in my home"; exchange student; "I had that early love for different people and different parts of the world"; Refugee work in U.S. during college; minor cross-cultural studies in college	Immersion and Formal training Concurrent Went to Mongolia to teach at same time of MA TESOL from Azusa Pacific; "There's not many foreigners around. I can get immersed into the culture easier when I have less distractions from other people that are in my culture, so that's made the experience really, really incredible."	
Mary	When a child knew a lady who had spent two years in Africa; this lady was Mary's "hero"; mother was "very overseas minded"	Lived in Russia with Russian family during a college study-abroad program for four months; "just immersed myself in the culture and really felt a love for the Russian people"; After four months in Russia - "I realized I will probably be living abroad"; taught one semester in China before MA program	MA TESOL, Azusa Pacific, while teaching in Inner Mongolia, China

ID / Name	Life Stage A Developing Awareness of Cultural Diversity	Life Stage B Immersion into a Different Culture	Life Stage C Formal TESOL Training
Oliver	Great Grandparents lived in China for three years; Grandparents lived in China for 10 years; "So as far back as I can remember I've heard about China"; went to Europe while in college for six weeks "had culture clash but we were basically isolated because we were altogether as a group, and so it was like this little America was going all over…. Our culture wasn't challenged."	Taught two years in China and one year of language study in China before MA program; "three years before I got into the masters program"	MA TESOL, Azusa Pacific
Grace	As a child her mother would "read stories about overseas" to her at bedtime; "ever since I was a child always loving to hear these stories about the little boy in India, or the little, you know"; "my mother had a lot of foreign friends growing up so I always had, I was always around a lot of people from different countries"; spent two and one half months in Egypt with a group of Americans when 16 years old "and it was like little America" when we would go out.	Spent two times in Indonesia during college and lived with Indonesian families; Taught EFL in Vietnam for two years before MA program	MA TESOL, Azusa Pacific
Ruth	"I didn't really have American friends (before college). All of my friends were from Taiwan, or ah, Korea, Japan, India, or Russia"; when young went to see an Indian movie with some Indian friends "they danced really neat, and it looked so fun"; had Korean and Indonesian friends in high school	Spent summer teaching English in Jordan during college	MA TESOL, Azusa Pacific; went directly into program after graduation from college
Tami	She "grew up on Sesame Street and Mr. Rogers" and learned a little Spanish; had books as a child that were about kids in Japan and China; in middle school one of her closest friends "her parents were always inviting people from a lot of different countries to their house and I got to meet a lot of different people especially from South America"; high school was "50% African American and 50% White"	Freshman year in college took a trip to Mexico - "I went on a missions trip to Mexico for a week, which just really played a significant part in my life…. I was really surprised that in a week I could feel so close to people"; Went to Granada for a couple of weeks; went to Spain for a semester to study during Jr. year in college; Taught EFL in Mongolia for a total of two and one half years (not all together) before MA program	MA TESOL, Azusa Pacific (presently finishing second year of program)

ID / Name	Life Stage A Developing Awareness of Cultural Diversity	Life Stage B Immersion into a Different Culture	Life Stage C Formal TESOL Training
Paul	Had a girl from South Africa live with his family when he was growing up; links his interest to different cultures to his parent's influence but states "I don't even know how this happened"; pastor of his church was a missionary to Cameroon and would bring incorporate parts of the Cameroon culture into the worship service and would bring Cameroon food to the church pot-luck dinners.	Studied in Mexico for a semester and lived with Mexican family; lived with Black family in Detroit; after college spent year living in Eskimo community; spent one semester in England for seminary internship; lived and taught in Uzbekistan for five years before MA TESOL program	MA TESOL, Azusa Pacific