

TRAINING ESOL TEACHERS: THE NEED FOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT*

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*We do not learn to know men through their coming to us.
To find out what sort of persons they are, we must go to
them.*

Goethe.

English is the world's second language. The vast international industry which is necessary to sustain the current status of English includes millions of learners in classrooms around the world, teachers, textbook writers and publishers, as well as those who service different sections of the industry. Within the category of support services, institutions of higher learning and teacher-training colleges occupy a vital position. Through teacher-training programs of different sorts they are partly responsible for the impact teachers have in contributing to successful or unsuccessful language learning. Although the field of TESOL has expanded considerably to cater to the increasing demand for formal qualifications in TESL/TEFL as well as for practical training in language teaching, the nature of teacher training tends to be taken for granted by many of

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its practitioners. As Fanselow and Light observe:

Many who prepare teachers have not studied the field of teacher preparation nor done any research in it; they have studied and do research in other fields. However, they still seem to feel competent to prepare teachers. (Fanselow and Light 1977:9)

There is consequently a relatively sparse literature on teacher-training in the major ESL/EFL journals. In the main part it consists of:

- a) descriptions of actual training programs and the rationale behind them;
- b) discussion of the value of particular training models (e.g., Competency Based Teacher Education);
- c) philosophical discussion of the assumed significance of particular content areas (e.g., psycholinguistics; transformational grammar);
- d) suggestions and descriptions of the skills, values and knowledge it is believed teachers need.

There is relatively little actual research or empirical data in the literature, nor have the issues of evaluation or accountability received much attention.

The present paper addresses the issues of needs assessment, evaluation and accountability in ESL/EFL teacher education. We describe a study of expatriate teachers of English in Japan. The study was partly motivated by the fact that this client group provides a significant portion of students entering the M.A. program in ESL at the University of Hawaii. At the time of the study, the curriculum for the M.A. program was being evaluated and revised and the data reported here was relevant to the evaluation process. The study also raises more general questions related to curriculum design for teacher education in TESL/TEFL.

A Study of Expatriate Teachers of English in Japan

Goals of the study

- a) To obtain assessments of training needs from practicing English language teachers in Japan who do not have graduate training in TESL/TEFL.
- b) To find out what sort of training EFL teachers in Japan with training, have received.
- c) To determine how relevant such training is perceived to be in the light of the current professional responsibilities of EFL teachers in Japan.

Background information

English is taught in Japan via two main systems:

1. English is studied at junior and senior high school by most Japanese students for six years. Those entering university generally study English for a further two years. The majority of English teachers at this level are Japanese.
2. The private sector. English is taught in the private sector through numerous private language schools and programs, and some in-house company programs. The majority of the teachers in these programs are expatriates.

Expatriate teachers of English in Japan include:

- a) trained EFL teachers who have chosen English teaching as a career;
- b) native and non-native speakers of English who have obtained employment teaching English in Japan. Some of these are graduates in other fields who have chosen to work in Japan for various reasons. Some are temporary members of the profession. Some, however, have long-term commitments to the field of language teaching,

and it is particularly from this group that many students for M.A. programs in ESL/EFL are drawn.

Obtaining Data on Expatriate English Teachers

Subjects

Subjects were members of The Japan Association of Language Teachers. This is a highly active language teaching association which was founded in 1977 to serve the needs of teachers of English in Japan, and was a response to the growing professionalization of English teaching in that country. The total membership in JALT is approximately 1600 members, of whom 55% are Japanese. JALT is an affiliate of the International TESOL Organization. Access was provided to the JALT membership list and a questionnaire was mailed to 200 non-Japanese members. An additional 50 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to participants at the JALT convention held in Osaka in October 1982. One hundred sixteen completed questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 58%. (See appendix)

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was in four parts. Part 1 concerned biographical data on institutional information; part 2 addressed job duties and classroom practices; part 3, which was for those without graduate training in ESL/EFL, sought information on areas the respondents would like to study within a graduate degree; part 4, which was completed by those with graduate training in ESL/EFL, asked respondents to evaluate the usefulness of areas they had studied.

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Results

Part 1. Background information on the respondents

N = 116

Nationalities: American 95, British 8, Canadian 2, Other 11

Years teaching English: Mean \bar{x} = 8 years

Years in Japan: \bar{x} = 8 years

Type of institution taught in:	College/University	69
	Private language school	54
	Private tutoring	38
	Business firm	27
	Senior high school	12
	Junior high school	9
Type of student taught:	Beginning	76
	Intermediate	105
	Advanced	70

Part 2(a). Current professional duties

N = 116

This was directed at what the teachers do in their current positions. Respondents indicated under three categories – always/often, sometimes, and rarely/never – how often they engaged in particular kinds of work. Means were calculated by scaling from 2 (always or often) to 0 (rarely or never).

Discussion

The teaching of speaking, listening comprehension and the preparation of classroom materials are shown to be very important activities for all respondents. This reflects the fact that the majority of non-Japanese English teachers in Japan are employed as conversation teachers. Literature is not a

subject typically offered in private language schools or taught by non-Japanese teachers, nor is there a great demand for ESP courses in Japan according to these responses.

<p>Table 1</p> <p>Results by rank to the instruction:</p> <p>Indicate what you do in your present job. N = 116</p>		
Rank	Mean	S.D.
1. Teach speaking	1.86	0.38
2. Teach listening	1.76	0.50
3. Prepare materials	1.51	0.56
4. Use A-V aids	1.30	0.69
5. Design curriculum/syllabuses	1.20	0.74
6. Prepare tests	1.09	0.75
7. Teach writing	1.03	0.74
8. Teach reading	0.95	0.73
9. Interpret test scores	0.86	0.79
10. Do administrative work	0.82	0.78
11. Do research	0.70	0.73
12. Teach ESP	0.58	0.74
13. Train teachers	0.57	0.66
14. Use language lab	0.55	0.78
15. Write articles	0.43	0.62
16. Teach about English-speaking cultures	0.43	0.62
17. Write textbooks	0.41	0.65
18. Teach literature	0.16	0.46

Part 2(b). Methods used

The respondents were asked to indicate which methods they most often used in the classroom.

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Table 2
Responses to the question:
Indicate which method(s) you use. N = 116

	Mean	S.D.
1. Combination	1.86	0.36
2. Direct Method	1.22	0.70
3. Notional/Functional	1.22	0.72
4. Audio-Lingual	0.88	0.72
5. Total Physical Response	0.82	0.74
6. Community Language Learning	0.58	0.67
7. Cognitive-Code	0.55	0.70
8. Silent Way	0.32	0.59
9. Suggestopedia	0.17	0.45

Discussion

This question was included to determine the methodological allegiances of foreign teachers of English in Japan. One of the functions of The Japan Association of Language Teachers is to upgrade the professional skills of its members, and at JALT conventions and meetings there is a considerable exposure to competing schools of methodology. Most teachers are free to choose their own texts and methods, and respondents indicate that eclecticism generally prevails. The relatively high use of direct method procedures reported probably refers to a vague awareness that the exclusive use of the target language in the classroom (a necessity for non-Japanese speaking teachers) was one of the tenets of the direct method, rather than a widespread use of strict direct method principles as such. The term 'notional-functional' was probably unwisely used here, since this refers not to a method but to a syllabus model. Many textbooks used in Japan cite notional functional

principles of organization, hence responses to this item should probably be interpreted to mean "use of texts based on a notional-functional syllabus." Practitioners of other methods are less frequent. Although Total Physical Response appears to attract modest support, teachers using Total Physical Response in Japan, according to presentations made at JALT conventions, treat it as a technique, rather than a method, to be used occasionally when appropriate.

Part 3. Teachers without graduate training.

This section of the questionnaire was addressed to teachers without graduate level training in TEFL/TESL/applied linguistics, but included respondents who hold a TESL/TEFL certificate or its equivalent such as the Royal Society of Arts Certificate in TEFL. Respondents were asked to indicate what sort of content areas within an ESL/EFL teacher-training program they would be most interested in studying (Table 3), and which teaching methods they would like to learn more about (Table 4). Areas which would not be self-explanatory to an untrained teacher were briefly described (e.g., *sociolinguistics* – the relationship between language and society/culture; *discourse analysis* – the organization of oral and written language; *second language acquisition* – how people acquire a second or foreign language). From the total of 116 respondents in the sample, 75 were eligible to answer this section of the questionnaire.

Table 3
Results by rank to the question:
If you were to study in an M.A. program in TESL/TEFL,
which areas would you like to study? N = 75

	Mean	S.D.
1. Teaching of listening	1.80	0.51
2. Teaching of speaking	1.73	0.57
3. Second language acquisition	1.62	0.56
4. Materials writing/selection/adaptation	1.43	0.69
5. Curriculum/Syllabus design	1.27	0.75
6. Use of A-V aids	1.27	0.71
7. Psycholinguistics	1.25	0.73
8. Sociolinguistics	1.24	0.74
9. Teaching of writing	1.13	0.72
10. Teaching of reading	1.11	0.76
11. Classroom management techniques	1.11	0.75
12. Error analysis	1.10	0.71
13. Practice teaching	1.08	0.88
14. Teacher training	1.01	0.81
15. Language testing	0.98	0.76
16. Discourse analysis	0.90	0.71
17. English grammar and how to teach it	0.88	0.76
18. Administration	0.84	0.80
19. Phonology/Phonetics	0.84	0.71
20. English for Specific Purposes	0.83	0.80
21. First language acquisition	0.82	0.77
22. Use of language lab	0.73	0.75
23. Contrastive analysis	0.73	0.79
24. Varieties of English	0.64	0.70
25. Theoretical linguistics	0.61	0.72
26. Bilingual education	0.57	0.65
27. History of language teaching	0.44	0.64
28. Statistics and research	0.42	0.65
29. English literature	0.36	0.64

Table 4
Results by rank to the instruction:
Indicate which method(s) you would like to study. N = 75

	Mean	S.D.
1. Notional/Functional	1.45	0.64
2. Total Physical Response	1.26	0.76
3. Cognitive-Code	1.25	0.73
4. Community Language Learning	1.15	0.79
5. Direct Method	1.06	0.84
6. Suggestopedia	0.90	0.77
7. Silent Way	0.85	0.76
8. Audio-Lingual	0.77	0.79

Respondents to this section were all experienced classroom teachers, yet further training in the teaching of speaking, listening, materials writing and adaptation, curriculum and syllabus design, and the use of audio-visual aids, were all given high priority. Practice teaching, however, was not thought to be so important for these respondents since they already have considerable teaching experience. Some respondents added comments disavowing any interest in theoretical courses: "I would not be interested in any theoretical courses. I am only interested in things that could be used tomorrow." "I would have little interest in theory and research per se. I would want to concentrate on the practical application of theory and research." Other viewpoints were also expressed: "I would be more interested in learning fundamental information about English and about language teaching and learning, than in learning about particular applications of that information." "I would welcome a course which takes a broad theoretical approach."

Despite reservations from particular respondents, some courses with a theoretical orientation were ranked of relatively high priority (*second language acquisition, psycholinguistics*). Theoretical courses ranked of low priority included *phonology/phonetics, contrastive analysis, theoretical linguistics*. We cannot be sure, of course, precisely how much respondents understood of the content of such courses in assigning them ratings. Evaluations by graduates who have taken such courses enable a better appreciation of their relevance.

Part 4. Teachers with graduate training

This was addressed to teachers who have already studied in a graduate degree program in TESL/TEFL or applied linguistics. Forty-one respondents from our total sample of 116 were eligible to complete this section of the questionnaire. Thirty-four respondents held M.A. degrees from American universities, 1 from a British university, 1 Canadian, 2 held American Ph.D.s, and 2 respondents had completed course work but had not yet graduated, 1 did not indicate. The average number of years since graduation was 7 years. Table 5 indicates the percentage of the respondents who took course work in particular subjects or areas as part of their graduate training.

Respondents were asked to indicate (a) what subjects they studied and (b) how useful the areas studied were, in the light of their current responsibilities in the field.

Table 5		
% of respondents who studied given subjects. N = 41		
Rank	Subject/area	% who took course work in this area
1.	Phonology/Phonetics	97
2.	Transformational grammar	95
3.	Structural linguistics	92
4.	Second language acquisition	88
5.	First language acquisition	85
6.	Contrastive analysis	84
7.	Teaching of speaking	79
8.	Teaching of writing	79
9.	Teaching of listening	76
10.	Teaching of reading	76
11.	Sociolinguistics	75
12.	Method analysis	73
13.	Psycholinguistics	73
14.	Practice teaching	72
15.	Traditional grammar	70
16.	Error analysis	68
17.	Semantics	66
18.	Materials writing, selection, adaptation	63
19.	Language testing	63
20.	History of language teaching	58
21.	Curriculum/Syllabus design	58
22.	Use of audio-visual aids	57
23.	Pedagogical grammar	56
24.	Varieties of English	52
25.	Classroom management	47
26.	Discourse analysis	46
27.	Statistics and research	46
28.	Bilingual education	45
29.	Use of language lab	43
30.	English literature	42
31.	Teacher training	27
32.	English for Specific Purposes	24
33.	Administration	12

Table 6
Responses to: Indicate how useful the courses
you studied were in view of your present jobs. N = 41

Rank	Mean	S.D.
1. Practice teaching	1.62	0.61
2. Classroom management	1.42	0.59
3. Second language acquisition	1.40	0.63
4. Materials writing/selection/adaptation	1.38	0.62
5. Method analysis	1.35	0.61
6. Phonology/Phonetics	1.32	0.68
7. Teaching of speaking	1.32	0.77
8. Curriculum/Syllabus design	1.25	0.77
9. Teaching of listening	1.23	0.76
10. Pedagogical grammar	1.21	0.77
11. Psycholinguistics	1.20	0.70
12. Language testing	1.19	0.62
13. Error analysis	1.14	0.69
14. Teaching of reading	1.13	0.76
15. Contrastive analysis	1.12	0.72
16. Discourse analysis	1.10	0.71
17. English for Specific Purposes	1.10	0.70
18. Teacher training	1.10	0.70
19. Use of A-V aids	1.04	0.62
20. Sociolinguistics	1.03	0.70
21. Teaching of writing	1.03	0.78
22. First language acquisition	0.94	0.62
23. Structural linguistics	0.91	0.75
24. Varieties of English	0.90	0.68
25. Traditional grammar	0.85	0.74
26. Semantics	0.84	0.76
27. Administration	0.80	0.40
28. Transformational grammar	0.71	0.75
29. History of language teaching	0.69	0.54
30. Use of language lab	0.66	0.66
31. Statistics and research	0.61	0.67
32. English literature	0.47	0.60
33. Bilingual education	0.38	0.67

Discussion

Table 5 is an interesting indication of how teacher trainers in the United States have viewed the needs of ESL/EFL teachers. The six most frequently studied subjects deal exclusively with language analysis and applied psycholinguistics (phonology, transformational grammar, structural linguistics, second language acquisition, contrastive analysis). Less than three-quarters of the sample had received practice-teaching experience, and even fewer had received training in the writing, selection and adaptation of materials, testing, curriculum or syllabus design. It is not surprising that a senior official of the Japanese ministry of education remarked to one of the authors recently, "Given a choice, we would prefer to have British rather than U.S.-trained English teachers in Japan. The average American teacher cannot handle the classroom situation." The American view of priorities is reflected in a comment by Diller in which he offers a justification for rejecting a competency-based teacher education model:

The professional teacher of English as a Second Language needs pedagogical training to be a teacher, and academic training in English and linguistics to be a professional in our field. But of the two, there is a certain priority for English language and linguistics, for a decision on the nature of language and on the psycholinguistic mechanisms of language acquisition will determine to a large extent our decision on the principles and methods of teaching. (Diller 1977)

The fact that transformational grammar, phonology/phonetics and structural linguistics were studied by almost all respondents reflects the fact that most ESL programs in the United States are affiliated with and often directed by departments of linguistics. Many M.A. ESL curricula consequently tend to look like watered down linguistics' degrees.

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In a survey of American and British teacher-training programs, Acheson (1977) noted:

The lack of concern with such *educational* matters as competency and performance in the classroom is partly explicable by the fact that only about ten of America's 50 TESOL departments appeared to be affiliated to schools, departments, or colleges of education. The remaining 40 were attached to departments of linguistics, English, foreign languages, speech, or other administrative units in the academic institutions. Furthermore in many cases, it is surmised that the preparation of teacher educators in the TESOL teacher preparation programs has been exclusively in linguistics, rather than in education and/or the *teaching* of ESOL. (Acheson 1977:73)

Table 6 indicates how useful respondents found particular subjects or areas they studied, in view of their professional responsibilities in Japan. Since most expatriate EFL teachers in Japan are employed as conversation teachers, it is not surprising that courses relevant to this goal (phonology/phonetics, teaching of speaking, teaching of listening) were found to be more useful than courses related to other skills. Phonology was rated a very low priority by those without graduate training ($\bar{x} = 0.84$, Table 3), yet found to be quite useful for those who had studied it ($\bar{x} = 1.32$). Despite Diller's plea, structural linguistics and transformational grammar were not found to be useful, however. The teachers in this study, like most classroom teachers, judged the value of their training in terms of its practical application and effectiveness. The correlation between courses studied and their usefulness in the field was only .367 ($p < .05$, Spearman's rank coefficient). Clearly, many of the respondents felt they were shortchanged, but none more strongly than the bitter teacher who added:

I deeply regret the time I wasted on transformational generative grammar and generative phonology. Discourse analysis is over-rated as to its usefulness. If I had to do it

over again, I would attend a British university for an M.A. I think the American TESL establishment has an inferiority complex vis-a-vis theoretical linguistics and generally fails to see TESL/TEFL as an applied craft. Or is it just a lot of empire building and greedy pushing and shoving?

Conclusions

According to B. Othanel Smith, in training teachers it is necessary to

- a) analyze the job of teaching into the tasks that must be performed;
- b) specify the abilities required for the performance of these tasks;
- c) describe the skills or techniques through which the abilities are expressed;
- d) work out training situations and exercises for the development of each skill (quoted in Fanselow and Light 1977: 5).

The procedure Smith advocates follow principles used in curriculum development in many areas of language teaching, namely, needs identification, skills identification, specification of objectives, and methodology. Judging from the data reported here, however, many ESL teacher-training practices have evolved from very different assumptions, with an emphasis on the development of knowledge, principles, and theoretical paradigms at the expense of training in skills and competencies. Despite the limitations of the present study (the sample size is small and detailed information is lacking in some areas), it suggests the need for more broadly based empirical studies of teacher behaviors and teacher needs, as a basis for the development and validation of more relevant models of ESL/EFL teacher training.

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Reference

Acheson, Palmer. 1977. English for speakers of other languages: a survey of teacher preparation programs in American and British colleges and universities. In John F. Fanselow and Richard L. Light (eds.), *Bilingual, ESOL and Foreign Language Teacher Preparation: Models, Practices, Issues*. TESOL: Washington, D.C.

Appendix The Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to obtain information about the needs of English language teachers in Japan, both those who have never studied in an M.A. (or Ph.D.) program in ESL/TEFL (Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language) and those who have. The information obtained will be used to help ensure that TESL/TEFL programs meet the needs of English language teachers.

SECTION I

1. Your nationality _____
2. Degrees or certificates obtained, if any. (E.g. B.A. in history, TESL diploma) _____
3. Number of years of experience in teaching English (as a second/foreign language) _____
4. Number of years in Japan _____
5. If you are a teacher, please indicate your present teaching position.

Check as many as applicable.

- () junior high school
- () senior high school
- () college/university
- () private language school
- () business firm
- () private tutoring
- () other _____

What level of students do you teach? Check as many as applicable.

- () beginning () intermediate () advanced

SECTION II

(a) Indicate what you do in your present job(s). Please check ✓.

		always or often	sometimes	rarely or never
1	Teach listening			
2	Teach speaking			
3	Teach reading			
4	Teach writing			
5	Prepare materials for my own use			
6	Use language lab			
7	Use audio-visual aids other than language lab (e.g. tape recorder, OHP)			
8	Prepare tests			
9	Interpret test scores			
10	Teach English for Specific Purposes (e.g. English for science, English for business)			
11	Teach literature			
12	Teach courses about English-speaking cultures			
13	Write textbooks			
14	Design curriculum/ syllabus			
15	Do research on lan- guage learning/ teaching			
16	Write articles for publication			
17	Do administrative work			
18	Train teachers			
19	Other: _____			

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(b) Indicate which method(s) you use.

	always or often	sometimes	rarely or never
Direct Method			
Audio-Lingual Method			
Notional/Functional			
Cognitive-code			
Silent Way			
Community Language Learning			
Suggestopedia			
Total Physical Response			
Combination of different methods			
Other: _____			

(c) Other relevant information, if any:

SECTION III

This section is for people who have never studied in an M.A. (or Ph.D.) program in TESL/TEFL or applied linguistics. If you have already studied in an M.A. (or Ph.D.) program in TESL/TEFL or applied linguistics, please skip this section and go to Section IV. If you have a TESL/TEFL certificate or its equivalent (e.g. RSA) but not an M.A., please answer this section rather than Section IV.

- (a) If you were to study in an M.A. program in TESL/TEFL, which areas would you like to study? Indicate the priority of each item. Please check ☒.

		High Priority	Moderate	Low Priority	Not Sure
1	Teaching of listening				
2	Teaching of speaking				
3	Teaching of reading				
4	Teaching of writing				
5	Theoretical linguistics				
6	English grammar and how to teach it				
7	Phonology/Phonetics				
8	Materials writing selection/adaptation				
9	Use of language lab				
10	Use of audio-visual aids other than language lab (e.g. tape recorder, OHP)				
11	Language testing				
12	English for Specific Purposes (e.g. English for science, English for business)				
13	English literature				
14	Sociolinguistics (Relationship between language and culture/society)				
15	Discourse analysis (Organization of oral and written language)				
16	Psycholinguistics (Psychological aspects of language and language learning)				

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		High Priority	Moderate	Low Priority	Not Sure
17	First language acquisition (How children acquire mother tongue)				
18	Second language acquisition (How people acquire second/foreign language)				
19	Error analysis (Cause and significance of errors)				
20	Contrastive analysis (Comparing and contrasting the grammar and phonology of English with those of another language)				
21	Varieties of English (Study of American English, British English, and other native and non-native varieties of English)				
22	History of language teaching				
23	Classroom management techniques				
24	Practice teaching				
25	Bilingual education				
26	Curriculum/syllabus design				
27	Statistics and research design				
28	Administration of language teaching program				
29	Teacher training				
30	Other: _____				

(b) Indicate which method(s) you would like to study.

	High Priority	Moderate	Low Priority	Not Sure
Direct Method				
Audio-Lingual Method				
Notional/Functional				
Cognitive-code				
Silent Way				
Community Language Learning				
Suggestopedia				
Total Physical Response				
Other: _____				

(c) Other relevant information, if any:

SECTION IV

This section is for people who have already studied in an M.A. (or Ph.D.) program in TESL/TEFL or applied linguistics. If you have never studied in an M.A. (or Ph.D.) program in TESL/TEFL or applied linguistics, please do not answer this section.

(a) When and where did you obtain your degrees in TESL/TEFL (or applied linguistics)?

(M.A.)

Year _____

University _____

(Ph.D.)

Year _____

University _____

(Currently enrolled)

University _____

(Left the program before getting the degree)

Year _____

University _____

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(b) Indicate which of the following areas you studied in your courses and their usefulness in your present job(s). Please check ✓.

		Studied			Did not study
		Very useful	Fairly useful	Not very useful	
1	Teaching of listening				
2	Teaching of speaking				
3	Teaching of reading				
4	Teaching of writing				
5	Traditional grammar				
6	Structural linguistics				
7	Transformational grammar				
8	Semantics				
9	Pedagogical grammar				
10	Phonology/phonetics				
11	Materials writing/selection/adaptation				
12	Use of language lab				
13	Use of audio-visual aids other than language lab (e.g. tape recorder, OHP)				
14	Language testing				
15	English for Specific/Special Purposes				
16	English literature				
17	Sociolinguistics				
18	Discourse analysis				
19	Psycholinguistics				
20	First language acquisition				
21	Second language acquisition				

		Studied			Did not study
		Very useful	Fairly useful	Not very useful	
22	Error analysis				
23	Contrastive analysis				
24	Varieties of English (Study of American English, British English, and other native and non-native varieties of English)				
25	History of language teaching				
26	Classroom management techniques				
27	Practice teaching				
28	Method analysis (Analysis of Audio-Lingual, Cognitive-code, Silent Way, etc.)				
29	Bilingual education				
30	Curriculum/syllabus design				
31	Statistics and research design				
32	Administration of language teaching program				
33	Teacher training				
34	Other: _____				



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