

DISCRIMINATION IN THE TESOL PROFESSION IN MEXICO: VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS

By

E. E. GARCIA-PONCE *

M. M. LENGELING **

I. MORA-PABLO ***

* Associate Professor, Department de Lenguas, Universidad de Guanajuato, Guanajuato, Mexico.

** Teacher Trainer, Department de Lenguas, Universidad de Guanajuato, Guanajuato, Mexico.

*** Faculty Member, Department de Lenguas, Universidad de Guanajuato, Guanajuato, Mexico.

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ABSTRACT

Over the last three decades, research has centred the attention on discrimination within TESOL motivated by issues concerning the distinction between native- and non-native English speaking teachers. However, based upon the authors' experience as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and researchers, it is claimed that discrimination in this field is not restricted to acts related to nativeness; their range is far more extensive. In order to show this, the present study set out to investigate the range of discriminatory acts that EFL teachers have experienced. By drawing on data collected through online questionnaires, the findings suggest that a high number of Mexican teachers in the field of TESOL have faced a wide range of discriminatory acts, which are profession-related, physical, and linguistic in nature. The findings also suggest that these perceived discriminatory acts impact in complex ways, from no effects, frustration, demotivation, low self-esteem, to positive effects. This study raises intriguing questions as to the effectiveness of movements and position statements to encourage discrimination-free practices within TESOL, and highlights the need to raise awareness amongst the whole educational community, involving administrators, teachers, learners, and parents, to eradicate these discriminatory acts.

Keywords: Awareness-raising Processes, Discrimination, Discriminatory Practices, Mexican Teacher, Non-native Speaker, TESOL.

INTRODUCTION

More than three decades ago, research efforts were directed towards evidencing and eradicating the discriminatory acts that non-native speaking professionals go through in the field of TESOL. These discriminatory acts have been mainly motivated by the distinction between the native and non-native status of professionals. Research discourse suggests that these discriminatory acts still exist in the field, despite the high number of non-native speaking teachers (80%, approximately) (Braine, 2010). Based upon the authors' experience as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and researchers, it is suggested that these discriminatory practices are motivated by not only the status of the language (native versus non-native), but also

by a wide range of acts which are complex in nature.

Following the above, the purpose of this study is threefold. Firstly, it intends to document that discrimination still exists, despite the ongoing movements and position statements stipulated to eradicate it within the field of TESOL. It secondly explores the kind of discriminatory acts that Mexican professionals that participated in this study have experienced in this field. Thirdly, it aims to determine the effects of these acts, if any, on these professionals' identity, emotions, perceptions, self-concepts, and decision-making concerning their language teaching careers. These aims are evident in the following research questions (RQs) which guide the studies are as follows,

- How often have the Mexican professionals within TESOL

faced discriminatory practices initiated against them?

- What is the nature of the discriminatory practices that these professionals have experienced?
- What are the effects of these practices, if any, on these professionals' identity, emotions perceptions, self-concepts, and decision-making?

1. Background

At this point, it is useful to define the concept of discrimination. Kohler-Hausmann (2011) mentions that "discrimination is an action or practice that excludes, disadvantages, or merely differentiates between individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of some ascribed or perceived trait, although the definition itself is subject to substantial debate." Thornicroft, Rose, Kassam, and Sartorius (2007, cited in Lengeling, Crawford, Mora Pablo, and Blomquist, 2016) divide the problem into more specific categories: ignorance, which is a problem of knowledge; prejudice, which is a problem of attitude; and discrimination, which is a problem of behaviour- and go on to suggest that if public knowledge can be changed, then so can the problem of discrimination. However, it is important for the purpose of the study and data collection that a clear definition of discrimination within TESOL is used. It is thus defined as prejudiced actions or omissions motivated by gender, ethnicity, temporal or permanent physical impediment, and linguistic competence (involving pronunciation, accent or any linguistic aspect related to the language), which initiate inequalities for the obtainment of resources or opportunities in the profession of foreign language teaching.

Eventhough the TESOL profession professes to be open to diversity of all speakers of English, discrimination is still believed to be part of it (Mora Pablo, 2011). The fact that the discrimination still exists in TESOL is indeed a problem, given that around 80% of English teachers are non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) (Braine, 2010). This discrimination under these circumstances in this day and age comes as a surprise to many, especially to those from within the NNEST movement such as Kamhi-Stein (2004) who has worked hard to raise awareness of the issues and combat it. Within the TESOL profession, there are position statements, which promote the idea of diversity of

languages and people's background. This principle is supported by the TESOL International Association, which does its part to eradicate discrimination, as suggested in the following position statement,

TESOL is opposed to discrimination that affects the employment and professional lives of the TESOL members on the grounds of race, ethnicity, nationality, language background, disability, health /medical condition, including HIV /AIDS, age, religion, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation (TESOL, 2016).

Despite all of the effort, there is still discrimination all over the world for TESOL professionals (Braine, 2010; Kamhi-Stein, 2004). It is evident that teachers, more specifically non-native speaking teachers, often face discrimination in the labour market due to the fact that English is not their native language. One main problem of the profession is the racism, ignorance, and prejudice, which may be involved in the very use of the terms referring to English teachers who have a first language other than English. For more than three decades, this has led to a vast amount of literature and ongoing discussions of the non-native speaker teacher fallacy (see Holliday, 2005; Kachru, 1992; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Kubota, 2004; Kubota and Lin, 2009; Llorca, 2005; Medgyes, 1996; Mora Pablo, 2011; Moussu and Llorca, 2008).

Both the racial aspect and the worse treatment of one group are involved with prejudice and discrimination in TESOL due to the different treatment of NNESTs when, for example, they do not obtain employment at the same rate as Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) (Braine, 2010), or are paid less (Lengeling et al., 2016), or there is a general prejudice against them (Braine, 2010). Ignorance could be the cause of prejudice and discrimination. Of course, all of this is difficult to detect unless large-scale research projects bring these to light. However, the consensus in the NNEST movement is that the problem of prejudice and discrimination is still widespread (Llorca, 2005), and when they use the word discrimination, they are using it in a way that is consistent with the definitions given above, unfortunately.

Much needs to be done within the NNEST movement itself, as well as other places. Some believe that research should

continue as it has from within the movement, especially in regard to the positive aspects that NNESTs bring to the classroom. However, Kumaravadivelu (2006) maintains that there is no need for further research like this. Though he may think that there are enough of these kinds of studies, the problem seems to be that the right people do not know about these studies, namely those on the outside of the NNEST movement, i.e. NESTs, administrations and stakeholders, as well as students and their parents. In other words, the reason that the problem of prejudice and ignorance against NNESTs still exists may be due in large part to ignorance, not malevolence, of students, teachers, and the fact that administrators and stakeholders believe that students and parents prefer NESTs, despite the lack of evidence for holding such a belief (Selvi, 2014).

To date, there has been limited research on this topic in Mexico. Only a limited number of studies have been carried out to explore the non-native speaker teacher (Clemente and Higgins, 2008). In response to this, the present study set out to explore and address the issues of non-native speaking teachers, who have perceived that they have been discriminated against within TESOL in Mexico. By drawing on data collected through an online questionnaire, the study makes a contribution to the research literature and, particularly, the NNEST movement by providing new insights into the likely frequency, nature, and influence of discriminatory acts that they feel they have experienced within their profession. It is hoped that this study will help raise awareness of the prejudice and discrimination against professionals within TESOL. Specifically, it is hoped that the evidence discussed in this paper is useful for those who are not within the movement who may believe that this kind of discrimination does not exist. Besides ethical considerations, and the growth of English Language Teaching by demand or through universal language programmes such as the one being implemented by the Mexican Government (Davies, 2009), it is in interest of all involved in the profession to take discrimination seriously and start changing public opinion.

2. Methodology: Virtual Context, Participants, and Data Collection and Analysis

The primary aim of the study was to investigate – from a qualitative perspective – the frequency and range of

discriminatory practices that professionals in the field of TESOL have felt that they have experienced. It was particularly important to adopt a qualitative perspective because this perspective would allow the researchers to explore these perceived experiences in depth and to make sense of these phenomena in terms of the meanings these professionals have (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The study also aimed to develop an understanding of the extent to which these perceived discriminatory practices influenced their identity, emotions, and decisions concerning their teaching career.

In order to attain the above, an online questionnaire (on Survey Monkey) was designed containing seven (bipolar, multiple choice, and open-ended) items, as summarised below,

- Have you ever been discriminated against?
- If your answer is 'yes', could you please describe the incident?
- How did this incident influence your perception of the TESOL profession?
- How did this incident influence your teaching practice?
- How often have these incidents taken place?
- Have you witness discrimination against other colleagues in this profession?
- Could you please mention what happened?

Before administering the questionnaire, previous and current colleagues who were working in TESOL were contacted on Facebook. As an initial step, they were asked whether they have perceived or experienced some kind of discrimination against them in this field. If their answer was positive, they were invited to participate in this study by answering the seven-item questionnaire found through a link. In total, 43 professionals responded the online questionnaire. The participants were Mexican, 36 female and 7 male, and claimed that they have worked in this field for more than 10 years.

The analysis of the elicited data firstly consisted of calculating simple percentages of the participants' perceived frequency of the discriminatory practices against them. Percentages were also calculated for the kind of discriminatory acts that they felt they have

experienced. This firstly involved categorising the discriminatory acts by identifying extracts manually, and attributing them to theme categories and sub-categories which emerged from the data. Categorisation such as this facilitated the identification of patterns, themes, and meaning (Berg, 2009). Percentages of the kind of discriminatory acts were then calculated by counting the total number of each kind of discriminatory act, multiplying the result by 100 and then dividing the result by the total number of discriminatory acts.

Moreover, the categories which suggested the influence of the discriminatory acts on the participants' identify, emotions, and decision-making were identified. The percentages of these categories were also calculated by counting the kind of influence, multiplying the result by 100 and then dividing the result by the total number of categories which suggested the influence of discriminatory acts. For the analysis, some extracts were selected and put into tables.

All participants were informed of their right to withdraw from using their responses for this study, and provided consent. Complying with their right to be protected from identification, the participants' names and identities were carefully anonymised in the data. Instead, the word 'Participant' and an identification number are used to refer to them in the extracts, analysis, and discussions.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 The Frequency and Nature of Discriminatory Acts within TESOL

In order to address RQ1 (i.e., how often have the Mexican professionals within TESOL faced discriminatory practices initiated against them?), this section begins by presenting and discussing the findings into the perceived frequency of the discriminatory acts that the participants perceived to have faced. When asked whether they have experienced discrimination against them within TESOL, an overwhelming 76.74% of the participants (33) felt that they have faced some kind of discrimination against them, as shown in Figure 1.

Based on this high proportion, it can therefore be assumed that discrimination within TESOL still exists, despite the efforts of ongoing movements and associations. 13.95% of the

participants (6) claimed that they have not perceived any kind of discrimination. What is also interesting from this table is that 9.30% of the participants (4) were not sure if they have experienced discrimination against them within TESOL. It is possible that these four instances of uncertainty may be motivated by the fact that discriminatory practices are not frequently evident. Moreover, drawing on the claim that members of a group, in this case, TESOL, can unknowingly legitimise the characteristics of inferiority attributed to them by that group (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Nayar, 2002), the possibility that these four instances of uncertainty may be due to self-discrimination (discriminatory acts which they attribute to themselves, e.g., non-native pronunciation) is suggested.

When the participants were asked about the frequency of these discriminatory practices, the following was found in Figure 2.

As shown in Figure 2, the results are varied. One third of the

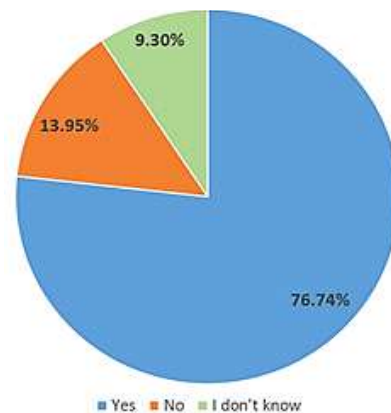


Figure 1. Percentage of Participants that have Perceived Discrimination against them within TESOL

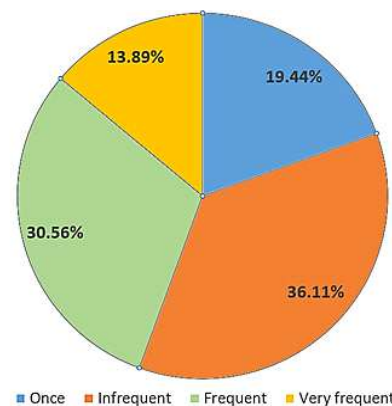


Figure 2. Percentage of the Frequency of Discrimination Perceived by the Participants

participants (36.11%) indicated that the discriminatory acts have been infrequent, but another third (30.56%) felt that these incidents have been frequent. 19.44% of the participants reported that the discriminatory acts have only happened once, but 13.89% felt that the acts have been very frequent. Despite these varied results, further evidence suggests that discriminatory acts within TESOL are complex in nature, and influential on the participants' identity, emotions and decision-making regardless of their frequency. In addressing RQ2 (i.e., what is the nature of the discriminatory practices that these professionals have experienced?), it is therefore explored the kind of discriminatory acts that the participants reported that they have experienced in the field of TESOL. Table 1 summarises these data.

Table 1 shows a wide range of discriminatory acts that the participants perceived to have faced within the TESOL profession, involving acts which are profession-related, linguistic, and physical in nature. The profession-related acts involve practices concerning 1) other professionals' misperceptions of the TESOL profession, 2) inexperience, 3) job opportunities for professionals of other fields, 4) importance for language certifications over a degree, and 5) favouritism for other colleagues. In the case of linguistic acts, the participants perceived discriminatory acts in terms of 1) their non-native pronunciation and 2) status of the L2. Interestingly, the perceptual data suggest that the perceived discrimination within TESOL also involved practices related to 1) physical appearance, 2) gender, and 3) physical impediment (i.e., pregnancy, motherhood,

and illness). These data corroborate the findings of previous studies (see, for example, Lengeling et al., 2016; Mahboob and Golden, 2013; Selvi, 2014), which have shown that professionals in the field of TESOL go through discriminatory practices concerning their non-native pronunciation and status of the language. However, the findings of this study reveal that discrimination within TESOL is not only alive, but also complex in nature. In order to show this, the complexity of discriminatory practices within the TESOL profession was examined. Due to practical constraints, this study is unable to include all the evidence of discriminatory practices that was found in the data. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate the nature of these practices in order to raise awareness amongst the educational community.

3.1.1 Discrimination: Misperceptions and Devaluation of the TESOL Profession

28.1% of the responses to the online questionnaire suggested that the participants have felt discrimination from employers and other colleagues from other fields, as suggested in Extract 1.

Extract 1 Quote from Participant 3:

"It is unfair that they [employers] underestimate the work I do in the classroom. They don't see that; they think that we play with students in class."

The statement from Participant 3 suggests the general feeling that her colleagues at her workplace misperceived her language teaching practice, as evident in "they think that we only play with students in the classroom." A similar feeling of discrimination was shared by Participant 9,

Extract 2 Quote from Participant 9:

"I believe that unfortunately, our profession is perceived as a trade, rather than a formal profession with possibilities of academic and professional growth. We, English teachers, are not taken into consideration for making decisions. I have seen that when your bosses don't know what applied linguistics or language teaching is, they ignore or avoid you and that is also discrimination."

Again, Extract 2 reveals the Participant 9's feeling that the TESOL profession was misperceived and devalued, as suggested in "our profession is perceived as a trade, rather than a formal profession." What is interesting from her statement is that she perceived that this discriminatory

Profession-related	
Misperceptions of the TESOL profession	28.1% (18)
Inexperience	6.2% (4)
Job opportunities for professionals of other fields	4.6% (3)
Importance for language certifications over a degree	4.6% (3)
Favouritism for other colleagues	3.1% (2)
Linguistic	
Non-native pronunciation	12.5% (8)
Nativeness	9.3% (6)
Physical	
Physical appearance	12.5% (8)
Gender	10.9% (7)
Pregnancy	3.1% (2)
Motherhood	3.1% (2)
Illness	1.5% (1)

Table 1. Kind of Discriminatory Acts within the TESOL Profession

practice was initiated by her bosses. In “they ignore or avoid you and that is also discrimination,” she suggests a perception of this avoidance as discrimination from her bosses. Other responses suggested that these misperceptions and devaluation not only influenced the way they perceived themselves (self-concepts), but also limited the resources and facilities that they claimed they are entitled to as part of their teaching activities, as suggested in Extract 3.

Extract 3 Quote from Participant 8:

“I was discriminated upon by other engineering teachers who said that English teaching is not an important career and, therefore, whatever I said was not important. This [discriminatory act] has resulted in not having any access to material or the interactive room which is used for languages because they thought it [teaching English] was not important.”

Extract 3 also suggests that Participant 8 felt that her language teaching practice was devalued by other colleagues from other fields. It also suggests that this perceived devaluation, in “according to them, it [English teaching] is not important,” resulted in limiting the access to resources for her teaching activities at her workplace. Due to the fact that these discriminatory acts are based on the participants' perceptions, the study was unable to corroborate the extent to which these acts happened in real practice. However, further evidence added weight to the argument that the misperceptions and devaluation of other colleagues not only influenced the participants' self-concepts, but also limited the resources and benefits as part of their teaching positions, as follows.

Extract 4 Quote from Participant 11:

“In some cases, they [teachers] are not considered part of the labour market, since they are not part of the payroll, they don't have official IDs, they don't have the right for social welfare, or making decisions.”

Participant 11's statement reveals a perception that due to the devaluation of language teaching, EFL teachers were not considered part of the teaching staff, suggesting that teachers at this school do not benefit from social welfare, and are not taken into consideration for decision-making processes in this institution.

So far, the evidence suggests that the participants felt that other colleagues' misperceptions and devaluation of the TESOL profession was a kind of discrimination which not only influenced the way they perceived themselves and their teaching activities, but also limited opportunities to use resources and obtain welfare benefits as part of their teaching positions. In the remainder of this paper, the perceptual data suggest that there were other kinds of discriminatory acts, which influenced both their perceptions of their teaching practices and their role in their workplace activities.

3.1.2 Discrimination: Preference for other Colleagues, Professionals of other Fields, and a Language Certification over a Degree

The participants' responses also suggested that the favouritism of their boss for other colleagues was another kind of discrimination.

Extract 5 Quote from Participant 38:

“More than being discriminated against, I have seen that in several occasions how the favouritism for other colleagues highly influences our opportunities that we can have as teachers here.”

Extract 6 Quote from Participant 21:

“At my school, there are personal preferences for other colleagues. Little do they pay attention to our teaching achievements.”

As evident in Extracts 5 and 6, the Participant 38 and Participant 21's statements reveal their perceptions, that favouritism at their schools influenced their working conditions and detracted from their achievements, as suggested in “the favouritism for other colleagues highly influences our opportunities that we can have as teachers here” and “little do they pay attention to our teaching achievements.”

The responses also pointed to the participants' perceptions of discrimination while being at disadvantage vis-à-vis professionals from other fields during job applications.

Extract 7 Quote from Participant 36:

“When applying for jobs, they accept any professional for language teaching positions only with knowledge of the language, and not necessarily a teacher with a BA in

TESOL.”

Extract 8 Quote from Participant 17:

“I have tried several times to join the basic education system. However, I have been rejected because they argue that my [academic] profile is not the appropriate, giving preference to psychologists in two times and once to pedagogue.”

In general, Extracts 7 and 8 suggest that these two professionals perceived that there was a certain preference for professionals from other fields. In “they accept any professional for language teaching positions only with knowledge of the language,” Participant 36 suggests that she perceived a preference for professionals with language knowledge over professionals in the field of TESOL. In the case of Participant 17, she claims that she has been unsuccessful three times in entering the basic education system, which, according to her, gives greater preference to psychologists and pedagogues than professionals in the field of TESOL. Similar incidents were perceived by 4.6% participants who claim that during hiring processes, there is preference for language certifications over teacher training certificates.

Extract 9 Quote from Participant 42:

“In a university, they give a language certificate more weight than a BA in TESOL. Both are important but it's sad because anyone without a BA has the same or more opportunities.”

Extract 9 reveals the Participant 42's feeling that language certifications weigh more than a teacher training certificate, which may sometimes take several years to obtain. Thus, as suggested in “both are important but it's sad,” this participant suggests an uneasy feeling that any person with a language certificate can obtain a job which provides them with similar working conditions and benefits. The perception that language certifications over teacher training certificates is a kind of discrimination was supported by the following extract 10.

Extract 10 Quote from Participant 5:

“There is favouritism for someone who has more language certificate than others. I have seen that these people are underestimated or made redundant.”

Again, Participant 5's statement suggests that a language certificate is perceived to be more important than a teacher training certificate for getting a job in TESOL, at least in Mexico. What is alarming is that the lack of these language certificates can be considered as factors for redundancy.

3.1.3 Discrimination: Nativeness and Pronunciation

Previous studies have shown how discrimination within TESOL is motivated by the distinction between the native and non-native status of professionals (see Lengeling et al., 2016; Mahboob and Golden, 2013). This study was not the exception; 9.3% of the participants' responses suggested that they have experienced discrimination in terms of their non-native status, as suggested in Extract 11.

Extract 11 Quote from Participant 22:

“It doesn't matter how prepared you are to perform your teaching tasks, if you are not a native speaker, it is going to be a huge limitation to teach the second language.”

As can be seen from Extract 11, Participant 22's statement suggests the feeling, that being an NNEST is a disadvantage compared to being a NEST. In “if you are not a native speaker, it is going to be a huge limitation to teach the second language,” he suggests the perception that the non-native speaking status limits opportunities to work in the TESOL profession. This view was echoed by Participant 39.

Extract 12 Quote from Participant 39:

“The native speaking teachers have better chances to obtain a job in language teaching, not because of their academic formation. The non-native speaking teachers are seen as expendable by both students and bosses.”

Looking at Extract 12, it is apparent the feeling that the native and non-native speaking status is a factor that likely influences the opportunities to teach in the field of TESOL. Moreover, this extract is revealing in two ways. First, it suggests that NESTs have better chances to obtain a teaching position than NNESTs. Second, it is surprising that she perceived that teachers can be made redundant by employers and even learners because of their non-native speaking status. Again, it was not possible to corroborate, whether this discriminatory practice really took place. However, this perception was supported by other responses

(Extracts 13 and 14).

Extract 13 Quote from Participant 42:

"I was discriminated against because of my pronunciation which was not clear and the students complained about it."

Extract 14 Quote from Participant 16:

"I was discriminated because of my accent and my pronunciation when I spoke French. They [employers] made up me excuses not to give me more hours. The students did not want to take classes with me."

As shown in Extracts 13 and 14, Participants 42 and 16 also perceived that they were discriminated against because of their non-native pronunciation. These statements are surprising because they suggest not only that these perceived discriminatory acts were initiated by learners (as in "the students complained about it"), but also that these acts influenced the number of hours that they could teach (in "they [employers] give me excuses not to give me more hours").

In sum, the perceptual data discussed in this section provides further evidence that discrimination can still be initiated by the non-native status of the professionals. These data also suggest that these discriminatory acts were perceived to be initiated by either administrators or learners, influencing in turn the professionals' chances to be part of TESOL and their teaching conditions.

3.1.4 Discrimination: Physical Appearance

Interestingly, an important percentage of responses (12.5%) suggested that discriminatory acts were also initiated because of the teachers' physical appearance. Even though these statements are quite shocking, it is important to mention that there are based on the participants' perceptions.

Extract 15 Quote from Participant 14:

"I think that in the labour market the degrees are not only important, but also clothing [...] I have been told that my clothes are not appropriate for a man."

As suggested in Extract 15, Participant 14 believes that he was discriminated against because of the clothes that he wore at his school. As suggested in "in the labour market the degrees are not only important, but also clothing,"

Participant 14 felt that clothes are equated to BA degrees in TESOL. A similar perception was suggested by Participant 31.

Extract 16 Quote from Participant 31:

"In one occasion, I applied for a job at one private school to teach English. I was rejected because of the fact that I am fat: the institution was not interested in whether I had the knowledge or not, I was judged by my physical appearance."

Again, Participant 31 felt that physical appearance can be an important factor, in this case, for obtaining job opportunities within TESOL. The following two sections provide further evidence that discrimination within TESOL is perceived to involve physical characteristics or impediment of professionals. Despite the fact that these statements are striking, this evidence should be treated carefully because it is not sure whether these discriminatory practices were actually initiated.

3.1.5 Discrimination: Gender

10.9% of the participants' responses (7) suggested that there is discrimination in terms of gender within TESOL. Extracts 17-19 reveal that this kind of discrimination was felt by both female and male teachers.

Extract 17 Quote from Participant 26:

"There are some colleagues who claim that it is an ideal profession for women because it allows us to be at home and become a mother [...] but in general they discriminate against me because I am a woman."

In Extract 17, Participant 26's statement suggests the perception that female teachers are discriminated against because of their gender. It is not sure the extent in which these discriminatory acts had an impact on their teaching activities. However, further evidence interestingly suggested that male teachers also felt discriminated against because of their gender.

Extract 18 Quote from Participant 3:

"While searching job opportunities, I have found Jobs which I cannot apply for because of my gender [...] I have found jobs which are specifically seeking female teachers."

Extract 19 Quote from Participant 41:

"I had a job interview with a kindergarten coordinator and told me that I compulsorily needed to cover the whole academic year, and that I needed to participate in all the school festivals and make crafts with the children. She saw that I was not discouraged and suddenly told me that the mothers will not accept that a man was the teacher of the children and she then thanked me for being there and my time."

As suggested in Extract 18, Participant 3 claims that he has seen job opportunities for female teachers, suggesting a feeling of discrimination because of his gender, as evident in "I have found Jobs which I cannot apply for because of my gender." What is interesting from Extract 19 is that this male teacher claims that he was not given the opportunity to teach at this school because of his gender, in "she saw that I was not discouraged and suddenly told me that the mothers will not accept that a man was the teacher of the children and she then thanked me for being there and my time." These data thus confirm the feeling that discrimination concerning gender relates to not only female but also male teachers.

3.1.6 Discrimination: Motherhood, Pregnancy, and Illness

A minority of participants' responses suggested that other discriminatory acts were initiated because of motherhood (3.1%), pregnancy (3.1%), and illness (1.5%). The following extract shows a statement, which describes an incident during a hiring process which Participant 18 perceived to be a discriminatory act.

Extract 20 Quote from Participant 18:

"One year and a half ago, I suffered from pre-eclampsia during my pregnancy. After this time, my passion for languages and teaching them led me to apply for jobs, but my limitations of this incident were knowledge loss and hearing impairment. When I attended several job interviews I had these limitations, confusing things that gave the employers grounds to say no. Therefore, I was not suitable for the post. They recommended that I wait some time and that they needed a 100% teacher. Knowing what I have gone through, I only faced expressions such as "we call you later," which have made me feel discriminated against and felt that my profession has been truncated because of my health."

This quote from Participant 18 suggests her perception that she was not given the opportunity to work at this school because of her physical condition. It is apparent that this incident is striking, and may be considered as a discriminatory practice. However, it also reveals the other side of the coin; the coordinator's responsibility to hire teachers who are able to speak and teach. All in all, this incident suggests the situations which TESOL teachers may experience when they suffer physical impediments, and the limitations they may face when seeking to get a job within TESOL.

To sum up, a wide range of discriminatory acts has been perceived by 76.74% of the participants (33). It is interesting, yet alarming, to know that discrimination within TESOL goes beyond the native and non-native speaking status of the professionals, involving other acts which are related to the profession, perceptions, and physical characteristics and conditions. Moreover, these discriminatory practices were perceived to not only limit their opportunities to be part of the TESOL, but also influence their teaching activities. Throughout these sections, the authors have emphasised the fact that these practices are based on the participants' feelings and perceptions. However, it should not omit the fact that these perceptions are important in number, suggesting perhaps the alive existence of a wide range of discriminatory acts which influence the professionals' identity, perceptions of the profession, and decisions concerning their teaching careers. In the remainder of this paper, further perceptual data suggests that discriminatory acts within TESOL are influential on these professionals' cognition and decision-making.

3.2 The Influence of Discrimination within TESOL

In order to address RQ3 (i.e., what are the effects of these practices, if any, on these professionals' identity, emotions perceptions, self-concepts, and decision-making?), these remaining sections provide evidence which suggests, as mentioned previously, that discrimination within TESOL influences the professionals' identity, perceptions of the profession, and decision-making, as summarised in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, the majority of the participants' responses (38.6%) suggested that the discriminatory

1	Lack of confidence, low self-esteem, demotivation and frustration	38.6% (17)
2	Resignation and unemployment	18.1% (8)
3	Positive actions	15.9% (7)
4	No influence	13.6% (6)
5	Devaluation of their skills and knowledge	9.0% (4)
6	Study other programmes	4.5% (2)

Table 2. Influence of Discriminatory Acts within the TESOL Profession

practices that they have experienced in the field of TESOL highly impact on their emotions, involving lack of confidence, low self-esteem, demotivation, and frustration. 18.1% of their responses suggested that these practices have compelled them to resign, or left them unemployed. Interestingly, their responses also suggested that the discriminatory practices had beneficial effects on their identity and some decisions (15.9%), and others claimed that these practices did not influence at all (13.6%). A low number of responses suggested that the discriminatory practices led the participants to question their skills and knowledge (9.0%), or study other training programmes (4.5%). The next section explores in greater depth how and the extent to which the discriminatory acts were perceived to have an impact on the participants' identity, emotions, and their decision-making regarding their teaching careers.

3.2.1 Lack of Confidence, Low Self-esteem, Demotivation, and Frustration

As shown in Table 2, the majority of responses suggested that the discriminatory practices were perceived to influence the participants' emotions. The following evidence suggests this Extract 21.

Extract 21 Quote from Participant 13:

"I became very unconfident while teaching the language despite my knowledge. I felt unable to teach a language class."

Extract 22 Quote from Participant 42:

"I felt a little bit unconfident while teaching after that [discriminatory act] because I thought that my students did not like my pronunciation."

As suggested in Extracts 21 and 22, both participants' statements suggest that the discrimination that they perceived against them heightened their lack of

confidence. This lack of confidence led them to question their teaching abilities, as in "I felt unable to teach a language class," and language skills, as suggested in "I thought that my students did not like my pronunciation." Other responses suggested that the perceived discriminatory acts had negative effects on their self-esteem and motivation, as follows.

Extract 23 Quote from Participant 7:

"Low self-esteem and to think that it is pointless to plan a class because they will not appreciate it."

Extract 24 Quote from Participant 39:

"Demotivation, in one word. Sometimes I questioned why would be the reason to plan a good class?"

Extract 25 Quote from Participant 41:

"Sometimes I think that it was a mistake having taken this profession."

What is interesting again is that these participants' feelings led them to question the effectiveness of their teaching activities, as suggested in "it is pointless to plan a class because they will not appreciate it" and "why would be the reason to plan a good class?" In Extract 25, Participant 41 claims that these feelings led her to question her decision of having taken a teacher training programme.

3.2.2 Resignation and Unemployment

As discussed previously, 18.1% of the responses suggested that the perceived discriminatory acts have caused the participants to resign. This is suggested in Extracts 26 and 27.

Extract 26 Quote from Participant 16:

"You don't like this [discriminatory act] and I chose to resign."

Extract 27 Quote from Participant 21:

"Because of this incident, I became more sensible and decided to resign and look for another job."

Extract 26 and 27 suggest that professionals within TESOL may opt to resign in response to prejudiced actions or omissions and the working inequalities that these may initiate. Other responses suggest that the discriminatory practices during hiring processes have resulted in unemployment, as shown in Extracts 28 and 29.

Extract 28 Quote from Participant 9:

"It has affected in the sense that I am currently jobless."

Extract 29 Quote from Participant 34:

"I didn't have a job for some time."

So far, the perceptual data have suggested that the perceived discriminatory practices had a negative impact on the participants' self-perceptions, perception of their teaching activities, decision-making, and job opportunities. However, there were other responses which suggest that these practices did not influence at all, or they had positive effects on the participants' perceptions and some decisions related to their teaching activities.

3.2.3 Positive Effects on their Identity and Decisions

As shown in Extract 32, the discrimination perceived by Participant 31 has led her and other colleagues to take agentive actions against discrimination.

Extract 32 Quote from Participant 31:

"Recently, the language teachers have fought against these incidents and it [discrimination] has decreased."

This suggests that it was not only her who have experienced these discriminatory practices, but also other colleagues from her teaching and learning context. Interestingly, she claims that they are now fighting against discrimination in her teaching community. As suggested in Extract 33, Participant 19 also felt that the discriminatory practice that she faced enabled her to find more than one job, suggesting a positive impact.

Extract 33 Quote from Participant 19:

"Rather, it helped me have more than one job."

Other participants' responses suggested that the perceived discriminatory acts had a positive impact on their identity as language teachers and their non-native status:

Extract 30 Quote from Participant 20:

"Positively, because it helped me have a stronger character and defend our teaching career."

Participant 20's statement suggests a positive impact of the discriminatory practice that she went experience. In "to have a stronger character and defend our teaching career," she suggests that her identity as language teacher

was shaped by the discriminatory act in a positive manner. A similar suggestion was echoed by Participant 23.

Extract 31 Quote from Participant 23:

"I will always speak and pronounce words as a person that speaks Spanish because it is my native language. Obviously, I always make an effort to pronounce and speak correctly."

Extract 31 suggests that the discrimination concerning the non-native status of her pronunciation led her to reconsider her L2 skills and characteristics, as evident in "I will always speak and pronounce words as a person that speaks Spanish because it is my native language."

In sum, the discriminatory acts were felt to play an influential role in the participants' identity, perceptions of teaching activities, and decision-making concerning their teaching careers. This evidence suggests that the discriminatory acts within TESOL are highly influential and impact in complex ways, ranging from no effects, negative feelings, such as lack of confidence, low self-esteem, demotivation and frustration, resignation or unemployment, to positive effects. Again, it was not possible to corroborate how the discriminatory practices actually influenced their teaching identity and activities. However, taken together the findings of this study, the argument is that 1) discrimination within TESOL is still alive, 2) its nature goes beyond linguistic aspects, and 3) it potentially influences the TESOL professionals' identity, perceptions of their teaching activities, and teaching decisions in complex ways.

Conclusion

The primary aim of the study was to explore the frequency and range of discriminatory acts that the professionals perceived to have faced within the field of TESOL. It also examined how and the extent to which these acts possibly had an impact on their identity, perceptions of the profession, and decision-making concerning their teaching careers. The perceptual evidence suggested that a high number of professionals have experienced some kind of discrimination within TESOL. The discriminatory practices appeared to be profession-related, linguistic, and physical in nature. The evidence also suggested that these practices are influential and impact in complex

ways, ranging from no effects, negative feelings, unemployment, to positive effects.

Throughout this paper, the data was carefully treated because the discriminatory practices were based on the participants' perceptions, and the fact that discrimination is mostly disguised or hard to be overtly noticed. In order to continue raising awareness, there is need to conduct further research. A further study could explore the frequency, nature, and influence of discrimination within TESOL involving the whole language educational community, that is, students, teachers, and administrators to have a more accurate picture of the discrimination within the TESOL profession. It would also be enlightening to validate in large-scale research project the influence of discrimination within TESOL on professionals' identity and decisions regarding their teaching practices. However, the study has some way towards gaining further understanding of the discriminatory acts that professionals experience within TESOL. Taken together, the findings of this study suggest that discrimination within TESOL is still alive, and potentially influences the teaching careers of thousands of EFL teachers which dominate the field. It is hoped that this study raises awareness amongst the whole TESOL community which involves students, teachers, administrators and employers. Once this whole community is aware of these discriminatory practices, principles, and position statements can then be effectively implemented with a view to eradicating discriminatory acts within TESOL.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Edgar Emmanuell García Ponce teaches in the BA in TESOL and MA in Applied Linguistics of English Language Teaching at the Departamento de Lenguas, Universidad de Guanajuato, Mexico. He holds an MA in Applied Linguistics (Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, Mexico) and a PhD in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (University of Birmingham, UK). His research interests centred on the Interplay between Classroom Interactions and Teachers' and Learners' Beliefs.



Dr. Martha Lengeling is a teacher trainer at the Universidad de Guanajuato in the BA of ELT and the MA in Applied Linguistics of ELT. She holds a MA in TESOL (West Virginia University, USA) and a PhD in Language Studies (Kent University, UK). She is a member of the National System of Researchers in Mexico. Her research interests, include Narrative Inquiry, Teacher Development, Identity, and Emotions.



Dr. Irasema Mora Pablo coordinates the Master's in Applied Linguistics of English Language Teaching at the Universidad de Guanajuato. She holds an MA in Applied Linguistics (Universidad de las Américas-Puebla) and a PhD in Applied Linguistics (University of Kent, UK). She is a member of the National System of Researchers (Sistema Nacional de Investigadores) and her research interests are Bilingual Studies, Identity, and Native Speakerism.

