

## Teaching English Overseas: From EFL Instructors' Perspectives\*

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Given the noteworthy increase in the number of native-born English-speaking EFL instructors teaching overseas, this research examined 6 American EFL instructors who had taught English abroad with special reference to their experience as foreigner instructors in their respective host countries. With the use of interviews as the major technique employed, this research was centered on identifying conflicts or difficulties the research participants encountered as novice instructors, both internal and external to the classroom settings of their host countries. Research findings revealed that the current participants were not adequately prepared to cope with new and unfamiliar physical settings of their host countries, or to familiarize themselves with their new classroom settings and students. Studying the various the conflicts which native EFL instructors encountered, both internal and external to the classroom environment, will hopefully shed light on, and provide a more accurate portrayal of EFL professionals' teaching overseas and may provide possible insights into potential solutions to them. Furthermore, the research findings were considered and discussed in terms of acculturation theory.

[acculturation/overseas EFL instructor/qualitative research, 문화동화/원어민영어교사/정성적연구]

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been an increasing number of native speakers of English from English-speaking countries teaching English languages on college campuses and in private language institutions. These men and women have arrived in various host countries for various reasons and by various routes. Many of those who come to foreign countries have been known to seriously pursue careers as EFL instructors. However, knowing how to speak English is not considered to be identical with knowing how to teach English. This is particularly true for the majority of the novice English instructors who experience significant difficulties associated with teaching English as well as with adjusting to a new life in a foreign culture (Snow, 1997). Similarly, knowing how important it is to understand possible difficulties does not always lead EFL instructors to adequately prepare for and find good means for solving them. Many people simply assume and imagine how difficult it would be to teach English in foreign countries without seriously considering and seeking effective or systematic solutions to the actual difficulties involved with overseas English instruction. The researcher who is not entirely unfamiliar with some undesirable incidents involving native English-speaking teachers in his own home country, chose to conduct a systematic inquiry into such experiences through first-hand interviews of native speakers teaching English abroad. Some relevant anecdotes have involved cases in which some of the native EFL teachers working in private sectors of foreign countries have reported that they were not paid as promised. Moreover, some EFL learners have complained about things which they claimed that their native English teachers did either inside or outside the classroom. These kinds of incidents are common enough to justify an inquiry into what has contributed to such unhappy relations between those concerned.

The situations in which native English-speaking EFL instructors have found themselves, of course, are not exactly the same as those in which Korean EFL instructors work, since most such non-native speakers have taught English in their homelands. Therefore, it is not difficult to imagine that the types of difficulties that Korean EFL teachers usually face in their own country may greatly differ from those that native English-speaking EFL instructors may perceive or experience while working in foreign countries. However, understanding the problems of

native-born speakers of English who teach in Korea may serve to provide Korean professors and instructors of English a better grasp of the work situation in which they will inevitably be involved even if only in an indirect way. This has motivated the current researcher to embark on the project at hand. Gathering information on this matter will hopefully provide the researcher with additional ideas, further motivation, and other related benefits as a result of this study. Given that many of the present research participants working as native English-speaking instructors may not have been well-prepared for being situated and expected to effectively teach in new and unfamiliar environments, it is necessary to explore their encounters with regard to such difficulties that they, otherwise, might have avoided in foreign settings, given adequate training and preparation for doing so. Entertaining discourses, in this regard, which may hopefully comprise investigations into participants' authentic voices, perceptions, and opinions regarding teaching English abroad will help Korean English professors and instructors to realize that they may well find themselves in a position to actually help future EFL instructors from English-speaking countries to be able to more comfortably and effectively work for one of our institutions in Korea.

The purpose of this study is to explore major difficulties that novice English-speaking EFL instructors may commonly tend to encounter when they pursue the English teaching profession in foreign countries as well as to further facilitate a better understanding of native-born English instructors, and the problems they experience by interviewing those who have actually been involved in teaching English in foreign countries. As a result of this study, it is hoped that the basic kinds of difficulties novice EFL instructors tend to have will have been delineated for them when they go abroad to teach English, as well as which factors turn out to cause problems when they are in or out of a classroom. This paper is therefore intended to help novice EFL teachers who would like to go abroad to teach English understand what kinds of difficulties they might have, and to thereby prepare them to cope with such difficulties as may derive from foreign environments which may be socioculturally and academically different from their own.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This field study used a semi-structured interview as the instrument employed for collecting data from native English speakers who had previously taught English abroad. By probing their personal experiences associated with teaching overseas, the researcher hoped to construct a better picture of commonly-encountered positive and negative aspects of teaching EFL in non-English speaking countries.

### 1 Participants

In this study, the researcher invited native speakers of English who were currently teaching EFL courses at universities in Korea for interviews. These participants were all native speakers of English who had had experience teaching EFL classes outside the United States of America, as the primary qualification for participation in this research. There were a total of six interviewees. These participants, as stated previously, were all American English instructors who had had previous experiences of teaching EFL classes outside the United States. The selected interviewees consisted of five males and one female. They were all currently teaching English at foreign language institutes of Korean universities across the nation. Each participant was given a pseudonym to be used for all purposes of this study: Cathy, Jack, Mark, Maunce, Gary, and John. Participants' ages ranged from 24 to 35 years old; participants' educational majors varied from biology to language and literature, some participants with and without teacher training or experience previous to teaching overseas. All participants had worked toward earning graduate degrees at universities in the United States, and had taught EFL courses outside the United States of America for different lengths of time and in various parts of the world.

Cathy was a 32-year-old female with a master's degree in German and currently studying in a PhD program in language education. She had taught in a German college for 3 years (during her assistantship in a German department) and had some tutoring experiences as well. She was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to teach EFL in a high school in Austria for a year two years previous to her participation in the study. She served as an assistant teacher in a high school in Vienna, and was the only native speaker of English in that school. Teaching in Vienna marked her first

teaching experience in a non-English speaking country. Because of her positive experiences and attitude, she is planning to go back to Austria in order to conduct her dissertation project in the near future. She is currently teaching English at a university in Korea.

Jack, who held a double bachelor's degrees in biology and East Asian languages and cultures, was a 24-year-old male currently studying in a master's program in law school and also working toward an MBA in business school. He was awarded a ChungHua Scholarship to study Chinese language and culture in China for a year, under which he was required to teach English in a private high school in China. He did not have any prior training or experience pertinent to teaching before going to China to teach EFL in a high school.

Mark, who was a 31-year-old male with a master's degree in applied linguistics, currently studying in a Ph.D program in language education. He has previously taught English as a Second Language (ESL) in an elementary school and in an evening English program for 6 months in the United States before moving on to a teaching job in Saudi Arabia, where he taught EFL courses for 5 years.

Maurice held his bachelor's degree in English literature and was 31 years old. He was currently working on a master's degree in applied linguistics. He had been a substitute teacher for 6 months prior to teaching abroad. He then taught EFL classes in non-English speaking countries for 6 years (2 years in Japan and 4 years in Korea).

Gary, 35, completed his bachelor's degree in English. He taught EFL courses in Japan for 7 years. John was a 32-year-old male with a bachelor's degree in philosophy. He had previously taught EFL courses for 6 years in Taiwan. Both Gary and John were currently pursuing master's degrees in language education.

## 2. Procedure

This study employed interviews as the main data-collecting method. The rationale and purpose behind interviewing American EFL instructors was to investigate what they thought and how they felt about teaching English abroad, not merely because of the obvious impossibility of directly observing "what was on their minds," but also due to the impossibility of observing their behavior which they had already completed during their overseas teaching experiences which had

already happened at some earlier point in time. In other words, the manner in which these EFL instructors have organized the world and the meanings which they have attached to what went on in the respective foreign countries was not within the realm of observation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, Patton, 1990). The researcher established a set of principle questions to be used as guidelines for the interview to be conducted. This semi-structured interview format permitted the researcher to conduct interviews "guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time" (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). In other words, such an interview format was employed on the grounds that it allowed the interviewer to appropriately respond to the situation at hand, to the new ideas on the topic, and to the perspective of the interviewee. The questions employed during the interview began with those regarding the circumstances that had prompted the participants to teach overseas, followed by other questions concerning their teaching and living experiences in their respective host countries from both positive and negative perspectives, and concluded with closing questions regarding their future plans. (For samples of semi-structured interview questions, see Appendix.)

During the first semester of the academic year 2003, all the interviews were conducted in English, according to the arrangements the researcher made with each of the interviewees on an individual basis. Every interviewee individually participated in a semi-structured interview conducted by the researcher. Each interview lasted for a variable amount of time (approximately 20-30 minutes), depending on how much the respondent could recall and contribute from his/her experiences of teaching overseas. All of the interviews were audiotape-recorded with the expressed permission of the interviewees. Immediately after each interview was terminated, the researcher composed in-process memos in order to cross-reference the oral tapes. This process was used in order to forge links among the interview data from various sessions as part of an initial gleaning of the emerging or recurring themes from the oral tapes. In the process of interviewing the EFL instructors, one of the interviews was transcribed verbatim for the most effective exploitation of interview database and out of the expectation that the researcher would become familiar with his own data while engaged in transcribing an interview. Upon the completion of the interviews, the rest of the audio-taped interviews were then also transcribed verbatim in English by the researcher as the

database for the current research

Along with the interviews with American EFL instructors, the researcher/interviewer took notes on what the researcher found to be important statements or experiences which the interviewees mentioned, or on elements which required more clarification through follow-up questions while the interview was still in session. Such notes allowed the researcher to conduct more *in-depth interviews with the* respective interviewees. Moreover, the notes contained descriptions of some aspects of the various affective reactions which the interviewees revealed during the interviewing process

### 3 Data Analysis

As the conversations for each audio-taped interview were all transcribed into written records by the researcher for inclusion in the database, the respective interviewee participants received copies of the researcher's findings and tentative interpretations of their interview data, as well as the *verbatim transcripts*. This process was designed as a verification step for member checks, which is considered to be the most important technique for establishing the credibility or internal consistency in connection with the trustworthiness and authenticity of a qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 1994, Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In other words, such member checks are performed in order to allow researchers to refer their relevant interview data, interpretations, and findings back to the respective interviewees in order to ascertain whether individual informants find them to be accurate, convincing and plausible (Merriam, 1998)

The researcher scrutinized a total of six sets of transcribed data and in-process memos on a *individual basis*. During this process, examining the first set of transcripts and in-process memos yielded an extraction of subcategories that emerged therefrom. The second set of transcripts and in-process memos was then examined in order to extract subcategories of data. These steps were repeated until the final data set yielded cogent, consistent subcategories. The six stories told by the interviewees and the respective in-process memos composed by the researcher were all examined together in order to identify further possibly emerging or recurring categories from what transpired in each set of subcategories already extracted (i.e., locating emerging or recurrent themes or patterns coupled with the

American EFL instructors' overseas teaching accounts) These analyses enabled the researcher to look into such issues or themes as prior preparation, teaching experience, and the social and cultural encounters as related to difficulties in and adjustments to living abroad as foreign instructors as well as to approaches to solving such problems Throughout these data analyses, the researcher consulted with one colleague who had had previous experience in conducting qualitative research studies This colleague acted as a peer debriefer Engagements with this debriefer provided an external check of the qualitative research process for the current study The researcher's consultation with the peer debriefer was frequently conducted during the process of subcategorizing interview transcripts and in-process memos that pertained to all of the interviews as well as during subsequent comparisons which were made of all such subcategories against one another Therefore, member checks and other external checks of the research process were used in order to insure the trustworthiness of the current findings and interpretations made during the course of this investigation

### **III. FINDINGS**

#### **1 Outside-the-Classroom Encounters and Conflicts**

One of the most common problems which the current participants mentioned in terms of teaching abroad related to how to deal with culture shock All the participants seemed to have entered the overseas teaching environment, equipped with very little knowledge about the host cultures involved This seems definitely to have contributed to their having had a hard time adjusting to their new living-, and teaching environments John commented that "culture shock has to do with being in a new place, new language, new food, new customs, and some ways of thinking about the world unfamiliar to you I know I had to deal with a lot of difficulties when I was away from home That just happened to me What could I do in that situation? I just felt I could teach all the time in the classroom Solution? Nothing I could do with had to put up with everything Otherwise, I shouldn't have gone there" Given that culture apparently comes into play whenever a teacher is in a new, foreign, social, or work environment, current EFL instructors seemed



to accept the host culture as it was. This kind of problem concerning the host cultures appeared to stem from the teachers' existence *per se* in different environments, rather than deriving from teaching English in classrooms. The researcher classified these types of problems as those dealing with "outside-the-classroom" encounters (i.e., problems external to classroom settings) Such an "outside-the-classroom" type of problem represented one of the difficulties that the current participants consistently experienced and suffered from in foreign settings. Let us first look at such problems coupled with their existence within the context of different cultures, which constituted most of the "outside-the-classroom" type problems which were reported by participants of this study.

### 1) The Cultures with Underdeveloped Infrastructures

It appeared relatively easy for the instructors to overcome challenges associated with new physical environments in-and-of themselves. Trying new food, for example, was often considered to be a benefit of living in a foreign country for all of the participants on the one hand. Different social and commercial structures of the host countries, however, seemed to pose enormous pressures on them on the other hand. Although the participants could either find Americanized food all over the world or bring their own recipes and ingredients, one of the participants, Jack, complained about a lack of familiar food in a typical way. But his complaint was not really about the food itself, but rather, the way in which drinking water was handled and consumed. He put it this way.

Food was fraud. I lost lots of weight. The thing is that it's not only I who had a problem. Chinese people there had problems too, just like everybody had problems. To put it this way, the water came out of the river and came into the storage tank for the school. When filtered like that it just came directly out of the river when we turned on the water to pour a glass of water, and we let it sit for a while, then half of the glass would be filled with dirt. It was really bad. The food in the cafeteria was just extremely subpar, even for Chinese people.

What bothered some of the EFL instructors most was the public water filtering system, food service system for the region to which they went and, most

importantly, the way in which the people there perceived these problems. If they had had previous knowledge of how conditions of the systems in the region were, it would have been much easier for them to have coped with some of the difficulties of living abroad. Almost none of the participants were sufficiently familiar with the conditions regarding underdeveloped facilities or weak infrastructures which they would have to deal with on an almost daily basis.

Some of the participants, also had difficulty in dealing with different commercial systems. Maurice pointed out the strange way in which people purchased things: "People in the US enjoy shopping at a department store like Wal-Mart where products of various kinds are displayed for sale. However, for example, when I was there several years ago, a small-sized specialized store was a more dominant form of commercial activity. I had to go to a TV-store to buy a TV, and another store to buy a CD. Shopping was really hell." In the host countries, the instructors felt it very stressful to move around from store to store when they needed to purchase their necessities rather than in the way they used to do so at home.

## 2) EFL Teachers as Just "Foreign and Weird"

When most of the present respondents decided to start their lives as teachers in their respective host countries, they had assumed that the countries in one cultural belt would share many cultural similarities with one another. However, there existed huge differences among, for example, Asian countries. When the interviewees were asked about how the people in the host country perceived foreign teachers like themselves, one of the respondents, Jack, expressed the feeling of "weirdness" with regard to the way in which he was isolated. He stated that:

Even within our school among the teachers, the administration of the school began to isolate us and putting not necessarily gripping by imposing a woman on us but by including everyone who has had contact with us. They began punishing people that were spending too much[time] with us. They began removing. Still no idea! Why?

What Jack reported has a bearing on the issue of systematic alienation perpetrated by the school, the reason for which he did not know. Similar to Jack,

John also expressed his frustration with his image as a foreigner in his host country. His statement presented below is typical with regard to the frustrations which the majority of current participants seemed to share:

The perception of foreigners is very, you might say, contradictory in a way because, on the one hand, there is this traditional notion of foreigners as bad and strange and as the other who is just so alien and different that any contact with and relationship with them is not really looked upon as very favorable. So, the parents might have this idea that it is good [to] learn English, but you do not want to get too friendly with a foreigner because of an old cultural idea about what a foreigner is like, and what kind of people they are.

John's use of the word "contradictory" is, perhaps, very telling, for it illustrates that he did not quite understand why the two different images concerning American EFL instructors coexisted within the host culture. Jack taught in China, and John taught in Taiwan. Even though they felt similar feelings of isolation because they were looked upon as foreigners, there might be different reasons for each case. China and Taiwan, first of all, have different socio-political systems. In John's case, learning English in Taiwan was regarded as good and there was no "removing" of the students because of close relationships with him. He just felt an invisible tension in the Taiwanese people's perception of him. When we consider other Asian countries such as Korea and Japan, it may be that even different and more varied images or perceptions toward these American EFL instructors may emerge. Two other participants who taught in these countries did not have much to say about the isolation problem, though. The idea of a foreigner, especially a person from the U.S. teaching English, may mean different things in different countries at different times.

### 3) Conflicts with Foreign Employers

Some EFL instructors' failure to understand the culture of the particular business environment of the host country also turned out to be a problem which they have never been able to come to grips with. The relations established between employers and employees in the host countries displayed a great deal of differences

to the ones in the US Gary, who had worked for six private companies over the course of 7 years in Japan, described one of the incidents which he encountered.

When we decided to work for the company, we understood that the apartment is like a necessity benefit, so it was the part of entire package. When we got to Japan, our Japanese boss considered the situation differently. We considered this benefit as part of the package and a part of our business agreement. But the Japanese boss considered it a more personal thing. We were very offended when he did not return the favor when he asked us to do something extra such Working six days a week, coming in to work on Saturday night.

The Japanese boss knew about the business agreement and he did as it said. He, however, did not consider it as his obligation but his generous offer. Here, Gary was really talking about the "EXTRA" work EFL teachers like him often had to do. When American teachers expected extra pay, it never came. In host countries such as Japan, Gary's unhappy memory seemed to insinuate that the business agreement both parties entered into suddenly turned into somewhat a loose one that the employers construed as personal, contrary to the employees' expected norm that under normal union rules, minutes spent after work deserve to be rewarded.

#### 4) Language Barriers to Communication

Another universal problem which the present research seemed to indicate pertained to communication problems. A native EFL instructor has taught English in non-English speaking countries. Thus he/she has to deal with communication problems. All of the difficulties that resulted from living in different cultures would have been far fewer with more preparation by the teachers in the language of the host country. Most of our interviewees could not speak the language used in their host countries when they went to the country. With respect to communication with people in the host country, Maurice commented as follows:

One of the difficulties was not having clear communication, and not really understanding what was expected of me in a given situation.

The statement above seemed to indicate that they were not willing to learn the languages used in the host countries. Not only lack of appropriate communication skills between the host culture's people and the novice American English teachers, but also American EFL instructors' perception on learning their host country's language led the teachers to feel a sense of non-belongingness to the host group. Gary add to this the statement below.

I had a hard time getting close to people before I learned Japanese to communicate, so I felt isolated, which I could've avoided if I had sensed that a little earlier.

## 2. In-Class Encounters and Conflicts

### 1) EFL Students' Learning Behaviors in Class

Similar to other instructors who worked in Asian and Arabic countries, Cathy who was only female participant interviewed pointed out that the classroom atmosphere was somewhat different from what she had expected.

In Austria, many of schools were primarily focused on a teacher-fronted or -centered classroom. In America, I did find in many cases the teachers were often very focused on the students being the center of the attention and then asking them questions and having them do. I tried to let students work in groups, I tried to let students construct knowledge and draw conclusions, so I tended to often assign group work in. ended up being in a cathedral. Austrian English teachers I talked to regarded good students as those who don't talk much in class and who were regarded as good listeners. I was peeved over this when I was with my students in Austria.

Cathy's comment hinted at the kind of discrepancy in perception between native English-speaking teachers and non-native English teachers concerning the role students should play in a language class. American EFL teachers wanted their students to actively participate and to learn by having fun. The reality was that students relied too much upon the teacher and put too much of their energy on memorizing materials. Similarly, John also described difficulties he confronted in

conversation classes, due to adherence to a conventional “rote memorization” language learning mode on the part of his students

When I started teaching, what was stressed to me was teaching in a communicative way and trying to develop a learner-centered classroom. But often times what I encounter was that the way of students. In other words, they were used to, their perception of teacher was that he or she would be the center of the class and lecture. One difficult thing was trying to get them to change their perceptions about what a conversation class should be like.

## 2) Knowledge about and Perceptions of Language Teaching Methodology

Most of the EFL teacher participants appeared to approach their teaching in foreign countries without sufficient practical knowledge about language teaching methodology, or without familiarizing themselves with it. Needless to say, being a native speaker of English is not sufficient qualification for being a good EFL teacher. When asked whether or not any native speaker of English could teach English, Gary responded

If you ask somebody the rules of their native language, they can't say what they are. I thought I could teach English even if I had no experience teaching. But teaching is different, as I see it now.

Before some of the EFL instructors left for their host countries, they took a few language teaching methodology courses or courses offered in the area of applied linguistics. However, they did not view those classes as useful. According to their assessment of such courses, EFL students did not benefit from their instructors' expert knowledge in such courses. The statement by Mark, who taught in Saudi Arabia, was a typical one:

I was very unhappy with the program that was supposed to have prepared me to become an English teacher, because when I think about the degree I did, almost none of what we did had anything to do with teaching in a minute. We took transformational grammar, for example, which really had no

application at all, and we took traditional grammar which had a little bit of application, but the way we approached the subject had nothing to do with the way you actually use traditional grammar

Mark's statement seemed to indicate that what was learned in classrooms at a graduate level did not apply to real classroom settings in actual practice. Furthermore, Mark's typically representative statement addresses the seemingly arcane issue of the efficiency of some EFL teacher training programs in which several respondents had studied and brings it home to the language teaching profession.

#### **IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

##### **1 Classroom-Unbound Encounter**

Teaching and/or learning in or even adjusting oneself to any new and unfamiliar culture is not an easy matter for anyone, since most people are not fully aware of the contents of many other cultures distinct from their own. American EFL teachers who teach overseas confront a unique problem (Garcia, 1990). In the cases of EFL teachers working overseas for a relatively long period of time, the cultures and situations with which they come into contact, and must submerge themselves, pose particular problems when the individual teacher's culture and the host culture come into conflict.

Given that one of the most common difficulties the participants reported encountering in the host cultures was concerned with such physical things as drinking water, food, and so on, American EFL teachers seemed to be bothered by the fact that they were surrounded by such terrible conditions. This seemed to be more than a matter of culture shock to them. However, such problems caused by the physical environments involved would appear to be relatively easy to overcome, given the participants' remarks on the pleasure of tasting exotic food, the only possible exception was the problem with the drinking water, which is associated with the substandard infrastructure in the region. Most of the participants had had to live in totally different living conditions in their host countries, compared to those

in the United States, the infrastructure of which was superior to those of the host countries, but the research interviewees were still reportedly all eager to learn about the new cultures despite the physical difficulties afflicted on them. From this, it seems possible to infer that physical adversities did not constitute major problems as far as the willingness to understand a different culture was concerned.

Similar to the problems that resulted from the host countries' different environments, it appeared that although most of the participants felt "weird" and under stress (shown in the case of Maurice) and experienced inconveniences immediately after they arrived in their respective host countries, when they tried to go shopping, etc., such inconveniences did not become an enduring problem of lasting importance. In a sense, such overseas experiences seemed to add to the participants' pleasure of shopping which was totally different than shopping in the U.S. All of the participants later commented on the pleasures of shopping as if they were tourists in the host countries. Hence, the inconveniences they first felt to be somewhat strange and stressful turned out to be invaluable experiences, which served to facilitate their adjustments to life in the host cultures.

The ways in which people in the various host countries perceive a foreigner is not necessarily identical or even similar in every case, and may vary considerably from culture to culture. For example, in Asian countries where people tend to be very conservative, their perceptions toward foreigners or aliens are characterized not only by exercising moderation in whatever they do, but also by keeping distances wide enough to avoid any kind of misunderstanding. As evidenced in the findings of the study, such perceptions of the host country's people toward foreigners sometimes result in the perception of persecution or oppression of the person(s) by the neighbors or the institutions of the host country. The case in which Jack talked about the attempts of a Chinese school to systematically alienate him from his students may serve to illustrate this point. In this vein, it is no wonder that American EFL teachers may have a hard time in interpreting the host people's perceptions toward them, unless these foreign instructors fully understand the meaning of their behavior in the form of either persecution or alienation. In a culture where an old tradition and ideology prevail and where people's reputations are gained from their exercise of moderation on a daily basis, it is conceivable that the parents of the students do not allow their children to mingle with a foreigner, who happens to be their children's teacher, outside the classroom. The parents



acknowledge only the presence and necessity of a native EFL instructor for the English education of children, not for purposes of socialization. Thus, it seems to be necessary that native EFL instructors seeking teaching positions in such a country recognize this tricky aspect of a culture, and develop an awareness of the culture prior to departure.

*Given that five of the present participants were confronted with language barriers in the host countries, it is imperative that any EFL speaker who intends to teach English in other countries should be well-equipped with the language used in the host country. Prior to departure to the host country, preparing oneself for a successful life in a foreign country may be beneficial in several ways: first, doing so helps each EFL instructor to adjust to an unfamiliar situation with relative ease; second, an EFL teacher's command of the host language(s) can be regarded as showing some kind of respect for the culture and people of the host country. Above all, having a relatively good command of the host nation's language may serve to help EFL instructors cope with the imminent difficulties they may face in a new land.*

From the findings, it was revealed that some of the EFL instructors had suffered ill treatment from their superiors in a private company, which may have been due to the fundamentally different ways of thinking regarding the relationship between the EFL teacher and his employer in an Asian country. The American teacher takes it for granted that the residence service he receives as part of an entire package, based on the conditions of the contract, while his Japanese employer may have a different understanding, and attach a different meaning to the conditions of the contract, which may include requiring his American employee to work on weekends. Such differing views seem to represent the American way of thinking versus the Japanese way of thinking, respectively.

Two such different ways of thinking may prove very difficult to reconcile and it may furthermore be difficult to pinpoint why such differences exist. It is plausible, however, to look at this phenomenon in two ways: individualization versus "family"-centeredness. In other words, a Japanese employer (as "father") views his employee (or "son") as a member of his "family" (or company), and may request that his son do something for him or his family. Such a request made by the superior is made without reluctance. However, an American teacher will almost invariably resist playing the role of the son of his employer.

Specifically, what the present research found in interviews with 6 American EFL instructors, external to their classroom teaching experiences, can be explained in terms of acculturation which has been defined as cultural change that results from continuous contact between two cultural groups (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936) A typical acculturation situation occurs when an individual of a particular cultural group comes into contact with another cultural group. Such close, ongoing cultural contact may lead EFL instructors to adapt to their new environment, relying on a variety of strategies (Berry & Kim, 1988)

In this respect, acculturation is assumed to bring about changes in these instructors. Berry and Kim (1988) enumerated four kinds of changes as a consequence of acculturation. First, physical change may take place because the individuals experiencing acculturation must live in a new place, with a new form of housing, and a different population density, that is, a physically different environment. Second, biological changes may result from experiencing new food and nutritional status, new diseases, and cultural interbreeding. Third, cultural changes may occur due to the confrontation of their original political, economic, linguistic, and social systems with those of the host society. Finally, psychological changes such as changes in mental health are inevitable as people try to adapt to their new environments.

What the research participants experienced in new environments can be viewed as a conflict phase which occurs as the nondominant group experiences stresses and pressures to change their way of life. Hurh and Kim (1984) indicated that the first one or two years of the initial adaptive phase will be characterized by "exigency" because of a language barrier, unemployment or underemployment, social isolation such as loneliness, and the general culture shock. This phase may become the most critical phase throughout the whole acculturation process.

If the nondominant group or the individuals are not fully willing to change their way of life, conflict and tension become heightened, which leads to a crisis phase in which a resolution of the conflict is called for. As a consequence of crisis resolution, an adaptation phase may occur in which inter-group relations are stabilized. This adaptation phase does not necessarily result in an adequate resolution to the conflict and various types of crisis or levels of any reduction in stress due to an adaptation may take on a variety of degrees and forms.

## 2 Classroom-Bound Encounter

A couple of difficulties the EFL instructors reported encountering in classroom situations were identified in this study. One such difficulty was derived from EFL teachers' adoption of a communicative approach to language teaching with a focus on learner-centeredness. The other came from insufficient preparation for classroom teaching (or the ineffectiveness of prior knowledge regarding EFL teaching).

The advent of communicative language teaching was a major impetus to the development of learner-centered language instruction. Providing learners with efficient learning strategies and styles and assisting learners to identify their own preferred ways of learning are some of the aims of the learner-centered philosophy (Nunan, 1988). In order to improve students' communicative skills, EFL teachers attempted to use a learner-centered approach in the classroom by getting their students involved in diverse activities, such as group work, and so on. American teachers' use of different teaching methods or styles and strategies, based on the notion of learner-centeredness, turned out to be in sharp contrast with students' learning styles and non-native teachers' way of teaching. Such a contrast also became one of the difficulties EFL teachers experienced in the host countries. EFL teachers' difficulty in the classroom may have been caused either by the students' not being accustomed to EFL teachers' introduction of unfamiliar language instructional methods to them, or by their own adherence to their original perceptions about what a language classroom should be like.

In terms of their readiness to teach English before EFL teachers left for their host countries, most teachers seemed not to be prepared. Even though one of the teachers said that he had read some books in order to learn about the culture and religion of the host country, it was often only from his personal interest in the religion of the host country (Islam in Saudi Arabia). Nothing special for the teaching purposes was done by the EFL teachers. As mentioned specifically in the remarks by Gary, most of the EFL teachers seemed to think that at the beginning stage of their teaching, it would not be hard for them as native speakers of English to teach English, even if they had no teaching experience, but the matter of teaching turned out not to be so simple as they had anticipated. One of the participants also mentioned the degree he had gotten in the area of applied linguistics as well as some methodology courses he had taken at a college. He thought that such courses

would help him and his students in the classroom, but as his reflections on the efficacy of the methodology courses showed, it seemed that there was a discrepancy between what he had learned theoretically at an American college and what he was actually able to apply to the teaching in his new host country. Therefore, it seems both desirable and imperative that EFL teachers be trained in pre-service EFL teacher preparation programs of high quality before they start to teach.

## V. LIMITATIONS

Given the findings of this study, considering the limited number of participants and interview data, it is not claimed that the results of this study represent the actual situation for all of the current American EFL instructors who teach overseas, especially in the cases of anyone involved in the profession of teaching English in other parts of the world. It is hoped that this study will shed light on the development of the EFL field and its professionals who may aspire to teach overseas in the future. Sharing the experiences of the participants in this research and further research studies with more EFL teachers from various English-speaking countries will hopefully help professionals in this field draw a more precise picture of EFL professionals, and clarify and provide possible solutions to the various conflicts native English instructors may encounter in foreign settings, which this research has attempted to delve into.

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## APPENDIX

### SAMPLES OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1 How did you feel about going to a new country when you first decided to teach overseas?
- 2 What went through your mind when you first started teaching abroad?
- 3 To what extent did you as an EFL instructor find yourself adequately prepared for teaching your foreign students when you were in the host country?
- 4 What motivated you to pursue a career as an EFL instructor in a foreign country, rather than in your homeland?
- 5 Were there any conflicts between the way in which you have previously been taught in the United States and the way in which you had to deal with instruction of students in your host country abroad?

- 6 What were your immediate concerns once you had left the classroom each day in the host country?
- 7 How were your relationships with local EFL faculty members of the new host country in schools or institutions you have worked for?
- 8 What was your impression on the general local public you had met outside the school?
- 9 Did you think that your education in the United States had worked well to prepare you to effectively teach students in the host country?

예시언어(Examples in): English

적용가능 언어(Applicable Languages): English/Foreign Languages

적용가능 수준(Applicable Levels) Primary/Secondary/Tertiary

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