

Teacher Training and Teaching Practice: The Case of Niger’s English as a Foreign Language Teachers

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Abstract

There continues to be a debate as to the role and value of educator preparation programs throughout the world. This paper examines self-report data of the instructional language learning methods of Nigerien English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. This study sought to understand what instructional methods EFL teachers are using in their classrooms and if there is any connection between instructional methods and teacher training. All EFL teachers in Niger were surveyed to answer these questions. Teachers used a variety of instructional methods based on their preservice training; however, these differences were contained to teachers in their first five years of teaching. The findings support that teacher training is associated with the instructional decisions of teachers.

Keywords: teacher training, English as a foreign language, pedagogy, factor analysis, Niger

How best to prepare teachers for the daily responsibilities of classroom teaching is an ongoing debate in the United States and around the world. Empirical research in the United States has shown certain benefits of completing an educator preparation program (EPP) prior to assuming full-time teaching responsibilities. Selected benefits include increased teacher confidence, self-efficacy (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002), and prolonged teaching careers (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003). Boyd and colleagues have shown how certain aspects of training programs can impact a teacher's preparedness for the classroom (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2009). US-based research indicates that preservice teachers with some training are better teachers than those without (Konold et al, 2008). Even with this and similar research, the debate over educator preparation continues with discussion on the practical implications of resource distribution and the theoretical basis of the benefits (or lack thereof) of training teachers. Highly developed countries, like the United States, have the benefits of sufficient resources and a wealth of empirical data to enrich the debate on the necessity of teacher training. However, many countries in the world lack both sufficient resources for education and empirical data to guide the debates over the allocation of these limited resources. One such country is Niger where data for this study were collected to understand if educator preparation is associated with the instructional methods English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers use in their classrooms. Data presented in this paper can inform policy makers, school administrators, and teacher educators as to the potential impact of teacher training on instructional methods.

The authors recognize that schooling is inherently local while being caught between dominant, national norms and priorities (Levinson & Holland, 1996). Schools also play a role in the cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1974; Fernandes, 1998) of the dominant group. In the current interconnected world, the "dominant group" could be a foreign power. In the context of Niger, the United States government funds teacher training efforts in EFL (and sponsored the research reported in this paper). There is a lack of data to indicate what forms of instruction are most effective in Nigerien EFL classes and therefore it is important to learn from these rich contexts. However, the authors bring a decidedly non-evaluative lens to the instructional decisions made by Nigerien EFL teachers.

Objectives

Understanding educational equity across diverse countries requires broadening the scope of research to settings that have gone unexplored. As an underdeveloped country located in West Africa, Niger has not experienced a high level of empirical research directed at its educational system in general and at its English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs in particular. In this paper the case of Nigerien EFL teacher preparation and instructional methods is described as a potential indicator of what may be happening in other similarly situated countries who have also not been exposed to much empirical research. Specifically, the research questions guiding this study included:

1. What instructional methods are EFL teachers in Niger employing in their classrooms?
2. Is the training EFL teachers in Niger received prior to beginning their careers associated with differences in the instructional methods they employ?
3. Do associations between training and instructional methods continue past five years of teaching experience?

The answers to these research questions will provide guidance to policy makers, researchers, and teacher educators in Niger and other countries that find themselves in similar situations.

There has been scant research conducted on education in Niger. There is research focusing on efforts to increase access to education for Nigerien children and particularly girls (Wynd, 1999) or on education as a development program example (Greany, 2008; Honda & Kato, 2013). Bourdon, Frolich, & Michaelowa (2006) examined data on elementary teachers in Niger hired either as traditional professionals or as less paid short-term contractors. The findings suggest there was no difference in the educational outcomes for students between these two groups of teachers (Bourdon et al., 2006). In a worldwide survey conducted by the British Council about teaching English, Niger was not even included (Rixon, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to identify the landscape of EFL teaching in Niger. Specifically, it sought to understand how EFL teachers in a developing country in West Africa chose to instruct their students and if different preparation pathways had lingering implications to their instructional methods. Furthermore, the study sought to understand if any association between teaching practices and training remained after teachers had been in the profession for an extended period of time.

English Language Teaching Instructional Methods – A Review

Most of the literature on instructional methods and approaches for language teaching is conceptualized by Western scholars. Instructional methods for language teaching, specifically English language teaching, need to consider the local educational and cultural contexts and offer a voice to the local teachers and students. English language teaching instructional methods, approaches, or strategies have various definitions in the literature (Herrera & Murry, 2016) and for the purpose of this study are defined as a method as “a body of philosophically grounded and purposively integrated strategies and techniques” (Herrera & Murry, 2016, p.184).

There is no scarcity of (historical) instructional methods, approaches, strategies or principles of teaching English, such as the grammar-translation method, the direct method, community language learning, communicative language learning, or content-based instruction (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Scholars such as Lightbown and Spada (2013) talk about natural and classroom settings where a language is learned. In terms of classroom settings Lightbown and Spada (2013) distinguish between structured-based classrooms – where the focus is on language form and accuracy and communication, and content-based classrooms – where meaning and communication drive the instruction (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Research on EFL instruction in countries from Asia suggests there are challenges in implementing EFL methods conceptualized in Western countries such as the communicative teaching methods (Butler, 2011; Thompson & Yanagitab, 2017; Yook & Lee, 2016). The reasons stem from how teaching and learning is locally conceptualized; resources such as, large class sizes, and hours dedicated to English language teaching, teachers' English language proficiency level and confidence, teacher training or evaluation tools; English language exams focused on grammar; and lack of opportunities to use English in authentic settings (Butler, 2011). Additional challenges in the teaching of English in Asia are the policies which require EFL teaching starting in early grades despite the lack of qualified teachers (Hayes, 2017).

There is no one best instructional method or approach for teaching English (Smagorinsky, 2009) and “teachers and teachers in training need to be able to use approaches and methods flexibly and creatively based on their own judgement and experience” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 250). The context of where language learning happens is important: English as a second language (ESL), where English is official language of the society or one of the designated languages of society, or English as a foreign language (EFL) – where English is not used widely to communicate in society. The learners and their languages, identities, and motivations are important considerations (Brown, 2002). Thus, language teaching happens in “localized environments” (Burns, 2008). Research has also looked at qualities of teachers of English and identified teachers’ good language proficiency levels, pedagogical knowledge, and the ability to address and understand students’ needs (Mullock, 2010). However, there might be gaps between what methods teachers say they are using and the methods they are actually implementing (Walsh & Wyatt, 2014).

Looking at the big picture of English language teaching, Kumaravadivelu (2006) noted “Three principal and perceptible shifts: (a) from communicative language teaching to task-based language teaching, (b) from method-based pedagogy to postmethod pedagogy, and (3) from systemic discovery to critical discourse” (p. 60). These constitute a major transition in TESOL methods. In the light of the “post-methods” era (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), “localized environments” (Burns, 2008), and postpedagogy and critical discourse in English language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) in the 21st century, this study aimed at identifying the specific “localized” instructional methods Nigerian EFL teachers use in their classrooms. For the purpose of the study, a method is “a body of philosophically grounded and purposively integrated strategies and techniques” (Herrera & Murry, 2016, p.184). The list of techniques and strategies included in the survey was created based on information and suggestions from the local teachers and teacher trainers in Niger. The authors were mindful in creating a survey that was informed by the local context rather than imposing their own ideas about what EFL methods they expected to see in the classrooms. Specifically, the strategies and techniques were a combination of what teacher trainers had offered during professional development; what they expected and hoped to see in the classrooms; and what they actually saw teachers using. The list of strategies that were included in the survey (as seen in Table 1) can be grouped as traditional, communicative, and writing-intensive. The labels used are informed by the literature on EFL instructional teaching methods available, and they were used to describe succinctly and clearly the language teaching that was observed to happen in Nigerian EFL classrooms. The labels used to group the strategies are similar to instructional methods described in the literature on teaching English such as grammar-translation method or communicative language teaching method (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). The grouping of strategies was also informed by research methodology in that the statistical analysis allowed for a clear picture of what happens in the classroom when the strategies are grouped.

Table 1. Most Commonly Used EFL Teaching Methods

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Use the blackboard	4.94	0.387
Sentences	4.74	0.587
Writing exercises	4.70	0.581
Explicit grammar instruction	4.60	0.692
Drills	4.60	0.814
Encouragement, praise, reward	4.27	1.214
Copying	4.22	1.317
Student created language	4.04	1.295
Teacher led discussion	4.00	1.116
Genuine student production	3.99	1.313
Speaking activities not including what is done during the warm-up	3.95	1.330
Reading from the book	3.86	0.938
Translation	3.77	1.068
Pair work, group work	3.62	1.034
Peer review	3.53	1.396
Student centered discussion	3.46	1.331
Paragraphs	3.29	1.024
Lecture	3.25	1.476
Tasks (real world activities)	2.98	1.478
Essays	2.71	1.059
Visual aids (photos, realia, etc.)	2.69	1.573
Games, songs	2.57	1.215
Grammar instruction in a language other than English	2.44	1.531
Narratives	2.43	1.135
Listening to authentic recordings	1.51	1.026

Traditional instructional methods refer to strategies and elements from grammar-translation, structured-based instruction, and teacher-centered classrooms which have less emphasis on meaning and communication. Some of the strategies include translation, teacher lecture, grammar instruction about English conducted in students' native language, drills and copying of text. Communicative instructional methods refer to strategies and techniques in line with communicative approaches in which meaning making and communication are paramount to language learning and teaching. Some of the strategies identified as communicative are: student pair work and group work, discussions, both student or teacher led, speaking activities and real-world tasks. Writing intensive instructional methods refer to strategies that focus on producing and practicing writing, such as writing paragraphs, essays or narratives,

but also additional strategies that precede writing tasks such as listening to authentic recordings, reading from a book, or games. This method aligns with some EFL students' expectations of being able to write emails or texts in English for the workplace. The writing intensive methods could possibly be part of a complete language learning program such as content-based instruction in which teachers use process writing.

Connecting Training to Practice

The purpose of this study was to identify the composition of EFL instructional methods and EFL teacher training in Niger. Worldwide, there are not enough qualified English language teachers for primary grades who are well trained in the pedagogy of language teaching and who have adequate English language proficiency levels (Rixon, 2013). In addition, teacher qualifications differ from context to context. For example, a teacher may know English but have no formal teacher training; might hold an English language degree but have no teacher training; or could be a classroom teacher who passed an English language proficiency test only (Rixon, 2013).

The way training is connected to practice is through EPP standards such as Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages/Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (TESOL/CAEP) Standards for P–12 Teacher Education Programs. For EFL settings, such as Niger, there are no uniform standards for teacher education. However, TESOL International Association has developed *The TESOL Guidelines for Developing EFL Professional Teaching Standards* (Kuhlman & Knežević, n.d), and there are countries that have modified the TESOL/CAEP Standards for P–12 Teacher Education Programs to fit their context or created their own standards (Kuhlman & Knežević, n.d).

The literature suggests that EFL/ESL teachers' preservice or in-service training and/or classroom experiences influence and inform their teaching and practices. Yook and Lee (2016) interviewed six secondary EFL teachers from Korea about their EPP and their classroom practices. Findings indicate the teachers' EPP had some impact on their teaching and that in-service training and observing other teachers' classrooms had a bigger impact. The teachers mentioned the local school context of national English tests and their perceived lack of English proficiency and confidence in their English skills were challenges in implementing what they learned (Yook & Lee, 2016). Novice teachers from a TESOL program in Canada considered the practicum and classroom experience to be more valuable than theory, as useful for their readiness to teach adults (Faez & Valeo, 2012). Eight EFL teachers from Slovakia, who attended an in-service teacher training, were surveyed, observed, and interviewed after the training to see if any changes happened in their teaching practices and professional development endeavors. No changes seemed to have happened or were sustained over time (Kubanyiova, 2006).

Teachers' knowledge and skills (developed during preservice and in-service training and through classroom experience) influence the way they teach. Specifically, EFL teachers' knowledge of grammar and familiarity with communicative language teaching impacts what happens in the classroom (Nazari & Allahyar, 2012). Four Iranian EFL teachers were observed and interviewed about their grammar teaching. The teachers themselves seemed to have different knowledge about grammar which influenced how they taught it (Nazari & Allahyar, 2012):

While some teachers tended to avoid teaching grammar and even answering students' grammar questions, some put a great emphasis on grammar. The

former, who applied inductive approaches, confessed that teaching grammar was difficult for them. However, the latter, who applied deductive approaches, seemed more comfortable with and confident about utilizing traditional ways to teach and explain grammar (p. 81).

It was also interesting that while all four thought they were teaching using CLT, they all seemed to have elements of traditional teaching such as teacher centered classrooms (Nazari & Allahyar, 2012).

König and colleagues (2016) assessed 444 EFL preservice teachers from universities in Germany. They assessed teachers' knowledge, more specifically, content knowledge (CK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and general pedagogical knowledge (GPK). Findings suggest CK, PCK and GPK to be interrelated, and teacher knowledge on the three dimensions varied between universities, which suggests that graduates from different programs may not have the same levels of teacher knowledge (König et al., 2016).

There are no uniform expectations on who can teach English in Niger, which can lead to diverse and varied practices in the classroom (Wiens, Andrei, Anassour, & Smith, 2018). Teachers can be taught to teach in specific ways. This has been shown through studies of professional development activities designed for practicing teachers (Borko, 2004). Meanwhile studies have also demonstrated that specific training provided to preservice teachers can have an immediate impact on teacher instructional practices (Chen, 2010). However, it can be difficult for EPPs to overcome established beliefs and practices in preservice teachers (Johnson, 1994). What has not been well-answered in the literature is the extent to which EPPs have a lasting impact on how teachers teach.

In addition to preservice training, other factors may impact teachers' instructional choices. Resources, curricula, testing requirements, and school culture can all impact the manner in which teachers decide to instruct their students (Rao & Lei, 2014). There is clear evidence that teachers improve in their instruction at least for the first few years of teaching (Attebery, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2015; Harris & Sass, 2011; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Additionally, there is ample confirmation that teacher professional development can impact teaching practices after teachers leave their EPPs (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Thurlings & den Brok, 2017).

EFL Teacher Preparation in Niger

The local context of how Nigerien EFL teachers are trained is significant for this study. To become an EFL teacher in Niger, there were no consistent standards or requirements across the country. Thus, EFL teachers in Niger became teachers in one of the following three ways: 1) graduate with a bachelor's degree from either the Faculte des Lettres et Sciences Humaines (FLSH: School of Arts and Humanities) or the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS: Teacher training institute) at Abdou Moumouni University; 2) received EFL training abroad; or 3) attended a summer EFL training program in Niger. Teachers trained in other countries generally came from neighboring countries such as Ghana and Nigeria where English is an official language. Besides these three options, there are EFL teachers in Niger who actually have no training at all in teaching EFL or in teaching in general. It is important to note that a large majority of EFL teachers in Niger (95%) are Nigerien nationals.

In this context of a diversely-trained teacher workforce in Niger and the lack of standardization of local educator preparation programs, the purpose of this study is to look

into any possible connections, if at all, between teachers' language teaching instructional methods and their training. The findings of the study provide insight about Niger, a country whose EFL teaching force and methods are not known outside of its borders.

Method

Setting, Population, and Sample

Data for this study were taken from a larger data-gathering effort supported by a grant from the United States Department of State (Wiens, Andrei, et al., 2018). The population for this study consisted of all of the middle school and high school EFL teachers in Niger (N = 1960). A total of 609 surveys were received from teachers for a response rate of 31.1%. The sample had an average of 7.43 years of experience teaching English. Teachers reported that 89% taught in public schools while 68% of teachers indicated that they taught in rural schools. Participants were asked to identify their teacher training as either ENS (13.7%), FLSH (51.1%), trained in other country (11%), summer training (2.7%), no teacher training (20.6%), or other. Participants were able to mark more than one answer; however, for this study only participants that selected one of those options were included (percentages presented above are for the sample used in this study only, n = 519). Participants that selected "other" were also not included.

Procedures

All Nigerien EFL teachers were sent paper surveys through regional teacher supervisors. As Nigerien teachers generally do not have access to computers or the internet, online surveys were not practical. Anecdotal evidence suggested this was the first time many of the participants had ever participated in a research study or been asked to complete a survey of this kind. A phone number was provided for participants to call and ask questions related to the completion of the survey which many participants called with a variety of questions regarding the survey. Teachers were asked to complete their surveys and return them to their regional supervisors within one week. The regional supervisors then returned the surveys *en mass* to the research team. Once the surveys were received, they were given confidential identification numbers and names were removed prior to data entry.

The list of strategies in the survey was created based on information from the teachers and teacher trainers in Niger. Thus, the strategies included in the survey were relevant to the local context and were informed by teacher professional development topics, by what teacher trainers expected to see in the classrooms, and what they actually saw. The instrument itself was a self-report of instructional practices. These inventory of practices were initially created by a member of the research team who was a teacher trainer of EFL teachers. The instructional practices were then reviewed by a local teacher trainer as well as two former EFL teachers to ensure that the items listed were clear and that the Nigerien EFL teachers would understand them as intended. The survey was constructed in English and translated into French as it is the *lingua franca* in the country and is the only language that all the EFL teachers would know. Two professional interpreters who had many years of experience with EFL education in Niger translated the survey into French separately. After translation, the two French versions were compared and differences between the two versions were reconciled by the interpreters. Finally, French-speaking members of the research team who work regularly with Nigerien EFL teachers, proof-read and edited the French for clarity and cultural appropriateness. Due to the assumption that the EFL teachers had differing levels of English language ability, it was determined that it would be better to include both languages. The final version of the survey included both the French and the original English. Participants

were assured their responses would remain confidential, and no participant names were connected or stored with the data. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the Niger Ministry of Education in accordance with human subjects research guidelines.

Measures

Data for this study were taken from a larger survey on EFL teachers in Niger (Wiens, Andrei, et al., 2018; Wiens, Jang, Liu, Anassour, & Smith, 2018). The participants were asked, “How often do you use the following in your class?” They could select “daily”, “weekly”, “monthly”, “almost never”, or “never”. There were twenty-five different instructional practices listed, including items such as “student centered discussion”, “explicit grammar instruction”, and “translation” among others (see Table 1).

Analysis

To answer the research questions, the descriptive data from the sample of teachers were examined to determine the most frequently used practices among EFL teachers in Niger. To answer the second question, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted (Comrey & Lee, 1998) on the teacher responses to reduce the number of variables being examined in a meaningful theoretical and empirical format. Then, an EFA was used because of the novel context of the research. It was not appropriate to impose a factor structure from literature published outside of West Africa on data from Niger. Therefore, this was the best strategy to allow the data to determine the factor structure. After completing the EFA on the twenty-five teaching methods a multivariate analysis of variance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996) was employed to determine if there were differences in the instructional practices of the EFL teachers trained in different ways. Post-hoc tests were conducted using Tukey HSD (honestly significant difference) analysis to better understand the relationships between groups (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). To help understand if professional development and experience might explain the difference in the MANOVA results, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted using the amount of professional development in English the teachers received in the last year and the number of years of teaching experience as covariates.

Finally, to answer the third research question and to understand if early-career teachers and later career teachers showed different associations between training and practice the participants were split in two groups: 1) teachers in the first five years of teaching, 2) teachers with more than five years of teaching experience. Then the MANOVA analysis described above was conducted again with these two populations separately. All analyses were conducted by the first author using SPSS version 24 (IBM, 2016).

Results

What instructional methods are EFL teachers in Niger employing in their classrooms?

The descriptive statistics were examined to understand the most commonly used instructional practices for Nigerien EFL teachers. Descriptive results are shown in Table 1 in order of the most common practices to least commonly used practices. The most commonly used practices are “use of the blackboard” ($M = 4.94$), “sentences” ($M = 4.74$), and “writing exercises” ($M = 4.70$). The least commonly used practices are “grammar instruction in a language other than English” ($M = 2.44$), “narratives” ($M = 2.43$), and “listening to authentic recordings” ($M = 1.51$). For full results, consult Table 1. These descriptive data provided an indication of the predominance of traditional instructional methods used by Nigerien EFL teachers.

Table 2. EFA Structure Matrix: Factor Loadings

	Factor		
	Traditional	Communicative	Writing Intensive
Pair work, group work		.558	
Peer review		.507	
Student centered discussion		.539	
Teacher led discussion		.416	
Encouragement, praise, reward		.531	
Translation	.685		
Student created language		.617	
Speaking activities not including what is done during the warm-up		.548	
Genuine student production		.663	
Lecture	.573		
Listening to authentic recordings			.458
Paragraphs			.528
Essays			.582
Narratives			.631
Games, songs		.507	
Visual aids (photos, realia, etc.)		.606	
Tasks (real world activities)		.565	
Grammar instruction in a language other than English	.688		

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Is the training EFL teachers in Niger received prior to beginning their careers associated with differences in the instructional methods they employ? An EFA was used to group the twenty-five strategies into more manageable analytical groups. Initial examination of the Scree Plot as well as Eigen Values determined that a three-factor structure best fit the data. It was determined that using principal axis factoring with a Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization provided the cleanest factor structure for the data (Comrey & Lee, 1998). Results can be seen in Table 2. Variables were limited to factor loadings of at least .300 and were placed in the factors with the highest factor loading. Six variables did not fit in the factor structure and were dropped, “use of blackboard”, “sentences”, “writing exercises”, “drills”, “copying”, and “reading from the book”. The factors were named based on methods that are mentioned in the literature (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011) for which definitions more closely related to the groups created as follows (with alpha values included):

Factor 1: Traditional ($\alpha = .460$)

Factor 2: Communicative ($\alpha = .793$)

Factor 3: Writing Intensive ($\alpha = .675$)

While the factor loadings and the Cronbach’s alpha values listed above were not optimal, it was decided to proceed with the three-factor analysis due to the necessity of having a reduced

item strategy for analysis. These factors were then used for follow-up analyses of teaching methods in a more concise manner. Descriptive data for these factors included that they had different mean scores: Traditional ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.01$); Communicative ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .84$); and Writing Intensive ($M = 3.59$, $SD = .76$). Pair-sampled T-tests (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003) indicated that the mean differences between each of these new variables were statistically significant ($p < .001$). This analysis showed empirical support that the teaching strategies can be grouped together according to selected three factors and that Nigerian EFL teachers employ these strategies at different frequencies.

Table 3. Factor Correlations

	Traditional	Communicative	Writing Intensive
Traditional	1	.193*	.153*
Communicative	.193*	1	.396*
Writing Intensive	.153*	.396*	1

* $p < .001$

Next, the training group differences on the combined teaching practices variables were analyzed. Prior to conducting the MANOVA, assumptions were checked (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). First, Mahalanobis distance was calculated to check for outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Two cases were deemed to be outside of the acceptable distance of 16.27. These two cases were deleted, leaving 517 cases for continued analysis. Visual scatter plots were examined and determined to be acceptable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Shapiro-Wilk tests for normality were all significant ($p < .001$) and normality was assumed, which determined later analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Correlation analysis to test for multicollinearity were within an acceptable range for MANOVA (see Table 3). Box's test of equality of covariance matrices was acceptable ($p = .368$). Levene's test of equality of error variances was also acceptable with all training categories greater than $p = .05$. Descriptive results for the groups on the three EFL teaching strategies are shown in Table 4. Due to uncertainty about normality testing, Wilks' Lambda analysis was examined for the MANOVA results (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). There was a significant difference found in the MANOVA analysis ($F = 4.018$, $p < .001$). Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests found significant pairwise differences in the communicative factor. Teachers trained in other countries used communicative teaching strategies less frequently than their peers trained in the ENS programs, FLSH, and those with no training ($p < .05$). Importantly, there were differences in the use of teaching strategies based on the preservice training that Nigerian EFL teachers received.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics: Teaching Preference by Training

		Mean	SD
Traditional	None	3.288	.991
	ENS	2.902	1.011
	FLSH	3.092	.988
	Other Country	3.361	.950
	Summer Only	2.962	.943
	Total	3.134	.993
Communicative	None	2.332	.835
	ENS	2.454	.711
	FLSH	2.537	.793
	Other Country	2.886	.951
	Summer Only	2.962	.935
	Total	2.530	.828
Writing Intensive	None	3.418	.702
	ENS	3.660	.716
	FLSH	3.631	.687
	Other Country	3.412	.871
	Summer Only	3.751	.824
	Total	3.568	.725

Because the six removed variables from the factor structure were among the most frequently used teaching strategies, a follow-up analysis was conducted on these variables individually to see if there were group differences on these variables. One-way analysis of variance (Hinkle et al., 2003) was conducted and found that of the six strategies, only “copying” showed between group differences $F = 4.993$, $p = .001$. Post-hoc tests indicated that the group with no preservice training used the copying strategy more frequently than did the ENS, FLSH, and those trained in other countries ($p < .05$ for all pairs). Teachers with no training relied on the copying strategy more than did their peers. This finding reinforces the association between training and instructional methods used by EFL teachers.

Do associations between training and instructional methods continue past the first five years of teaching experience? There were two potentially confounding variables in this study that needed to be included in the analysis. There is clear evidence that teachers improve in their instruction at least for the first few years of teaching (Attebery et al., 2015; Harris & Sass, 2011; Rivkin, et al., 2005). Additionally, there is ample evidence that teacher professional development can impact teaching practices after teachers leave their EPPs (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Thurlings & den Brok, 2017). Therefore, it was important to control for these variables and determine if there was still a significant group difference. In

the survey there was a question asking participants to indicate how many professional development opportunities they had in English in the last year. Another question asked teachers to write in the number of years, including the current year, of teaching experience they had. Since there was no direct measure of how much professional development teachers had experienced over the course of their career, a new variable was created, multiplying teacher years of experience with the amount of professional development in the last year. This new variable was then used as a covariate in a MANCOVA (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996) to examine the group differences. The new variable had a mean of 11.39 and standard deviation of 12.653. MANCOVA analysis showed that there were still statistical group differences in the combined teaching factors even after controlling for professional development and years of experience, $F = 3.551, p < .001$. To test the relationship between professional development experience and instructional methods, correlations were calculated between the new variable and the teaching practices. The correlations indicate that years of experience in professional development are significantly related to instructional methods. For communicative ($r = .146, p = .001$) and writing intensive strategies ($r = .166, p < .001$), there was a positive correlation; however, in traditional methods there was a negative correlation between experience and use of these instructional methods ($r = -.172, p < .001$).

Table 5. Characteristics of Teaching Experience Groups

Group	First Five Years	More than Five Years
No Training	75	19
ENS	40	24
FLSH	93	146
Other Country	30	21
Summer Only	7	3
Total	245	213

Next, the dataset was split into two groups: teachers in their first five years of teaching and teachers with more than five years of teaching. The new participant numbers, shown in Table 5, left 245 in the first five years group and 213 in the more than five years group. Wilks' Lambda MANOVA test showed that the teachers in their first five years were significantly different on the combined dependent variables based on their preservice training $F = 2.935, p = .001$. Similar to the entire sample, the strongest difference was in the Communicative teaching strategies ($F = 4.506, p = .002$). Posthoc Tukey tests showed that the group with no training used these strategies less than both the other country group and the summer only group. Likewise, the FLSH group also reported using these strategies less than the other country group and the summer only group (all $p < .05$). Wilk's Lambda MANOVA results did not show a significant difference among training groups in the teachers with more than five years of experience, $F = 1.56, p = .099$. This analysis reveals that the association between training and teaching was only found among teachers early in their career and was no longer present in teachers with more than five years of teaching experience.

The analysis conducted in this study provides important links between teacher training and teaching practices. Descriptive statistics and mean group difference testing provide information on teaching practices in Niger and how these are associated with training in Niger. The implications of these findings will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

Discussion

The debate over the purpose and place of in-service and preservice training as well as EPPs is occurring around the world, and there is an ever-increasing need for empirical research to contribute to debate. This study can contribute to this debate because it presents data from a context that has not experienced much empirical research, but examines universal educational issues. This study provides a description of the instructional methods EFL teachers in Niger use and shows an important association between preservice preparation and training, but also indicates that those differences might not last long into a teachers' career. In addition, the findings provide an overall general picture of language teaching in the "localized environment" (Burns, 2008) of Niger, which is relevant to the literature on EFL teaching currently lacking information on this country.

Instructional Methods used by EFL Teachers in Niger

Aside from "using the blackboard", which nearly all teachers reported using daily, the most popular instructional methods EFL teachers used were writing, grammar exercises, and drills. Herrera and Murry (2016) classify these in the grammatical/grammar-based domain. Nigerien EFL teachers were much less likely to use communicative strategies even while Western literature supports these methods as more effective (Echevarria, Short, & Vogt, 2008). These differences were seen in examining both the individual methods and the composited items where communicative strategies were the least used by teachers by a significant amount. Meanwhile writing strategies were the most frequently used of the composited strategies. However, significantly more research would be required to understand if these strategies are appropriate for teaching in Nigerien schools.

Preservice Training is Connected to Instructional Methods

The data also showed an association between preservice EPP and the use of specific teaching strategies. EFL teachers who were trained in traditional EPPs were more likely to use communicative methods. This finding is not unexpected, nevertheless, it adds to the literature and shows the context of EFL teachers in Niger is similar to that of EFL teachers elsewhere. Among the entire EFL teaching population, the most significant differences were found in the use of Communicative strategies. Teachers trained in other countries from the region were less likely to use these strategies than their peers. It is impossible to know why this is the case because these individuals could have been trained in any number of ways. Meanwhile, EFL teachers with no training were more likely to use the copying strategy. These findings reinforce the potential impact of EPPs to impact teacher instructional practices. Among EFL teachers in Niger different pathways to the profession report the use of different strategies. These differences remained even after controlling, roughly, for experience and professional development.

Training Differences Disappear after Five Years of Teaching

It is important to note that the significant differences in the use of teaching strategies did not remain among teachers with more than five years of teaching experience. In fact, the differences between strategies use and the various pathways to teaching were apparent only among teachers in their first five years of teaching. Teachers have been shown to change their teaching practices over the first three to five years of teaching (Attebery et al., 2015; Harris & Sass, 2011; Rivkin et al., 2005), and perhaps this is what is happening in Niger. However, another potential explanation is that teacher training in Niger has changed in the last five years. The number of teachers trained through a traditional EPP (ENS) in their first five years of teaching was nearly double that of the group of teachers with more than five years of

teaching. This is due, in part, to the fact that the ENS program is relatively new. Also, the younger teacher group has a much larger portion of teachers with no training at all (75 to 19). Therefore, these differences may also be attributable to changes in the teaching workforce.

Limitations and Future Research

The first limitation for the study is the reliance on self-report data on teacher practices. Limited resources made it impossible to directly observe the Nigerien teachers spread throughout the country. It is possible that teachers simply responded as they thought the researchers would want them to, especially since the research was funded by the American Cultural Center who provides professional development to teachers. Still, the teachers reported low levels of professional development and many reported no preservice training. Thus, it is difficult to know if the teachers would know what the “right” answer would be to these questions. Future research would benefit from direct observation of teachers to fully understand the enacted teaching strategies. Interviews with the teachers would also provide helpful information about the relationship of training to their current instructional practices and how they take into consideration the identities and motivations of the students in choosing their methods as Brown (2002) suggested. In addition, it is not certain why teachers used some methods over others, and this would be a good avenue for future research.

Another important issue is that this was a cross-sectional survey. Therefore, some of the teachers had been classroom teachers for many years. Additionally, this analysis examined relationships and did not attempt to prove causality. It is not possible to determine from the data collected for this study the reason for why teachers in certain groups seem to favor different instructional practices more than their peers from other preservice groups. This is certainly an area of future investigation.

Recommendations

The research presented in this study provides clear recommendations for policy makers, teacher educators, and school administrators. The data show that preservice teacher training is associated with teacher instructional choices. Nigerien EFL teachers taught differently depending on their training. All policy makers face difficult decisions over the allotment of resources and what requirements are necessary to ensure effective education. Data presented here supports recommendations to promote preservice teacher training. However, it also indicates that preservice teacher training is not sufficient. Professional development throughout the teaching career is required to promote teacher adoption of beneficial instructional methods.

Conclusion

In an international climate where the value of EPPs is under considerable debate, this study provides guidance about the association of preservice teacher training and instructional decisions in Niger, a developing West African country. This study provides the first information about the instructional choices that Nigerien EFL teachers make. Teachers with different training teach in different ways in Niger; however, more research is needed to understand why these differences occur. As resources are scarce in Niger – and similarly situated countries – policy makers should consider the lasting impacts of teacher training on instructional choices of teachers and how this may impact students.

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